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WORD

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A LINGERING BLITZKRIEG...

20 years have passed since the beginning of the First Russo-Chechen War

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Abdulla DUDUEV

A LINGERING BLITZKRIEG...

Twenty years have passed since December 11, 1994, the day that Russian forces entered Chechnya.

The Russo-Chechen War became one of the bloodiest and most destructive European conflicts of the 20th century.

Not a single Chechen city or village — with the exception of those located in Nadterechny District — was spared complete or partial destruction, in some cases repeatedly over the course of the two wars.

The republic's infrastructure was destroyed: factories, plants and other industrial facilities, agriculture, hospitals, maternity clinics, museums, archives and basically the entirety of what constituted the republic's material culture, including the majority of its ancient towers and other cultural monuments.

The overall number of civilian fatalities varies depending on the source data, ranging from 57,000 to 300,000 — that is, as much as a third of the Chechnya's total antebellum population. Of course no one knows the precise figure — and has no way of knowing it, since to collect such data requires state cooperation, and the very state that instigated these mass killings does not seem interested in such research.

Moreover, the Russian authorities have spent the intervening years dodging their responsibility to search for the disappeared, the majority of whom were abducted by soldiers. For many years now, the authorities have variously obstructed investigations of this nature as well as searches for grave sites, exhumations and the identification of the bodies of the deceased.

And yet, even according to official data, more than five thousand persons are considered missing; according to unofficial data, this number is three times greater.

Practically the entire land area of the republic was "sown" with mines and other ordnance, which has led to thousands of casualties — mostly among children: According to the republican ministry of labor, in 2008, there were more than thirty thousand underage invalids Chechnya.

The war's catastrophic consequences are evident to this day. It is unlikely that the damage done to the environment as well as public health will be mitigated in the foreseeable future. It is no accident that the rates of cancer and cardiovascular disease across all age groups of the population have taken on the dimensions of an epidemic — this, in addition to tuberculosis and other dangerous ailments.

In this issue of our digest, in commemoration of that tragic date, we set out to systematically arrange and present the events that led up to the beginning of the Russo-Chechen War as well as those that took place once combat operations began. The data that we are using are assembled from various sources, among them Human Rights Center Memorial's two volume collaborative work titled International Tribunal for Chechnya (S.M. Dmitrievsky, B.I. Gvareli, & O.A. Chelysheva; Nizhny Novgorod: Kommersant Press, 2009). Though DOSH has some accounts at its disposal, the majority of the information is taken from HRC Memorial.

The chronology we have prepared is admittedly incomplete. We do not have the capability to recreate a more exhaustive picture of those tragic years: We have access only to information about a third of the events that took place during this time period. Our current history (much like our past history) is rife with yawning gaps and white spots. There is much that we must still reinstate, grain by grain, focusing especially on the fate of the victims: on the circumstances surrounding the deaths of peaceful civilians, those who were certainly not guilty of anything but died uncounted all the same.

In this issue we are also publishing the memoirs and testimonies of the participants and witnesses to the events that took place between 1990 and 1996.

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Maria KATYSHEVA

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WAR

As another anniversary of the war in Chechnya comes and goes, the same old question arises: Was it possible to avert the war? Could the bloodshed have been prevented through diplomatic means? History shows that such a thing can happen, if both sides share a mutual interest in it. Today there are different views on the diplomatic efforts made by the federal center and Dudayev's government in the run-up to the war: Some think that no negotiations were attempted whatsoever; some claim that Dudayev insisted on negotiations, while Yeltsin adopted a grandstanding position, refusing to negotiate with "extremist leaders"; others recall that some kind of attempts were made but were unsuccessful...Whatever the truth, what happened, happened, and what followed was a catastrophe that caused numerous casualties and massive destruction. Yet another lesson of history. And a cruel one. It teaches us that before taking up arms, we must speak to each other, seek common ground and consider compromise. In this case the parties had no compelling, reciprocal interest to do so and accordingly, pride prevailed and ambition eclipsed reason. Today the protagonists of those events are either no more or unreachable. It's the ordinary people who remain — people whi have paid an exorbitant price for their leaders' pride, ambition and false ideas. Documents from that time reveal that many politicians from both sides sought a dialog after all: As early as fall 1991, attempts were made to mend bridges, to work out a negotiation process between the federal center and the restive republic. And though such attempts were made repeatedly, they enjoyed no success. This was truly an instance of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object.

On the Chechen side, it was parliament that led the initiative for a dialog (which, by the way, became one of the sources of friction between the republic's legislative and executive branches). In late 1991 and early 1992, several panels of experts were set up and consultations began. The first dialog took place in March 1992 — a meeting of experts' panels at the Dagomys resort in Sochi. Among other things, the report from that meeting to the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation contained the following: *"The leadership of the RF Supreme Soviet had doubts about the legality of such a meeting because of the uncertain status of the Chechen legal experts who were representing the interests of the so-called 'Parliament of the Chechen Republic,' a body unrecognized by the RF Supreme Soviet. But it was impossible to ignore the objective facts on the ground, which changed the at first purely legal dimension of the issue, created a fundamentally nonstandard situation and consequently compelled the parties to seek nonstandard solutions. [...]*

THE HOMESTRETCH — TO WAR

A chronology

June 12, 1990: The First Congress of People's Deputies of the RFSR ratifies the Declaration of Russian Sovereignty.

November 23–25, 1990: In Grozny, the All-National Congress of the Chechen People (NCChP) elects its Executive Committee, which subsequently becomes the NCChP Executive Committee. Its chairman becomes Major-General **Dzhokhar Dudayev**.

"The proclamation of the so-called 'Chechen Republic,' with its own leadership which pursued policies that were largely autonomous from those of the Russian Federation, [in turn gave rise to] legislative and executive authorities (parliament, the president and his government) in the republic — that is, bodies that represent a considerable part of the political leadership of the Chechen people and enjoy the greatest political influence. In view of these circumstances, the Supreme Soviet's leadership viewed the holding of consultative meetings between its experts and representatives of the 'Parliament of the Chechen Republic' as politically timely and legally justified.

"During the consultations, the parties agreed that in the event of negotiations between authorized delegations, it would be especially advisable to consider the following four major types of issues: political issues, legal issues, economic issues and issues of collective security.

"The Chechen side claimed that the main priority, and the subject of the negotiations should be the issue "Of recognizing the political independence and national sovereignty of the Chechen Republic." At the same time, the Chechen side did not conceal that this implied the desire of the current Chechen leadership to legally ensure the existence of the Chechen Republic outside of the Russian Federation, while maintaining the republic's current economic ties with Russia.

"Taking into account that the inclusion of this issue in the negotiations held a fundamental importance for the Chechen side, and that otherwise the negotiations could not take place, the experts of the RF Supreme Soviet agreed to record this wording in the Minutes and to recommend the matter for the next comprehensive review. At the same time, they insisted on including the issue 'On determining the political-legal form of the relationship between the Chechen Republic and the Russian Federation' in the Minutes as well. This stemmed from the fact that concepts such as 'political independence and national sovereignty of the republic,' could be modified and invested with a variety of political and legal content depending on the form of political and legal relations between the republic and the other subjects of the Federation as well as the Federal legislative and executive bodies. It is possible that by means of negotiations between parliamentary-sanctioned delegations, the Chechen side, which had legalized the status of the Chechen Republic, would come to a decision about the republic's ratification of the Federation Treaty of the Russian Federation.

"Accordingly, the RF Supreme Soviet Panel believes that it is possible to limit the scope of political issues to be examined at the first stage of the negotiations process. [...]

"In addition to the above political issues, the experts identified and recorded in the joint Minutes, a number of other legal, economic and security issues. These are more concrete and applied in nature and are largely derived from the corpus of political issues, since it is obvious that the various political solutions will have various consequences for the other areas of common interest."

That was the initial contact. The consultations began. They gave rise to hope. It seemed like the political

In the photograph:
a meeting between Chechen deputies, S. Shakhrai and R. Abdulatipov in January 1993.
Photograph taken by S. Khugayev (from the author's archives).

November 27, 1990: The Supreme Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush Republic declares the republic a sovereign state.

June 8–9, 1991: The NCChP passes a resolution deposing the Supreme Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush Republic and proclaims the formation of the Nokhchicho Chechen Republic. The NCChP Executive Committee, headed by Dzhokhar Dudayev, becomes the interim governing body.

June 12, 1991: Boris Yeltsin is elected president of Russia in the first round of voting, receiving 57.3% of the vote. The next presidential election is due to be held five years later in 1996.

August 19–21, 1991: A coup d'etat is attempted in Moscow. The Supreme Soviet and the government of the Chechen-Ingush Republic, headed by Doku Zavgayev, come out in support of the coup organizers, the State Committee on the State of Emergency (GKChP). The NCChP reacts decisively to the Moscow coup attempt, establishing a headquarters in the former city committee building in Grozny. A rally is held in the central square of the republican capital. On **August 19**, Dudayev and his associates disseminate a proclamation condemning the GKChP and describing the Moscow coup attempt as "a coup organized by a group of state criminals."

The police attempt to disperse the rally, detaining Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev and Salavdi Yakhyayev, activists from the Vainakh Democratic Party, and delivering them to the KGB. Around four in the morning on **August 20**, by order of the first secretary of the CPSU Grozny City Committee, law enforcement temporarily bars access to NCChP headquarters. That same evening, law enforcement attempts to expel Dzhokhar Dudayev's followers from the building itself. Encountering the threat of armed resistance from NCChP guards and members, law enforcement and KGB officers retreat.

The National |Guard begins to assemble in the republic. On the second day of the coup, military units from the Grozny garrison are mobilized and further units of the Russian Army begin to enter the republic (the official pretext is "to assist with the harvest"). Following the downfall of the GKChP and the arrest of its members, the various parties and organizations that had protested for Chechen independence demand the resignation of the republic's parliament and the holding of new elections.

August 25, 1991: At an emergency meeting of the Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush Republic (Ch-IR), deputies express their support for **Doku Zavgayev** (this chairman of the Ch-IR Soviet and former party official is in the present day the Russian ambassador to Slovenia).

August 26, 1991: Russian officials arrive in Grozny in order to warn Chechen authorities that coercion of opposition protesters will not be tolerated. According to various sources, Dzhokhar Dudayev is asked to leave the republic and offered an alluring post in Moscow. He refuses it, however.

Towards the early September 1991, followers of the NCChP begin to take control of the situation in Grozny as well as the countryside. The protesters and the armed groups assembled from their numbers seize the radio and television center of the republic's Council of Ministers. At the Third Congress of the Chechen People, the Supreme Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush Republic is declared dissolved. In response, legislators attempt to declare a state of emergency in Grozny. They offer to hold presidential elections on September 29. However, on September 6, the protesters storm the House of Political Education where the deputies had been

interests involved were working to engender a more-or-less cordial atmosphere among themselves. At the same time, however, the above-cited report also pointed out that *"the nascent process of political reconciliation has not yet been resumed due to recent developments in the Chechen-Ingush Republic. At the end of March of this year, forces opposed to Dudayev held protests in Grozny which culminated with the government's use of military force against them, leading to civilian casualties. The Chechen Leader D.M. Dudayev introduced a state of emergency in Grozny, which is still in effect as of the time of writing.*

"The leadership of the RF Supreme Soviet looks forward to continuing the incipient political dialog with the Chechen side, which will normalize the crisis in the region through peaceful means. The leadership intends to seek the preparation and negotiation of authorized delegations and intends to task the delegation of the RF Supreme Soviet to raise and discuss, first of all, the above-mentioned political issues. The leadership hopes that a discussion of these issues will lead to a constructive dialog, provide an opportunity to find mutual interests, bring the positions closer to each other, and help develop compromissory or interim agreements for mutually acceptable solutions."

Despite the restive situation in Grozny, the experts' panels maintained contact, as a result of which authorized official delegations were formed to conduct negotiations. And yet, as strange as it seems to us today, the executive branch of the Chechen Republic did everything it could to hamper the dialog. All the attempts at negotiations and the intrigues surrounding them were much discussed in the press. For example, A. Shikharbiyev, a columnist for the Impuls newspaper, wrote as follows: *"If subsequent exchanges between the Russian and Chechen sides take place without the involvement of the ChR executive branch, we can view the parliament's foreign policy initiative as an attempt to take control of and gain the upper hand in its internal conflict with the president and his government. If Dudayev agrees to negotiate with Rutskoy, the anticipated conflict between the executive and legislative branches will not come to pass, while any success of the negotiations will immediately kill two birds with one stone, helping to resolve the internal and external crises.*

"The end of Russian financial sanctions will help the government pay the wages it owes to its employees but will not solve the larger economic problems. The elimination of the 'external threat' will immediately reveal a stratum of problems and will confront the government with the possible collapse of the republic. So an external breakthrough, as mentioned above, will only temporarily give the President and his Government room to maneuver. However, if parliament is left to pursue this initiative on its own, then the internal crisis will only worsen. The very existence of the regime will then become a subject of scrutiny, since the non-participation of the executive branch in the solution of the Russian-Chechen problem will reflect its inability to maneuver and lead in general. In this case, a new round of internal instability will become inevitable, albeit, pushed back to a later date."

These predictions turned out to be accurate: The executive branch indeed refused to support the parliamentary initiative, and if the Executive took part in the negotiation process, it was only with one purpose — to undermine it — as was confirmed by the events of January 1993. The internal crisis escalated and the confrontation between parliament and the president intensified, culminating finally in the bloodshed of 1993.

The events of 1993 prove that D. Dudayev was not interested in a dialog with the federal government. Back then, again at the initiative of the ChR parliament, the political activist Ramazan Abdulatipov and Russian Minister for Ethnic Affairs Sergei Shakhrai travelled to Grozny in order to draft an agreement on the delimitation of powers between Moscow and Grozny. However, the Chechen president prohibited these officials from reaching the capital. Armed men blockaded the airport and trucks were parked on the runway to prevent the plane from landing. The plane carrying the officials circled in the air, in the crosshairs of President Dudayev's guardsmen and was permitted to land only following the direct intervention of the Speaker of Parliament Kh. Akhmadov, who managed somehow to resolve this delicate and perilous situation. This was a fateful moment. The guests from Moscow managed to meet and hold discussions with Chechen legislators after all. They decided to begin drafting an agreement on the delimitation of powers between the republic and the federal center.

Later, S. Shakhrai would recall these events: *"On November 11, 1992, I traveled to the conflict area. [...] It was clear to everyone at the time that without a resolution of the Chechen crisis, no conflict in the region could be settled. [...] Only peace could stabilize the situation in the Caucasus. This led to the idea of coming to an agreement with the Chechen authorities that would delimit state powers. Ramazan Abdulatipov and I flew to Grozny and on January 14, 1993, signed a protocol providing for the drafting of such an agreement. Unfortunately this political process was called off. Yet the idea itself did not die there. A year later, in 1994, we signed a similar agreement with Tatarstan: After three years of negotiations, the leadership of Tatarstan showed a willingness to compromise as well as to listen to common sense. In the case of Chechnya, this did not happen."*

Speaking at a press conference a few days after the meeting between Chechen legislators, Shakhrai and Abdulatipov had taken place, Yu. Soslambekov said, *"Russia needs negotiations no less than we do. We have already clarified our status and ratified our Constitution. Russia has not done so yet. They still have to go through with this process and clarify their form of government before the next congress. If they don't, the existence of the Russian Federation will be in doubt. The negotiations won't be called off unless our side does so unilaterally."*

R. Yusupov, a reporter from the Gudermes-based newspaper Gums, formulated his question as follows: *"The president's team is still making preparations for war with Russia. Meanwhile, parliament wants peace and accord. There is no Chechen that doesn't find the conflict between the executive and legislative branches unpleasant. Is there, however, any way of influencing the former branch?"*

meeting and force Doku Zavgayev to relinquish his claim to power.

September 4, 1991: A rally is held by NCChP followers. Dudayev declares the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush Republic.

September 6, 1991: The building of the Ch-IR Supreme Soviet is seized by NCChP protesters and bodyguards. Zavgayev submits his resignation.

On the whole, Russian authorities are not opposed to the replacement of the "Communist" parliament of Chechnya-Ingushetia; they simply want this process to take place under some guise of law. With this in mind, a delegation of politicians close to Boris Yeltsin arrive in the republic on **September 11**. Their goal is to convince the deputies to announce their voluntary dissolution, form interim state authorities and schedule new elections. After a preliminary agreement to this effect has been reached, on **September 14**, Ruslan Khasbulatov, the acting chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, arrives from Moscow. The next day, he takes part in the last session of the republic's legislative body, scheduling new elections for November 17.

Before that date, with the opposition's agreement, an Interim Supreme Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush Republic is formed. Its head becomes the deputy chair of the NCChP Executive Committee, Hussein Akhmadov.

September 15, 1991: Ingush deputies in Nazran, proclaim the Ingush Republic, a subject of the Russian Federation.

September 17, 1991: The NCChP announces that presidential and parliamentary elections for the Chechen Republic will be held on October 27.

October 6, 1991: The NCChP announces the dissolution of the Interim Supreme Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush Republic and assigns itself the functions of "the revolutionary committee for the interim period."

On the same day, Russian Vice-President Alexander Rutskoy arrives in Grozny on a "peace-support mission."

However, he is accompanied exclusively by the *siloviki*, Russian hard-liners: the MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) minister and the head of the KGB. Their meetings with NCChP and Interim Supreme Soviet officials come to nothing — the two parties are unable to resolve their differences. Upon the delegation's return to Moscow, the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR adopts a resolution "On the political situation in the Chechen-Ingush Republic." The Interim Supreme Soviet is proclaimed as the only lawful authority and is ordered to "adopt all necessary measures to stabilize" the situation in the republic.

This act causes an irrevocable split between the NCChP Executive Committee and the Russian leadership. The Soviet Army draft is suspended across the republic, while Chechen servicemembers stationed abroad are recalled back to their native land. The ongoing rallies in the center of the capital begin to grow: Tens of thousands of citizens from the various regions begin to arrive in Grozny and sign up for the National Guard.

October 8, 1991: The Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR announces that the only lawful authority in the republic is the Interim Supreme Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush Republic. Dudayev's opponents in Chechnya announce the formation of a popular militia as a counterweight to the NCChP's National Guard.

Kh. Akhmadov offered the following answer: *"Parliament determines foreign and domestic policy. Practice shows that agreements can be signed at one as well as both levels. By resolution of parliament, we have established that if any person engages in actions that result in the threat of resistance, then that person may be held accountable to the people. That is to say that we have the legal basis to indict anyone committing such actions. I again approach the president, the chairman of the Constitutional Court and the chairman of the Supreme Court with a proposal to hold a meeting in order to develop guidelines for the structure of our state."*

Internal conflicts, however, only intensified. The situation escalated and the president and parliamentary deputies — though allies just recently — grew further apart. Talks with Moscow faltered due to the fact that the different power structures in Chechnya just could not work out a common approach; moreover, they did not even want to do this and each sought to impose its position on the others. In his memoir, *The Regime of Dzhokhar Dudayev*, Taimaz Abubakarov writes, *"I think that it is no accident that the Chechen foreign minister never participated in the pre-war negotiations with Russia. Sh. Beno was not allowed to attend, most likely because of his liberal views. After five months in the post, he resigned. His successor, Sh. Yusef, knew nothing about Russia and, more importantly, did not want to know anything. He excelled at concocting small acts of provocation aimed not only against the deepening of the Chechen-Russian dialog, but also against the normalization of inter-Chechen relations. Accordingly, at the height of the Moscow talks in February 1993, he sent a telegram from Grozny to the Russian leadership, in which he disavowed the authority of the Chechen delegation, thus putting both sides in an awkward position."*

It's worth remembering that it was at this Moscow meeting, which followed Shakhrai's and Abulatipov's January visit, that a series of very important documents was to be adopted, paving the way for the building of inter-state relations. That was a key moment in the confrontation between the breakaway republic and the federal center. It was a fork in the road: If you go this way, you'll have peace; if you go that way, you'll have war. If that meeting had turned out differently, the relations between Moscow and Grozny would have played out quite differently as well. One of the journalists covering the negotiations, the famous historian and journalist Abdul Vatsuyev, wrote the following in his report:

"A joint declaration had been drafted. All the documents that the task groups had worked on were drafts. These became the subject of discussion at the final meeting between the two delegations.

"However, a pointed and constructive discussion did not take place. During the discussion, the Russian side proposed a break of fifteen minutes. Upon the resumption of the meeting, the head of the Russian delegation announced that a telegram had arrived from the ChR Minister of Foreign Affairs, claiming that our delegation did not have the authority to conduct negotiations.

"That same evening, Russian radio (and next morning, the Russian press) announced that the negotiations had been interrupted due to the disavowal of the Chechen delegation's authority by the Chechen president. […]

"Negotiations are interrupted but have not been called off. […] Moreover, the delegations have agreed to continue talks in Grozny in the second half of February — itself a sign that both parties wish to establish normal relations.

"There is no alternative to the talks. The democratic factions of both Russia and Chechnya are in agreement about this principle. They both realize that the continuation of these negotiations — the movement towards each other through mutually acceptable and mutually beneficial compromises — is the only means of preventing possible coordinated actions by Russian and Chechen reactionary forces."

ChR Minister of Economy and Finance Taimaz Abubakarov, whose ministry felt the intergovernmental, interstate and internal conflicts of that time particularly vividly, recalls the following: *"Because the government's social and economic policies depended on the effectiveness of its foreign policy, the effectiveness of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs would have to come under scrutiny sooner or later. And that is precisely what happened. In December 1993, the government began to consider which issues were to be raised at the next round of talks with the Russian leadership. The participation of foreign ministry officials here would have been self-evident, but for some reason, Sh. Yusef adopted an odd position, trying even at this early stage, to diminish the value of future negotiations. I finally ran out of patience with this conduct, and having first ensured our positions were in agreement, M. Mugadayev and I confronted the president with the unsatisfactory work that the foreign ministry was doing on this issue. The president immediately and quite sharply rejected our views on the problem, stating that the work of this agency had a special character and was therefore not subject to standard evaluations. Then, we decided to broaden our approach somewhat and asked the foreign minister to report his concept of ChR foreign policy to the government — if there even was one to report. Dudayev and Sh. Yusef began to argue that there was indeed such a concept, but that it could not be publicly divulged due to its secret nature."*

All these intrigues, these vicissitudes of the negotiations process, did not remain beyond the public eye. For instance, writing in an op-ed, Mustafa Edilbiyev and Lom-Ali Gamaloyev, heads of the socio-political movement *Gulam*, expressed the following view on Dudayev's policy: "The abandonment of a constructive dialog with Russia by the new ChR government can only be viewed as a shortsighted and hopeless policy. Guided by commercial interests, the current holders of power in the ChR are sacrificing the interests of the Chechen people in exchange for political expediency. Thus, instead of seeking a principled dialog with the Russian side in order to effect a preliminary agreement, President Dudayev and his entourage have taken the disastrous path of confrontation — both in the foreign and domestic arenas."

T. Abubakarov continues: *"Such were the conditions as we began our preparations for the first Russo-Chechen intergovernmental talks, as initiated by our side. […] Dudayev included M. Mugadayev (as head), V. Dakalov and myself in the delegation.*

October 18, 1991: Soviet Army forces begin concentrating in the neighboring republics of Dagestan and North Ossetia. General Dudayev warns the populace of the possibility of an armed invasion.

October 19, 1991: Yeltsin demands that Dudayev submit to the resolution passed by the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR within three days. In the event of refusal, "measures will be implemented, as provided for by law, to normalize the situation and strengthen compliance with Constitutional order."

The Russian Prosecutor General issues warrants for the arrest of the NCChP leadership.

October 27, 1991: Presidential and parliamentary elections are held for the Chechen Republic.

According to data from the Ch-IR Central Election Commission, voter turnout is 72%. Dzhokhar Dudayev is elected president with 90.1% of the vote.

November 1, 1991: President Dudayev issues his first Presidential Decree, "On the announcement of the sovereignty of the Chechen Republic."

On **November 2**, the new Chechen parliament ratifies the decree.

On **November 3**, in Moscow, at the 5th Congress of the People's Deputies of the RSFSR, the Chechen elections are declared illegal and in contravention of the country's Constitution.

November 7, 1991: In his turn, Yeltsin issues Presidential Decree No. 178, declaring a state of emergency in the Chechen-Ingush Republic. In response to this, even those leaders and members of parties and organizations that had previously been opposed to Dzhokhar Dudayev announce their support for him. An unprecedented consolidation of the populace takes place.

A *Spetsnaz* (Special Forces) team from the Dzerzhinsky Division is airlifted to the Chechen capital during the night of November 7, in order to enforce the RF presidential decree. The team is however blockaded at the airport in Khankala by Chechen separatists. Meanwhile, local police forces still loyal to Moscow are also neutralized. The protesters surround the MVD building where the minister Vakha Ibragimov has taken shelter along with two Russian generals.

November 9, 1991: The inauguration ceremony of Dzhokhar Dudayev takes place.

Before an immense assembly of people from all regions of the republic (an attendance of at least 100,000), the first elected president of the independent Chechen Republic is sworn into office. The Interim Supreme Soviet and its subordinate authorities — including military ones — have disintegrated.

November 21, 1991: President Dudayev revokes martial law. After several days, he prohibits the export of weapons located on military bases in the republic.

November 27, 1991: Dudayev issues a decree nationalizing weapons and military hardware located in the republic.

November 30, 1991: A referendum is held in the Malgobeksky, Nazranovsky and Sunzhensky Districts. These three districts of the former Chechen-Ingush Republic have high Ingush populations. The majority of the population votes for the formation of the "Ingush Republic as a constituent of the RSFSR with the return of the Prigorodny District to Ingushetia and with the relo-

"The negotiations, which lasted altogether two and a half hours, took place in Moscow in mid-January 1994, directly between M. Mugadayev and Viktor Chernomyrdin. They came to agreements on basically every issue raised. The primary outcome of the meeting was an agreement to arrange high-level talks between Dudayev and Yeltsin. Given the official position of the Russian leadership about the illegitimacy of the powers of the Chechen president, this was direct evidence of the utter success of Mugadayev's mission. Not everyone felt that way, however.

"Upon returning home, we instantly sensed that Dudayev viewed the consensus we had achieved with suspicion. He was less interested in the substance of the talks than in the formalities surrounding them: where did you live, whom did you speak to, etc.

"Despite the successful conclusion of negotiations between Mugadayev and Chernomyrdin, the talks were not destined to become a watershed turning point in Chechen-Russian relations — the attendant knot of conflicts proved too complicated and tight. Initially, it seemed as if everything was going as well as it could. As a result of the Moscow meeting, State Secretary A. Akbulatov was recruited into the Russian presidential administration to help prepare the president for talks with Dudayev. Meanwhile, the media, famous for its proximity to the Kremlin, began to speak in unison about the upcoming summit. However, in March–April 1994, these same voices fell silent almost as if by command.

"When the issue of the summit moved to a practical level, the tone of Dudayev's political statements changed markedly. He suddenly began to claim that, in view of the anti-Chechen sentiment promoted in Russia after October 1993, as well as the Russians' persecution of Chechens, the various public and religious organizations of Chechnya strongly urged him to postpone the meeting with Boris Yeltsin until a better time. The fact that such assertions were not fortuitous was evidenced during the international conference Ethnocide: Theory and Practice, which was held in Grozny in April 1994. In his speech at the conference, Dudayev surprised many by making some undiplomatic remarks about Russia and its president, which could not have gone unnoticed by the Kremlin and which hampered bilateral relations. An indirect confirmation of this was provided by the President of Tatarstan Mintimer Shaimiyev, who in his interview about the problems in Chechnya has repeatedly said that Yeltsin's position in relation to the Chechen Republic and its president finally changed for the worse during spring of 1994 — as a direct consequence of Dudayev's speeches."

Of course, the Chechen president's statements at an international scientific-practical conference could not have passed without consequence, uttered as they were at a time when negotiations had come in sight of the finish line: an agreement about a meeting between the two Executives. The following are excerpts from Dudayev's speech:

"The tragedy of the ethnicities is that the Russian people are chronically ill and — overshadowing all misanthropic concepts like fascism, racism, Nazism — have given birth to the 20th century plague of 'Russism.' [...]

"What has changed in Russia over the last hundred years? The only thing that's changed is that ethnocide has been perfected, becoming bloodier, while fascism has grown to become 'Russism.' [...]

"And who pretends now to the role of democratic architect of ethnicities, including among them the Chechen? Blasphemously and ironically, none other than the Russian werewolf and its leadership, a country where slavery officially persisted until the middle of the 19th century. [...] The serf mentality has transformed into the fascist mentality, and this fascism is alive and well in Russia today. [...]

"Brutality raised to the level of state policy is above all a tragedy of a people and of the state which nourishes it. [...] Dozens of regions and peoples are next in line. We can expect further victims of the insatiable, imperial hydra, whose various heads — be it tsarism, Bolshevism, socialism, Communism, or democratism, etc. — all spew the same poison, the same flames of everyday 'Russism'"

On top of this, there Dudayev made statements such as these, voiced in various publications and from different podia:

"We are currently considering the option of not recognizing the legality of the Russian government as one that has come to power illegally. And our parliament does not need to hold talks with 'partners' like that."
(Ichkeria, June 1992)

"If there is anyone who does not want to fight Russia, it is I. I never killed a chicken and I will never kill one in my life, and I value peace in the land of my ancestors more than I value my own life. But they can force us to go to war. In that case, it makes sense to fight! And not only fight but go to the very end, even knowing that we will lose half our people. Russia has got a good thing going and the Russians, seemingly in their majority, support their leadership" **(Ichkeria, April 1993)**.

Such statements were not simply undiplomatic — they were harmful, untimely and inappropriate at a time when a summit between the two presidents had already been arranged and agreed. This position, I think, caused a backlash from Yeltsin, who began to view what was happening in Chechnya more rigidly. His dissatisfaction and doubts were fueled by the "hawks," which included not only the military hardliners but also the "guild of young capitalists," that had closely surrounded the Russian president. Meanwhile, the views of the more discriminating Russian politicians tended to unnerve the members of the anti-Dudayev opposition as they passed from one high office to the next, all the while insisting that Dudayev could only be dealt with by force. Writes Taimaz Abubakarov, "Dudayev and the opposition share the common ground of seeking to prevent a high-placed summit." And so it happened in reality. Implacably, the war drew nearer. And when Dudayev finally offered to enter into negotiations, it was too late — the flywheel of the war had been spun and accelerated to such an inertia that it was impossible to stop.

In The Regime *of Dzhokhar Dudayev*, Taimaz Abubakorov writes, "All the preceding negotiations were used not so much as a way to seek compromise as to gain time for the preparation of military operations."

cation of the Ingush capital to the eastern-bankside of Vladikavkaz."

In early December, Pavel Grachev, the RSFSR deputy minister of defense, arrives in Grozny to hold talks about militant groups in Chechnya. The talks go on until February 1992. Grachev agrees to cede a portion of the weapons, including heavy weaponry, in return for the granting of free passage of Russian Army units located in Chechnya.

March 12, 1992: The Chechen parliament ratifies the Constitution, under which the Chechen Republic is proclaimed "a sovereign and legal democratic state created through the exercise of self-determination by the Chechen people." By this time, however, tensions begin to emerge between the government and the larger portion of the legislature, regarding the role of parliament during the formation of the cabinet of ministers. In addition to this, there are further disagreements about how to implement market reforms and normalize relations with Russia.

March 12–14, 1992: The first serious talks between Russian and Chechen officials are held in Dagomys. The result is a signed protocol suggesting that the Russians will examine the question of recognizing Chechen sovereignty.

March 31, 1992: On the day that the republics are due to sign the federation treaty with the Russian government, a coup d'etat is attempted in Grozny by a hitherto unknown armed group calling itself the Coordination Committee for the Restoration of Constitutional Order in Checheno-Ingushetia. The group occupies the radio station and television station buildings, killing two security guards during the capture of the latter. The rebels' anonymous leaders (according to some sources, one of them was Ilyas Deniyev, son of the well-known religious figure, Sheikh Deni Arsanov of the Naqshbandi tariqat) demand the immediate resignation of the Chechen president. In the second half of the day, a detachment of the Chechen National Guard liberates the radio station, while unarmed negotiators — members of the clergy and elders — approach the television station building.

The individuals who had captured the television station open fire on the crowd and kill the first elder. Government forces return fire. Having lost several people (6 or 7) and dropped their weapons, the rebels cross the Sunzha River, flee the city and go into hiding in the Nadterechny District — the only administrative region of Chechnya that still refuses to obey President Dzhokhar Dudayev. Anticipating the day's events, Russian mass media has been reporting an opposition coup since morning and suggesting that Doku Zavgayev is expected to sign the federation treaty on behalf of Chechnya. That same day, as a response to the coup attempt, which is seemingly backed by Moscow, the Chechen parliament decrees the transfer of all military bases and Russian military units, including all equipment and arms, to the republican authorities. This measure is intended to prevent the military from assisting the opposition or supporting it by transferring weapons to it — something that was already underway.

January–March, 1992: According to Akhmed Kelimatov, one of the leaders of anti-government armed groups operating in the Nadterechny District, Umar Avturkhanov and "his associate Abdulla Bugayev" received shipments from Mozdok containing "over 2,500 assault rifles for the arming of detachments that are to depose" the Chechen authorities.

promise as a way to demonstrate the sides' intransigence. As a result, the interludes between the talks were frequently filled with actions that followed destructive policies — and which at long last led to war. Of course, the causes of the war lie much deeper, but it still bears pointing out that the Dudayev administration's lack of a fleshed-out foreign policy that addressed fundamental Chechen national security concerns, also played a role here. [...] Dudayev's foreign policy remained a mystery even to his own government. The republican ministry of foreign affairs was beholden to the president and no one else; it did not report anything about its work to the government. And to tell the truth, there was nothing to report. After all, if we were to judge the ministry's performance on the international community's recognition of Chechen sovereignty, or else, the assurance of republican security by any and all available means — then the solution to both of these vital tasks was a successful failure. [...]

"With regard to the foreign ministry's activities beyond Chechen-Russian relations, here too ministry policy came largely down to bellicose rhetoric — in contravention to the ChR Constitution, which proclaimed its primary foreign policy as founded on the desire for peace and cooperation with all countries, including Russia. When on the brink of war Dudayev claimed that one million Muslim Mujahedeen were ready to offer military support to Chechnya, he was doing so on information provided by this very ministry. To the question of what we would do with all the Mujahedeen after the war, the president promised to provide an answer after the war."

The last attempt to come to an agreement was made in December 1994, several days before federal troops entered the republic. The initiative came from the Russian ethnic affairs ministry. It led to the formation of a government working group headed by the Deputy Minister Vyacheslav Mikhailov, an experienced diplomat and savvy politician. Today, in hindsight, it seems improbable that Dudayev accepted Moscow's proposal: On December 1994, he signed an order to create the relevant government commission. Strangely enough, he appointed Taimaz Abubakarov, the minister of economy and finance, as the head of this body instead of his foreign minister. This choice was likely dictated by the personal qualities Abubakarov. Intelligent, well-educated and able to hold a dialog at any level, he was preferable to Sh. Yusef in every way.

The meeting was scheduled to be held in Vladikavkaz on December 12. Abubakarov later recalled how on that day the Chechen delegation was forced to wait at the Ingushetia-Ossetia border: A huge column of Russian troops was moving in the opposite direction. Vyacheslav Mikhailov, the deputy minister for ethnic affairs, was notified of the troops' movement in Moscow as he was about to fly to Vladikavkaz. Performing their duty to the responsibility placed on them, the politicians managed to meet despite these obstacles. It was however too late to change anything.

April, 1992: The Russian government enacts limited economic and financial sanctions against the Chechen Republic.

Automotive, air and railway communications are blocked. Limits are set on the transfer of funds to private persons, companies and organizations.

The Chechen leadership, however, maintains its position — Chechnya's political independence in return for the republic's economic, financial, transportational and military integration in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

This then becomes the subject of talks held in Moscow on **May 25–28**. Initially, Russian officials try to renege on the promises they had made in March and insist that the talks start from "a blank slate." They also try to insert the determination of the Chechnya-Ingushetia border into the agenda. But the Chechen side manages to bring the conversation back to the central dispute, extracting an endorsement of the Dagomys protocol as well as an agreement to continue the negotiation process in the future.

May 26, 1992: The two governments sign an agreement about the withdrawal of all troops deployed on Chechen territory. Two days later, Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev orders that half of all arms and munitions located on republican territory, including heavy weaponry, be transferred to the Chechen government.

June 4, 1992: The Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation adopts a law providing for the autonomy of the Ingush people within the federation. The document makes no mention of the Chechen Republic.

June 6, 1992: President Dzhokhar Dudayev emphatically demands that all Russian units leave the Chechen Republic within three days. This is in direct response to Pavel Grachev's announcement, published in the mass media, that the Russians are ready to send further units into the republic in order to protect the soldiers and their families still remaining within its borders. There was, however, no reason to worry about their welfare: There had been no recorded instance of the murder, wounding or even assault committed against this group of people.

June 8, 1992: Russian forces leave Chechen territory.

June–July 1992: Fifteen deputies from the Chechen parliament form the "Bako" ("Right") group. They want Dzhokhar Dudayev to be stripped of his executive powers and the cabinet of ministers to be reformed in a manner that makes it accountable to legislators.

September 6, 1992: A special MVD detachment accompanied by several dozen BTR armored personnel carriers sets out from Khasavyurt (Dagestan) towards the Chechen border. The Chechen National Guard is set on combat alert and takes up defensive positions. Conflict is avoided, however, through the involvement of local residents. Avars, Kumyks and Chechens block the road and capture the Russian officers, promising to release them only after the Special Forces return to their military base.

After they are transferred to Dagestan, Moscow attempts to explain its actions by claiming that armed forces were necessary in the area to prevent possible "bread riots."

In September of that year, a number of organizations and movements that opposed the NCChP at the height of the crisis in the autumn of 1991, unite into the Democratic Forces Bloc.

Vladimir VORONOV

THE FIRST CHEHEN WAR, OR TWENTY YEARS AFTER

It is difficult to identify the precise starting point of this war. The general consensus is that the war began on December 11, 1994, when columns of Russian troops first entered Chechnya. There are others too who consider the war's beginning to be November 24, 1994, the day when "opposition" units attempted to seize Grozny. Another possible starting point is October 15, 1994. Around 3 p.m. on this day, first, several "unidentified flying objects" took off from a Russian airbase and conducted airstrikes against a series of targets in Grozny, and a little later, a column of armored vehicles and trucks with machine guns entered the capital from the direction of Staraya Sunzha. This was a composite force of the anti-Dudayev "opposition" headed by Umar Avturkhanov, "the boss" of Chechnya's Nadterechny District, and it was soon followed by units led by Beslan Gantamirov and Ruslan Labazanov. City residents gaped at the military convoy with astonishment. The machine-gunners dismounted and introduced themselves as "militiamen." They were utterly unfamiliar with the city and kept asking startled bystanders for directions.

Later on, erratic machinegun fire broke out, punctuated by exploding grenades, and soon enough a tank was burning, an armored personnel carrier (APC) was exploding. Subsequent accounts claimed that the militia had reached Dudayev's presidential palace — the old Soviet Regional Committee building (or, as it was known back then in Chechnya, the Republican Committee) — but managed to accomplish nothing at all. When it grew dark, the erratic fire ceased and by 3 a.m., "opposition" units began to leave Grozny. This clumsy assault led to seven killed, a burned tank and several disabled APCs.

The consequences of this incident turned out to be far-reaching, yet at the time, it received little to no public attention: Outside of Chechnya, hardly anyone even knew of it. But it was precisely this failure of the "opposition" in Grozny on October 15 that became one of the tripwires that triggered the November "armored" assault on Grozny and the ensuing war thereafter. However, I would stress again that I remember no reports on the TV nor the radio about these events in the Russian media. This is not so surprising, since no Russian channels had any offices in Chechnya at the time, due in part to the fact that the Chechen leadership had banned Russian journalists from the republic in September 1994. I was then working as a correspondent for Stolitsa magazine. In early September 1994, I

had gone to Grozny and had been deported from there one could say, personally, by Movladi Udugov, the minister of information and print of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI). Unwilling to rely on memory, I went to the library to see what the press was writing in those days: Aside from brief mention of yet another Chechen clash, deserving no particular attention, there is basically nothing about the October 15 assault. This is perhaps not so surprising because October 15, 1994, fell on a Saturday and the weekend issues of the dailies had already been composited on Friday, while the proofs of the weeklies that came out on Monday, had already been sent to the presses. In other words, the editorial staffs of all Moscow periodicals had that weekend off. Of course the news agencies were still working, but they too provided basically no information, which is not surprising since there's little demand for it on a Sunday. And by Monday (October 17, 1994), an entirely unrelated incident seized the news cycle: A bomb secreted in a briefcase exploded in the editorial offices of the *Moskovsky Komsomolets* newspaper, killing correspondent Dmitry Kholodov. For the next couple weeks, the major news outlets focused on this story, which was followed by the massive political crisis in Russia. No one had time for Grozny and, as it seemed at the time, the never ending Chechen inter-clan power struggle. It turns out that the attack on the Moscow newspaper, regardless of its goals, served as an ideal way to divert attention from the failure of the Russian-backed operation in Chechnya: Right up until early December 1994, in one way or another "the Kholodov case" lingered on the television screens and pages of all Russian news outlets. In this manner, it served to shroud and conceal not only the failure of October 15, but all the preparations already under way for the next operation.

This was why the subsequent events in the republic seemed so unexpected and

shocking. On the morning of November 26, 1994 (another Saturday!), the militiamen returned to Grozny, but this time with tanks, much larger forces and from several different directions: There were at least 36 T-72 tanks (other sources claim there were more than 40), several dozen APCs, machine-gunners on 46 GAZ-66 trucks and almost 3,000 militiamen following on foot. This time the fighting in the city was much fiercer than on October 15, though the result was much the same: The "opposition" had been expected and was handed a crushing defeat. The number of casualties that the "opposition" suffered in Grozny's streets remains unknown to this day. At the time, ChRI officials claimed 500 dead and 200 taken prisoner, but these figures are clearly exaggerated. On the other hand, the claim that basically all the armored vehicles were either destroyed or captured is closer to the truth: According to some sources, the "opposition" managed to save 18 tanks, while according to others, they managed to save only four.

This time around the fighting in Grozny was televised and reported by Russian news sources: The revelation that most of the tanks' crews were Russian servicemembers was sensational. Russian POWs were paraded before the cameras. We know for certain that 21 Russian servicemembers were taken prisoner: seven soldiers and sergeants from the conscripted forces, one senior warrant officer, seven lieutenants and senior lieutenants, five captains and one major. We also know that at least six Russian tankers died in the fighting. Afterward, 20 POWs were returned, and one — Lieutenant Aleksandr Naletov — was shot by the Department of State Security (DGB). A little later another sensational item was uncovered: the planning and coordination of the "armored assault" was done by the secret services instead of the military. It was agents from the Federal Counter-terrorism Service (FSK — the KGB's successor agency) that had recruited servicemembers for the operation, doing so from among 2nd Guards Tamanskaya Motor Rifle Division, the 4th Guards Kantemirovskaya Tank Division, the 18th Independent Motor Rifle Brigade and the *Vystrel* Senior Officer Training Program. In total, 82 servicemembers had been recruited. Of their number, 78 went into combat on November 26, 1994: Twenty-four of the tank crews (i.e. 72 tankers) were completely Russian, while another six Russian tankers were allocated among mixed Russian-Chechen crews. The remaining four were fortunate — they were kept among the reserves.

Once the fact that Russian servicemembers had been taken prisoner came to light, defense ministry and FSK officials hurried to claim that these were not servicemembers but mercenaries for

whom neither the MOD nor Lubyanka [a metonym for the KGB/FSK/FSB — *Translator's note*] considered itself responsible. After a short silence, Minister of Defense Pavel Grachev also spoke up, claiming with feigned astonishment that he had no idea who took part in the Grozny assault: mercenaries of some sort, not our people. After which, he launched into a protracted polemic against the operation itself: "Only uneducated commanders would lead an armored column into a city. Such a thing should not happen. First you send the infantry, then the tanks. A tank can't see anything. A tank is good in a field. In a city, it's completely blind. [...] No wonder this was the outcome." And in general, "if it really was up to the Russian army, then a single airborne regiment would be enough to take care of the situation in about two hours."

Talks between Russian and Chechen officials are still ongoing.

September 22, 1992: During a meeting in Moscow between Russian Vice-President Alexander Rutskoy, Deputy Chairman of the Chechen parliament Yusup Soslambekov and State Secretary Aslambek Akbulatov, the parties agree to open embassies in Moscow and Grozny, as well as to lift financial, economic and transportation sanctions against the republic. Another meeting in Chishki (Chechnya) on September 25, culminates with the approval of protocols adopted during the March and May rounds of talks.

This meeting is conducted by Yuri Yarov and Bek Mezhidov, deputy chairmen of the Russian and Chechen parliaments.

Late October 1992: The heated dispute over the Prigorodsky District, which had been transferred to North Ossetia during the deportations under Stalin, erupts in armed hostilities. The first ethnic conflict on Russian territory does not last long: The federal government steps in on the side of Ossetia and assists in the brutal eviction and deportation of tens of thousands of Ingushes from their homes. On **November 10, 1992**, federal troops and armor, which had been deployed to the region to enforce the state of emergency and prevent outbreaks in violence, instead move in the direction of Chechnya, entering the republic's territories at several locations and penetrating up to 12 km. Chechen armor and artillery is sent to meet them, while National Guard units take up defensive positions in hastily-dug trenches. Armed volunteers begin to stream to their aid from all over the republic. With renewed popular support, Dzhokhar Dudayev demands that the Russian units withdraw before the morning of **November 11**.

Acting Russian Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar and his Chechen counterpart, Yaragi Mamodayev, play an important role in resolving the conflict. With the support of the future Ingush president, Ruslan Aushev, they hold talks over the phone and manage to agree to a withdrawal of troops before the ultimatum's deadline. From here on out, the Russian side in the talks will be represented by Sergei Shakhrai, the Russian minister for ethnic affairs, and General Aleksandr Kotenkov. Yaragi Mamodayev meets both men and manages to receive confirmation of the agreed upon terms. The final agreement to a peaceful resolution of the situation is signed on **November 15**.

Upon their return to Grozny, the acting prime minister of the republic and those in his entourage are shot at and then taken hostage by Russian marines. This, it turns out, is the response to Dzhokhar Dudayev's actions: During a survey of his units, the president encountered a Russian military outpost that had been positioned within Chechen territory. Deciding this a violation of the terms, he ordered his guards to disarm and arrest everyone in the outpost. Yaragi Mamodayev and his companions are released in exchange for the Russian soldiers. Right after this Mamodayev makes his way to the republic's television station and goes on air with criticism of the president, accusing him, among other things, of trying to unleash a war. Responding the next day, Dzhokhar Dudayev announces that he never gave anyone the authority to conduct negotiations. Russian representative Sergei Shakhrai demands confirmation of the authority of the signatories to the agreement about the the troops' dissolution. On the evening of **November 17**, having allowed himself to be "convinced" by influential politicians, the Chechen president agrees to recognize the document.

I was in Grozny at the time and saw firsthand the prisoners and the wrecked, burned tanks strewn about the city's streets. Meanwhile, the city was already undergoing a full-scale bombing campaign by General Deynekin's "UFOs." I had the opportunity to speak with Senior Warrant Officer Nikolai Potekhin and conscript Aleksey Chikin. The warrant officer's face had been severely burned, his hands bandaged — they had been burned as well — the look on his face was so stunned that it was clear that the tanker was still in shock. "Grachev said that we're mercenaries, you say? That we never served in the army? Bastard! We were just following orders!" Nikolai Potekhin, a T-72 driver-engineer from the 4th Guards Kantemirovskaya Tank Division tried to cover the tears on his singed face with his bandaged hands. He had been betrayed not solely by his defense minister: When the tank had been hit, he had been wounded and left to burn alive by the vehicle's own commander. The warrant officer had been pulled out of the burning tank by the same Chechens who took him prisoner. Formally speaking, the soldier had been recruited to this escapade by secret service agents. In early November, he had been ordered to report to the special section of his unit. "Want to make some money?" he was asked. The job sounded simple: He was to be flown to Mozdok where he would help "our" Chechens move some tanks. If he agreed, he'd receive a million rubles on the spot — about $300 at the time. There'd be another three million after the operation. Along with the other "volunteers," the warrant officer was airlifted from Chkalovsky to Mozdok where the tank crews were issued forty T-72s, which they began to prepare for a transport to Znamenskoye. Later, "we were told that it was necessary to defend the Russian populace. [...] On the morning of November 26, we received the order to move against Grozny." In doing so, there were no specific orders about the operation: The men were told to enter the city, at which point the pro-Dudayev forces were supposed to take flight. Infantry support was supposed to be provided by Ruslan Labazanov's unit. As it soon turned out, Labazanov's militia did not actually know how to handle their equipment and, upon entering the city, quickly dispersed to pillage the stores and kiosks in their vicinity. And then the RPG fire broke out from all sides. (Nikolai Potekhin and Aleksey Chikin were released to the Russian side along with other POWs on December 9, 1994.)

The point of no return

According to the (to this day) official version of events, everything started when the "opposition" tanks entered Grozny and the illegal armed formations began shooting at them. As for the origins of the "opposition," well, it simply popped up on its own, like a genie from a magic lamp, in the summer of 1994. To be fair, it's worth pointing out that the anti-Dudayev "opposition" existed much earlier. There were earlier hostilities as well, including decapitations and the display of heads in public squares. But all of that had too little to do with ideological or political conflicts and seemed more like criminal or clan disputes over spheres of influence. And yet, the "opposition," which had so unexpectedly (and just in time) appeared in July–August 1994 was quite special: it wasn't merely well-armed, it was very well armed and riding in on tanks. It even enjoyed close air support from Mi-24 gunships that had been delivered to it. These UFOs were later complemented with Su-25 tactical bombers, and beginning on September 30, 1994, this modest air force launched a bombing campaign against Chechen targets.

These kinds of things don't even happen in the movies: nothing appears out of nowhere. Before you can mount the "opposition" on tanks and give them gunships for close air support, you have to first find them, equip them, teach them, feed them and give them a place to sleep. Otherwise, there's no way to rally the troops at dawn with the order, "Company assemble!" Or, if a more romantic version is preferable, with the words, "Get up, guys! Great deeds await you..." One way or another, the tanks and gunships are just an endgame in which everything's already cut and dry. It's the preceding events that are interesting. What was the search mechanism for the "opposition" itself? Who, where, how and under what criteria found, prepared, equipped and armed the "opposition?"

Many believe that the point of no return was October 1994, when Pavel Grachev, the Russian defense minister, acting under Yeltsin's orders, ordered the Main Operations Directorate (GOU) of the Russian General Staff to create an Operations Group for Chechnya. The group was tasked with, among other things, developing case studies that included the introduction of troops and the outbreak of armed hostilities. The group was headed by deputy head of the GOU, Major General Anatoly Kvashnin and Major General Loentiy Shevtsov. However, this was already basically the final stage at which technical details are merely being polished. In which case, we should first ask, when (and how!) was the actual political decision taken?

In his memoir, *Presidential Marathon*, Boris Yeltsin suggested that the summer of 1994 marked this line, without however indicating a precise date: "In the summer of 1994, we began to look closely at the Chechen problem. Back then, the following theory was popular among the higher-echelons of power: Dudayev's grasp on power in Chechnya is very tentative. [...] The populace is sick half-to-death of Dudayev's promises. Everyone wants at least some kind of stability. The time has come for Russia to get involved — with the assistance of the anti-Dudayev forces in the republic. [...] Let's create here in Moscow (where many high-profile Chechen fighters reside) some kind of new body that will lead this movement. There are plenty of fitting candidates — Avturkhanov, Gadzhiyev, Zavgayev." According to Yeltsin's version of events, "the plan's stages were as follows: Gradually introduce anti-Dudayev attitudes and forces to Chechnya. Provide monetary assistance and, if needed, specialists. Ensure that the people expel Dudayev on their own. And if an armed struggle breaks out, intercede to prevent any bloodshed. Peace initiatives always enjoy popular support. [...] And I was in agreement with this plan."

Army general Anatoly Kulikov, the then commander-in-chief of the Ministry of

The November crisis had two important consequences. Firstly, the Russian leadership adopted a stance that ignored Dzhokhar Dudayev as a political figure, while cultivating the favor of parties opposed to him. The principal decision to do so seems to have been adopted at a session of the RF Security Council in December 1992. Secondly, a further split took place in the Chechen pro-independence camp. The dispute between the president and parliament also took on an outward guise: A significant number of deputies began to express the willingness to compromise on the issue of republican sovereignty.

December 1992: Sergei Shakhrai for the Russian side and Yaragi Mamodayev with Yusup Soslambekov for the Chechen side start working on a draft agreement that will distribute the various powers among Russian as well as Chechen agencies. Despite the negative reaction to this by Dzhokhar Dudayev, who calls the measure a "private initiative" by unauthorized politicians, by **January 14, 1993**, talks are still ongoing. A Russian delegation arrives in Grozny and at a meeting with parliament leaders agrees to create a working group that will prepare an "Agreement for the distribution and reciprocal delegation of powers."

January 18, 1993: Dzhokhar Dudayev announces his support for holding Russian-Chechen talks, but points out that he does not agree with "a number of terms provided for by the protocol that was signed by the Russian delegation and leaders of the Chechen parliament." In his view, the protocol violates Chechen sovereignty and decreases the level of agreement with Russia in comparison to documents signed in mid-March and at the end of May 1992. The president of the republic disavows the protocol and sends his own delegation to Moscow. It is headed by one of Dudayev's closest associates, parliamentary deputy Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev.

The Russian leadership however does not give these negotiations their due attention. The Chechen delegation, which consists of key ministers, is met by a junior official from the Committee for Ethnic Affairs. After two days of work, he suddenly announces that he must consult with Ruslan Khasbulatov, the chairman of the Supreme Soviet. On his return, he announces that talks cannot continue due to the Chechen side's refusal to draft an agreement about the distribution of powers.

In the subsequent few months, there is already no time for negotiations. Aside from declarations of intent, neither side makes serious attempts to come to an agreement, since both Russia and Chechnya become embroiled in a conflict between the executive and legislative branches of power, which in both cases leads to bloodshed.

By 1993 the disagreements between the executive branch and the Chechen parliament, which had been greatly exacerbated following the military crisis on the Ingush border, lead members of the parliamentary opposition to begin looking for a path toward unification. The beginning of February sees the creation of the Council of National and Civil Accord. However, by the end of the same month, Daymokhk, Civil Accord and a series of other pro-Russian organizations leave the Council.

At the same time, in the beginning of 1993, State Secretary Aslambek Akbulatov is tasked with drafting constitutional amendments that strengthen the powers of the Executive. The pretext for such direct measures is an opposition rally held in the capital's Theater Square on **April 15, 1993**. Activists call for the president's resignation and the holding of new parliamentary elections.

Internal Affairs' (MVD's) Internal Troops, mentions a curious meeting about the Chechen problem that took place in Zhukovka (near Moscow) at the summer home of "a senior administration official." This meeting was attended not only by the siloviki (Russian hard-liners), but also several heads of the republics in the North Caucasus (though Ruslan Aushev, the president of Ingushetia, was not invited!). Naturally, this would not have been a serious planning session, rather something like an opinion poll of North Caucasian princes — as well as a careful, if entirely transparent, message to them: We are going to war soon. Kulikov is diplomatic in his description of the situation: "Of course, if there is no other way, then we'll have to adopt decisive measures." The best evidence of this was the presence of the MVD's commander-in-chief at the meeting, which took place strictly off the record. It's too bad that General Kulikov failed to clarify two important points: When exactly the meeting took place and who exactly took part in it. Though, to be fair, it's not difficult to date it: The MVD commander was urgently called to the meeting a day after the terrorist attack in Mineralnye Vody. (On July 29, 1994, three armed Chechens captured a bus, taking the passengers hostage, and demanded a ransom of 15 million dollars and safe passage on a helicopter to Chechnya. In the ensuing assault on the provided helicopter, one terrorist and three hostages were killed, two terrorists were arrested, and fifteen hostages were wounded.) At the same time, on July 30, 1994, FSK Director Sergei Stepashin was recalled to Moscow from Mineralnye Vody. According to Stepashin's biographer, General Aleksandr Mikhailov, on this day, the FSK director met with Sergei Shakhrai, then vice premier, and Sergei Filatov, the president's chief of staff. At this meeting, the Lubyanka boss learned of "Yeltsin's concern about the unfolding situation in Chechnya." Consequently, we can date the Zhukovka meeting as having taken place on July 30 or 31, 1994.

Immediately following it, Stepashin recalled Avturkhanov, who flew to Moscow on August 1 in the company of Colonel Khromchenkov, an FSK department chief. By the way, Kulikov writes that "Avturkhanov's name was first mentioned at the July meeting in Zhukovka, in regard to an emergency message saying that 'Avturkhanov is asking for help in Znamenskoye!' Or something like that."

No one, however, explains exactly whose summer home the meeting was held at, but then again, that's not so important: Sergei Filatov chaired the meeting. It was precisely around this time that he launched a full-blown campaign on the Chechen issue and — it's worth noting — did so before the aforementioned July 29 terror attack. On July 24, he met with Avturkhanov. On July 25, he met with FSK Deputy Director (and FSK Moscow Director) Yevgeniy Savostyanov, who had just returned from his blitz-tour of Chechnya. On July 26, Filatov arranged a meeting between Savostyanov and Yeltsin. On July 30, joined by Shakhrai, Filatov apprised Stepashin of the president's decision on Chechnya and afterwards held a meeting with all the key figures of the North Caucasus. In his memoirs, the former chief of staff directs investigators to that abstract summer of 1994 when, according to his version of events, he was compelled by Yeltsin and Savostyanov to initiate contacts with Dudayev's opponents. Though, tellingly, he points out that "the anti-Dudayev opposition was activated at the end of 1993." One way or another, the MVD commander-in-chief understood that although "of course the meeting in Zhukovka did not result in any specific decision, it nevertheless served as an unambiguous signal that by late July, early August 1994, the Russian political leadership was inclined to the view that constitutional order in Chechnya needed to be restored. And in doing so, it did not exclude the option of using the Armed Forces."

According to the State Duma's Investigatory Commission for the Causes and Circumstances Surrounding the Crisis in the Chechen Republic, "by autumn 1994, there were no highly-placed officials in Moscow who were considering a conciliatory approach to Dudayev." And yet as far back as March 25, 1994, the very same State Duma adopted Resolution No. 75-1GD "On the political normalization of relations between Federal authorities and the authorities of the Chechen Republic (ChR)," which had ruled out any possibility of holding direct talks with Dudayev!

Ruslan Khasbulatov, who in 1994 headed the so-called "Peacemaking Group," believes that the Kremlin made its final decision after September 19: Back then, he had been recalled to Moscow by Kotenkov and Savostyanov, where he managed "to find out that the armed forces were ordered to draft a plan to employ forces from the North Caucasus Military District in an operation in Chechnya and that a specialized command unit had been formed answering to the defense minister and the commander of the North Caucasus Military District." I suppose that Mr. Khasbulatov is equivocating a little in this case: His own "Peacemaking Group" was nothing other than a cover for armed formations that were doing their utmost to feel out (with their bayonets) how firm Dudayev's support was. To put it succinctly, the "peacemakers" of Tolstoy-Yurt were well-equipped with weapons and armored vehicles — to say nothing of the fact that "peacemaking" atop of tanks, is utterly meaningless. In any case, the various sources agree on the main thing: By the summer of 1994, the Kremlin had already made its decision about using force to depose Dudayev — and did so with very little regard for what was actually happening in Chechnya.

However, if we examine the available sources more closely, we find that we must revise this dating yet again: In his book, Anatoly Kulikov writes that he first met Avturkhanov in April 1994, "when Avturkhanov traveled to Moscow at my request." Why would the MVD commander-in-chief want to meet with the head of some far-off dis-

The originally planned rally that day was intended to consist of unions with socio-economic grievances and was supposed to be held on Freedom Square in front of the presidential palace. However, about an hour after its beginning, opposition activists joined union ranks and the meeting took on a political nature. Speeches were made calling for the government's resignation and propagandistic and provocative materials began to circulate among the crowd. Rally organizers had not expected anything like this and in response submitted their demands to the authorities while disavowing their relationship with those who had seized control of the rally. Word of the opposition's rally in Grozny quickly spreads throughout the entire republic. The president's supporters begin to arrive in Grozny. The situation becomes heated. Greatly outnumbering the opposition, government supporters drive them from Freedom Square. The opposition rally reconvenes on Theater Square.

April 1993: Commander of MVD troops Anatoly Kulikov calls Umar Avturkhanov, head of Nadterechny District, to Mozdok and holds talks with this opposition figure. Speaking about the "opposition forces in Nadterechny District," the Russian general says that he has formed "the strong conviction that this opposition has arisen due to ancestral enmity and can claim influence only in the district where its ancestral roots lie. Their assurances that there were thousands of fighters in their ranks and all they needed for victory were arms seemed doubtful. As it subsequently turned out, the capabilities of the opposition were greatly exaggerated."

At around the same time, Anatoly Kulikov, by his own admission and supposedly on his own initiative, decided it was necessary to meet with "the most important representatives" of the anti-Dudayev opposition. Among them, he named Salambek Khadzhiyev, Doku Zavgayev and Magomed Magomadov.

April 17, 1993: Chechen president Dzhokhar Dudayev dissolves parliament, the Constitutional Court and the Grozny City Council; he also reorganizes the republican MVD and SNB (the National Security Service) and appoints a new vice-president and prosecutor general. In addition to this, he announces a republic-wide curfew and the installation of presidential rule. The majority of parliament and judges of the Constitutional Court refuses to recognize the legality of these decisions. At the end of April, the legislature splits into opposing factions. Approximately ten deputies retire, while another group elect Yusup Soslambekov, the leader of Bako, as chairman, adopt a resolution that strips the president of the prime minister's powers and task the deputy prime minister Yaragi Mamodayev with forming "a government that enjoys popular trust."

Morning of May 25, 1993: Lechi Dudayev, the president's nephew, is beaten on Theater Square. Driving past the rally, he is surrounded and insulted. Unable to control himself, Lechi Dudayev gets out of his car and is beaten. He returns home and calls Shamil, his younger brother, as well as four bodyguards and returns to Theater Square where they are all attacked by an immense and enraged mob. One of the protesters, deeming that merely beating the relatives of the loathed president is not enough, shoots and kills Shamil Dudayev.

The murder of Dzhokhar Dudayev's nephew serves as the pretext for further violence against the opposition. The initial opposition rallies in Grozny's center have by now grown into daily protests.

trict in Chechnya? Kulikov's answer is as follows: "In an attempt to figure out for myself all the differences between the various Chechen opposition groups, I invited a well-known Chechen figure, who had once served alongside me, for a chat. [...] To my question of whether he would be able to offer professional assistance to these people if the need so arose..." Here then is our answer: It turns out that as early as April 1993, the Russian leadership was already considering a scenario in which MVD troops would take part in an operation in Chechnya. The only thing that is difficult to believe is the utterly independent nature of the MVD commander's sudden interest in the "differences between the various [...] opposition groups."

Especially so, since Kulikov makes reference to other, no less curious, meetings that he held during this period: "Figuring that the main emphasis would be on the anti-Dudayev opposition, I ***independently*** deemed it necessary to meet with its representatives. [...] I was convinced that Salambek Khadzhiyev, Doku Zavgayev and, perhaps, Magomed Magomadov were the only serious politicians and leaders of the true Chechen opposition" (emphasis mine). Kulikov is a little too insistent on including the phrases "figure out for myself" and "independently." There are few people who would know as well as he that acting on one's own initiative is a punishable offense — especially when it comes to political matters!

Further on, he mentions an utterly astonishing date that in no way conforms to the official version of events: August 25, 1993. On that day, generals from three agencies — the MVD, the MOD and the Security Ministry — held a meeting to discuss the situation in Chechnya: "At one such meeting, held on August 25, 1993, I got the distinct impression that my colleagues in the army and counter-intelligence services, as though by conspiracy, exuded this tranquil conviction of people who, firstly, see no reason that they should be consulting with anyone, and, secondly, utterly lack our own concerns about the strength of the Chechen resistance." Is this perhaps a typo, and the general means to say August 25, 1994 — not 1993? Nothing of the kind: The meeting is clearly mentioned in his account of the events of 1993.
As per usual, General Kulikov understood everything correctly. Accordingly, immediately following the meeting, he "summoned General Pavel Maslov, the district chief of staff in Rostov-on-Don [i.e. the North Caucasus Military District of the MVD's Internal Troops — *Author's note*] and ordered him to begin drafting military-technical plans for a scenario involving the introduction of troops to Chechnya." And again, as per usual with Kulikov, all of this was done "at my own risk. On my own initiative. And yet with the aim that Maslov, a tanker, [...] would do everything the way it needed to be done and make sure that our troops' hypothetical and actual actions would all be united at an operational level, since the soldiers' psyches and ambitions were as an open book to him." Why, what an enterprising general this is: On his own, without asking or consulting anyone, without receiving an order or a directive — neither from his minister nor from the Commander-in-chief — he orders his subordinates to draw up concrete and practical plans for an operation in Chechnya?! Who could find this credible? It simply could not have happened. I can just hear his scrupulous colleagues reporting to Yeltsin: "You should know that General Kulikov is making plans, drawing arrows on maps — and we haven't even ordered him to do anything!" And that would have been the end of it — the general, this time on the leadership's initiative, would have been sent packing. After all, Kulikov himself describes the soldiers' reactions upon hearing about his plans: "General, what are you bothering for? Did anyone give you the order personally? Do we have a directive, an instruction or a decree from the president?" This is, by the way, the only proper way for a military man to approach this issue and since the general remained in his post, it follows that "the initiative" was well within "the general policy of the party and government." That is why Kulikov, together with his deputy, General Anatoly Romanov, were even back then developing a series of case scenarios "that took into account both the further strengthening and isolation of Dudayev's regime, as well as the introduction of a state of emergency on the border with Chechnya, and the initiation of combat operations for the blockading and elimination of militants in the republic." Hence our conclusion: Purely forceful solutions to "the Dudayev problem" were clearly on the table by April–August 1993. Back then, the plans were not put into action because the leadership had other problems to deal with — like the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet. Nonetheless, the course of action for the forceful overthrow of Dudayev was adopted no later than April 1993, while after August 1993, this intent began to take concrete shape on the charts and maps of the various staffs.

"Bastards of our own" or "peacemakers" on tanks

This, obviously, did not mean that Operation "Opposition" had to be canceled. According to the memoirs of a member of the anti-Dudayev formations, Akhmed Kelimatov, who for some time commanded all of Avturkhanov's "armed forces," by fall of 1993, Avturkhanov "managed [...] to persuade the amenable secret services, and through them the country's leadership, to offer assistance to the opposition, in arms and food." Let's assume that this was not so much "persuasion" as making up for an earlier snafu: It turns out that back in January–March 1992, Avturkhanov received over 2,500 automatic rifles from Mozdok — to arm formations that were supposed to overthrow Dudayev. But, to use Kelimatov's own delicate diction, Umar Avturkhanov and his associate, Abdulla Bugayev, "pocketed" these automatic rifles.

Moscow, however, had no choice in the matter, since there were no other "bastards of our own" in Chechnya for it to choose from. Thus, according to Kelimatov, beginning in October–November 1993, "weapons and ammunition [...] were airlifted in helicopters," "the deliveries were addressed, i.e. to the names of specific persons" and "the helicopters began to land regularly in the village of Ken-Yurt in Groznynsky District," from where the cargo could be conveniently delivered to its intended recipients. By the way, it was during this time that all these members of the "opposition" "suddenly" began to receive all kinds of praise from official publications and news agencies. It is no accident that in December 1993, *ITAR-TASS*, which Sergei Filatov cites out of nowhere in his book, begins to report daily on every design and idea that occurs to the Chechen "opposi-

June 2, 1993: Accompanied by bodyguards, Dzhokhar Dudayev goes to Theater Square, wishing, as he explains later, to personally speak with the protesters. He has good reason to do so. Since the beginning of the opposition protests in Grozny, the government and the president had taken serious steps to resolve the situation. In particular, they had come to a preliminary agreement to appoint certain high-profile opposition leaders to important posts in the republican government. Since the protesters did not contest the general course toward independence, the only remaining condition that the republican leadership had for implementing the larger agreement was the dissolution of the protests in Grozny.
Accordingly, Dzhokhar Dudayev set out for Theater Square in order to speak to the people assembled there. Yet he was not allowed to say anything. First the crowd insulted him and then shots rang out. The bodyguards surrounded Dzhokhar Dudayev in an attempt to escort him back to his car. Another shot rang out, this time, aimed. It struck the neck of one of the president's bodyguards. Dzhokhar Dudayev left Theater Square.

June 4, 1993: That morning, on Theater Square, where the anti-Dudayev opposition was holding its rallies, someone opens fire from an assault rifle on a car transporting Isa Arsamikov and Dzhalavdi Ekiyev. Both men are killed. According to some sources, Dzhokhar Dudayev was planning on appointing Isa Arsamikov head of the National Security Service and the murder, which was premeditated and public, was connected to purely to this fact.

During the same day, in response to Isa Arsamikov's murder, National Guard units seize the Grozny City Council building where both parliamentary and Constitutional Court sessions are convened. There are casualties during the assault.

Meanwhile, supporters of the Chechen president begin to assemble before the presidential palace on Liberty Square. Fearing armed hostilities throughout the city, organizers dissolve the rally on Theater Square.

By midnight the palace is empty.

The opposition had scheduled a referendum on June 5 to ascertain the level of trust in the Chechen president and parliament. The referendum does not take place, as supporters of the president destroy the ballots. According to various sources, between 7 and 50 people die during clashes at the Central Election Committee.

Mid-June 1993: Amendments are made to the Chechen Constitution that change the system of government to a presidential republic.

Late June 1993: The republican parliament reconvenes without legislative powers.

July 22, 1993: Akhyad Idigov is elected as speaker. All opposition-aligned deputies lose their powers. Among the "personae non gratae" are former chairmen Hussein Akhmadov and Yusup Soslambekov.

August 25, 1993: As Anatoly Kulikov, the former RF MVD minister and the then Commander of MVD troops, would write in his memoirs, the Chechen situation was being discussed by generals from three agencies: the MVD, the defense ministry and the security ministry. General Pavel Maslov, head of staff for the MVD's North Caucasus District, is called to Rostov on Don and ordered to draw up a plan of military-technical measures in the event that troops are sent into Chechnya.

tion." But why would the president's chief of staff suddenly cite a new agency? Are there no better sources available to him?

As though some starting gun had been fired somewhere, the largest deliveries of funds and weapons began to flow to the Chechen "opposition" in August 1994. That was when they suddenly acquired armored vehicles, and not long after, helicopter gunships capable of providing close air support. It is known that one of the first significant tranches was delivered to Umar Avturkhanov, to his "capital," the village of Znamenskoye, on July 30, 1994. It was delivered by a Russian military helicopter that departed from Mozdok and it consisted of 1.5 billion rubles in cash. At the time, using the exchange rate of the RF Central Bank, this was the equivalent of $730,000 — an immense sum of money, since back then, a monthly salary of even $100 was considered quite respectable. According to Kelimatov, over the course of summer and fall of 1994, Avturkhanov received a total of no less than 150 billion rubles from Moscow. Since the RF CB exchange rate varied from 2,052 to 3,200 rubles per $1 USD, we can reckon that altogether Avturkhanov was granted no less than $50 million. Back then, this was no small number by any means. How this money was spent remains a mystery: Neither our colleagues in the anti-Dudayev "opposition," nor their handlers in the RF presidential administration and secret services ever provided anyone with the relevant accounts. And in general, after December 1994, the whole issue of these vanished billions was quietly closed.

At that time, the fleet of KAMAZ trucks resumed its journeys between Mozdok and Znamenskoye, ferrying weapons and armored vehicles. In August alone, ten T-62 tanks were sent from Mozdok to Znamenskoye. Though, to be fair, only one of these tanks lived long enough to take part in the October 15 assault on Grozny — only to be set ablaze in the city's streets. The rest were lost in skirmishes with Dudayev's forces, or broke down during August–September 1994. One was actually sold, on the cheap, to Dudayev's forces. At the same time, Avturkhanov received 26 APCs, 46 new GAZ-66 trucks and four C2 (Command & Control) vehicles, one of which was immediately sent to Tolstoy-Yurt for Ruslan Khasbulatov's "peacemaking group."

And forget tanks — the "opposition" somehow got its hands on "its own" aviation. Beginning on September 30, 1994, military targets in Chechnya came under attack from unmarked Mi-24 helicopters and Su-25 tactical bombers. The only thing that was known for sure was that the "unidentified" helicopters were making their sorties from Mozdok. However, the press-service for the MOD, the General Staff, the staff of the North-Caucasus Military District, VDV command and Army Aviation command — all categorically denied that the aircraft conducting airstrikes in Chechnya were owned or operated by the Russian Armed Forces — while very much at a loss when asked to explain how these UFOs were allowed to operate in airspace controlled by the Russian Anti-Air forces.

What is known is that on September 5, 1994, the General Staff of the RF Armed Forces, issued Directive No. 312/1/0112sh, under which the North Caucasus Military District issued ten APCs and six combat helicopters with

The dissolution of the city council as well as the protests that had by then been held continuously for one-and-a-half-months marks the end of peaceful political struggle in the republic. From here on out, the conflict between the authorities and the opposition begins to take on the guise of an armed conflict, which ultimately serves as grounds for the termination of the negotiations between Dzhokhar Dudayev's administration and Russian leadership.

Russian policy towards Chechnya begins to favor the use of force.

This course becomes irreversible in April 1993. In August of that year, what had merely been policy planning begins to take on an operational form. However, the open implementation of these plans to overthrow the Chechen government and return the republic to Russia never comes to pass. A political crisis overtakes Russia, ending on October 3 with the shelling and dissolution of the Supreme Soviet.

Autumn 1993: According to the memoirs of Akhmed Kelimatov, one of the leaders of the anti-Dudayev opposition, Umar Avturkhanov manages to convince "willing special services" of Russia — and through them, the Russian leadership — to help the opposition with arms and supplies. From **October to November** "arms and munitions are airlifted by helicopter" for delivery to the addresses of specific individuals. In particular, helicopters begin to land regularly in the Ken-Yurt village of the Grozny District, "which is a convenient location from which to make deliveries to the recipients."

December 12, 1993: Russia adopts a new Constitution in the wake of a national referendum. Under the legislation, the Chechen Republic is a subject of the Russian Federation. Chechnya ignores the referendum.

The center of the opposition has shifted from Grozny to the rural parts of the republic: Nadterechny and (to a lesser degree) Urus-Martanovsky Districts.

December 16–17, 1993: Ibragim Suleimenov, a former supporter of the president, creates the Committee for National Salvation (CNS) which along with fighters from the republican security services and volunteers who had been fighting in Abkhazia, blockades the center of Grozny. Their demands include the scheduling of new parliamentary elections, limits to the powers of the president and prime minister, and the creation of a Sharia court and defense ministry. However, as negotiations progress, Dzhokhar Dudayev manages to win over a significant portion of the protesters to his side.

December 16, 1993: The Provisional Council of the Chechen Republic is created in Nadterechny District, uniting many of Dudayev's opponents. Its chairman becomes Umar Avturkhanov, the head of the district, which has remained insubordinate to Grozny. Yeltsin declares the closure of the Russian border with Chechnya and the seizure of railroads that run through it.

In the first days of January 1994, an armed CNS detachment attacks a republican unit deployed near Grozny.

January 14, 1994: The Chechen Republic officially becomes the "Chechen Republic of Ichkeria" (ChRI) in order to distinguish it from the RF subject mentioned in the new edition of the Russian Constitution.

Early February 1994: Ibragim Suleimanov is arrested by agents from the Department of State Security. The organizations that he founded are dissolved.

respective crew complements to the opposition. One of the witnesses to those events explained that "when Dudayev claimed that Russian aviation was bombing Chechnya, we replied that Avturkhanov had bought some helicopters and filled them with Chechen crews. The truth was that the crews were Russians who had been recruited by the FSK."

We should recall here that Boris Yeltsin himself described the plans as follows: "Gradually introduce anti-Dudayev attitudes and forces to Chechnya. *Provide monetary assistance and, if needed, specialists.* Ensure that the people expel Dudayev on their own." Exactly who these "people" were is well documented: Umar Avturkhanov, Beslan Gantamirov, Ruslan Labazanov and "independent peacemaker" Ruslan Khasbulatov. Each one had his own armed formations, his own scores to settle with Dudayev, and an utter lack of any kind of ideas or policies whatsoever. Other than one: depose Dudayev. And, if the opportunity presented itself, perhaps take his place too?

In the eyes of the presidential administration, the leading candidate at the

time was Avturkhanov: Umar Dzhunitovich Avturkhanov graduated from the Ordzhonikidzevskoye Higher Military Officers School of the USSR MVD, an institution tasked with training the MVD's Internal Troops. Avturkhanov reached the rank of MVD Major. His last station was in Sukhumi. After that he left the service. In 1992 Avturkhanov was the "mayor" of Nadterechny District and, basically from the same time, was one of the members of the Dudayev "opposition." An ideal candidate? The only problem, as his fellow "opposition" member, Akhmed Kelimatov pointed out, was that Avturkhanov "did not end up in Chechnya during the euphoria of the perestroika entirely of his own choosing" — he had been discharged "from the MVD for having dishonored the rank of officer of the militia [i.e. Soviet police — *Translator's note*]." In his memoirs, Anatoly Kulikov, the former Russian interior minister, mentions that Avturkhanov's last station was "the special motor battalion of MVD troops in Sukhumi" (read: the convoy unit, charged with guarding prisoners). Kulikov goes on to state quite plainly, "The only problem was that there was something off about his discharge. He left behind himself a trail of rumors about a crime he had committed and a criminal case that had been opened as a result." Avturkhanov's associate, Akhmed Kelimatov, clarifies: He had been thrown out of "the MVD for discrediting the rank of officer of the militia." After his discharge, Avturkhanov returned to his native village of Komarovo in Nadterechny District, where, according to Kelimatov (writing not without spite), "the young entrepreneur quickly mastered the ABCs of market science and began to breed furry animals." And that would have been it, were it not that "the daily trips to the Mozdok market, hauling foul-smelling sacks, exhausted him physically. Standing around the market day in and day out in all sorts of weather is not a pleasant business." And then Dudayev appeared, Ichkeria declared its independence and things started working out for Avturkhanov: Soon enough he was the "mayor" of Nadterechny District. There seemed to be no reasons for the enmity between him and Dudayev; the only possible connection was that the district was always considered the ancestral domain of the Zavgayev clan. Indeed, initially, Avturkhanov had a normal relationship with Dudayev, while the district's de facto independence inside Ichkeria seemed to please its "mayor." It's no accident that Kelimatov lets slip that "Avturkhanov will start by plundering the oil wells and then extend his influence to the Ischerskaya oil depot, though doing so only after consulting Dudayev's people." Is this an unambiguous hint to the sordid underpinnings for Mr. Avturkhanov's dispute with Mr. Dudayev? A divergence of views about how to divvy up the oily spoils? Or, just as plausibly, perhaps the ex-breeder of furry critters wisely decided to diversify his bets? In mid-August 1992, Avturkhanov was working hard to assuage his Moscow masters: "We have 1,200 fighters at our disposal, with good military equipment and corresponding combat training." He also claimed that "our warriors were trained in Russian units." Obviously, back in 1992, it didn't work out for Avturkhanov. Nevertheless, he went on pulling the wool over the eyes of the various Moscow "armchair generals" who had taken him under their wing. He assured them that he "controlled first three, then six and finally thirty districts of the republic," though in actual fact he did not even control his mayor's building. Despite all this, the Moscow brass decided to funnel the funding and equipment for the anti-Dudayev forces through him. The only problem, according to Kelimatov, was that in addition to the aforementioned automatic rifles, Avturkhanov was also adept at making other things "vanish": "Funds and supplies issued through official channels to help the impoverished parts of the population were appropriated by the opposition leadership. Thus, in 1993–1994, shipments of produce were sent to Nadterechny District: flour, pasta, sugar and other products. As a rule, the part of the shipment that went through Priterechye was sold through the various stores of the district where the mayor's people worked. The money so obtained was pocketed." Despite this (or, maybe, precisely because of it?), "his rare talents for pulling the wool over people's eyes, bluffing and catching fish in troubled waters, all allowed him to attract the attention of Russian politicians uninitiated in the Chechen tragedy; once the secret services got their hands on him, he became a common bootlicker." In Chechnya, Avturkhanov had no authority and even seemed comical when placed alongside other political "heavyweights" like Zavgayev, Khadzhiyev or Khasbulatov. No matter, mocks Kelimatov, "at least the secret services are utterly at ease with him. As the old-timers in these agencies like to say: 'What a rare find, this one. He is one of us through and through! It's easy to manipulate him due to his flimsy morals.'"

February 24, 1994: On the insistence of Sergei Shakhrai, the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly includes a paragraph that declares the authorities of the Chechen Republic illegal and calls for new elections.

A month later the State Duma adopts a provision in which it recommends the government and the president to hold consultations "with all political forces" of the republic and insist that elections to the Russian Federal Assembly become a precondition to any possible agreement about the distribution of powers.

March 25, 1994: During a meeting with the head of Yeltsin's administration, Sergei Filatov, the ChRI presidential envoy, Aslambek Akbulatov, expresses his willingness for further talks, without however abandoning independence.

May 21, 1994: Sergei Filatov tells journalists that the Russian leadership demonstrated its readiness for serious negotiations, including directly with Dzhokhar Dudayev himself. At the same time, he says that "in pursuance of normalizing relations with Chechnya," Sergei Shakhrai is removed from his duties as ethnic affairs minister.

May 27, 1994: Around 10 p.m. an assassination attempt takes place against Dzhokhar Dudayev. A car that he narrowly avoids getting into explodes. The republic's minister of interior affairs and one of his deputies are killed.

Summer 1994: The republican "opposition" is organized with Russian support. Armed units are formed and preparations are made to depose the republic's president. The heretofore fractured opposition parties and movements are combined into one organization around the so-called Provisional Council of the Chechen Republic. Created in December 1993, under the chairmanship of Umar Avturkhanov, the head of Nadterechny District, the council also enjoys the support of Doku Zavgayev, the then chief advisor to President Yeltsin on the North Caucasus.

June 2, 1994: A detachment under the leadership of the criminal Ruslan Labazanov, who has joined the pro-Russian opposition, attacks the republican Radio House where they capture Salvadi Yakhyev, the chairman of television and radio. The group takes him to Kirov Park where the TV station is located and beat him half to death in front of a group of journalists that Yakhyev had earlier fired.

June 3–4, 1994: The "assembly of Chechen peoples" takes place in the village of Chulgi-Yurt (Russian name: Znamenskoye). It is attended exclusively by members of opposition organizations.

None of the assembly's delegates are elected officials of any part of the republic. Nevertheless, several hundred people express their lack of confidence in the president ("in the name of the people") and invest the Provisional Council with "the powers of the highest body of state." With the assistance of Russian soldiers and agents of the Federal Counter-terrorism Service (FSK — the successor agency to the KGB), armament of opposition forces begins in Nadterechny District. Aside from small arms, the opposition is equipped with large amounts of armor, anti-aircraft guns and artillery. The command of the North Caucasus Military District (SKVO) promises to provide helicopters to support the operation.

The Provisional Council is also told that it will receive 150 billion rubles.

Another member of that team is Beslan Gantamirov: A partial secondary education, then vocational training, service in the highway patrol, after that a cooperator and founder of the Islamic Way party. In 1991, Gantamirov was one of the driving forces behind the coup and a sponsor of the "Dudayev revolution." Under Dudayev, he was first the Chief of Staff for the National Guard and, later, the mayor of Grozny. But as of 1993, he joined the "opposition." Regarding the real motive for his opposition, Ruslan Khasbulatov wryly wrote, "In the spring of 1993, the general greatly curtailed the supply of 'oil money' to Gantamirov's 'treasury'; Gantamirov was seriously upset about this fact and ended up joining the opposition." Another associate of Gantamirov sardonically points out that in April 1993, Gantamirov "was certain that he would receive no more than five percent of the oil and abruptly joined the opposition"; "the general's temerity and impudence had deeply hurt the mayor's pride. He had not expected his former ally and patron to take such measures." General Anatoly Kulikov claims that the former mayor of Grozny had surfaced in his field of vision by appearing in the meetings under way in Mozdok in October 1994: "In those days, Gantamirov was frequently mentioned and his name [...] evoked certain hopes. His appearance in Mozdok was a sign that the preparations [...] were going at full steam." At the same time, however, Gantamirov's associates point out that he "was looking for access to Dudayev in order to obtain his signature for the release of funds held in foreign accounts, after which he intended on resolving the issue of being appointed the overseer of the armed forces of Ichkeria." What an intriguing chase after several rabbits at once! It is known that the mayor of Grozny did not justify the hopes that Moscow had placed in him: When his "militiamen" entered the

city, the first "investigation" they conducted was that of the goods belonging to local retail businesses.

Ruslan Labazanov is the most flamboyant persona of this bunch. His is the most vivid biography of the other "members of the opposition." "Lobzik" as he was known, was a graduate of the Krasnodar Sports Institute, a specialist and teacher of eastern forms of self-defense, as well as a prolific criminal who had been convicted for murder and robbery. The events of 1991 found him in prison where he initiated a riot and even formed a pro-Dudayev unit from among his fellow inmates. "A murderer. In prison he enjoys an indisputable authority," wrote Kulikov about Labazanov as far back as that autumn. According to Khasbulatov, after he offered his services to Dudayev, Labazanov "quickly became one of his most trusted and closest people, performing his most 'delicate' assignments. [...] He could come and go in Dzhokhar Dudayev's office as he pleased." His name in those days was well-known in the Caucasus: especially in connection to his large-scale arms trade across the entire region. "He has left a long trail of the most serious of crimes: murder, racketeering, seizure of private homes and vehicles (especially foreign-made ones), extortion of public servants," writes Khasbulatov. It is known that Labazanov even managed to break into Usman Imayev's office, who at the time was the Chechen general prosecutor and chairman of the national bank. Labazanov subjected Imayev to a brutal beating and demanded he immediately give him one million dollars. When two Chechen boxers — champions of Europe and Russia — dared look too closely at Labazanov's retinue, he beat them too. In general, the newspapers of those days are rife with vivid accounts of Labazanov's exploits. His disagreement with Dudayev seems to have stemmed from the traditional issue — oil money. One way or another, by summer of 1994, this "Robin Hood" had obviously burned all his bridges and Dudayev gave permission for the elimination of Labazanov's group: The house that Labazanov had barricaded himself in was taken with much fanfare — tanks and artillery. And yet, although they leveled basically the entire block, "Lobzik" himself got away. The severed heads of his accomplices were placed on public display...And then, as Khasbulatov recounts, "one beautiful day in late August 1994, a representative of this 'Robin Hood' approached me and requested that I meet with his boss, claiming that he had common goals with my peacemaking group." There's a Robin Hood for you indeed — one who knew whom to turn to! And what's more is he guessed right and they took him in! Because "the following considerations won out: ***If we don't turn away this criminal (with whom, by the way, we couldn't deal wit***h at the time), we might end up saving at least one innocent life" (emphasis mine). A telling admission: We took him because refusing him would cost us more. But the curious thing is if Khasbulatov could not take care of some criminal, how was he supposed to take on General Dudayev?!

Then again, it's possible that this wasn't his decision to make — that it was made by his "senior colleagues." Khasbulatov does slip up and mention that after Russian troops entered Chechnya, Labazanov "received the rank of colonel from the FSB, took on

The head of the FSK's Moscow directorate, Yevgeny Savostyanov (who according to some sources has been in Chechnya since spring 1994), coordinates this activity in the field. He is assisted by RF Deputy Minister for Ethnic Affairs Alexander Kotenkov, as well as a host of other officers from the special services and the Russian Army.

June 8, 1994: Yevgeny Savostyanov sends a secret letter to Sergei Shakhrai containing proposals for FSK operations in Chechnya.

June 13, 1994: ChRI security agencies (MVD, DGB and Special Forces) storm the Grozny base of Ruslan Labazanov. His group, which is not limited to Chechens, is defeated and scattered with 10 men killed and 60 wounded. The operation goes on for seven hours. Sometime later, the remnants of Ruslan Labazanov's group will resurface in Argun.

July 23, 1994: The Provisional Council, which unites the main opposition forces of the republic, calls on President Yeltsin to recognize it as the only lawful authority in Chechnya as well as to "provide necessary assistance in establishing the rule of law and civil security."

July 29, 1994: The Russian government issues a declaration about the situation in Chechnya, in which it states that Russian leadership will be forced to "defend the rights and lives of citizens" in the event that Chechen authorities resort to force in their struggle with the opposition.

July 30, 1994: At its next session, the Chechen Security Council passes measures for "the strengthening of security in the republic and the prevention of Russian acts of provocation against the Chechen people."

July 30, 1994: The pro-Russian Provisional Council passes a Decree of Authority, announcing its removal of Dzhokhar Dudayev from presidential office and its assumption of "the full totality of state authority."

July 30, 1994: ChRI Prosecutor General Usman Imayev issues an order for the arrest of Umar Avturkhanov. The head of the Provisional Council is accused of treason.

July 30, 1994: A Russian military helicopter flies from Mozdok to the village of Znamenskoye to deliver 1.5 billion rubles (at the time, a little over $730,000) to Umar Avturkhanov. According to the memoirs of Akhmed Kelimatov, in total, Umar Avturkhanov receives no less than 150 billion rubles from Moscow over the course of summer and autumn 2014.

August 1, 1994: Another opposition group — this one led by Yusup Soslambekov — makes an attempt to resume the work of the Supreme Soviet of the Chechen Republic. At their assembly, this group of deputies announces its intent to draft a power sharing agreement with the federal authorities as well as to consider a documents package about the future structuring of power in the republic.

August 2, 1994: Umar Avturkhanov tells the Russian president that the Provisional Council is the only lawful authority in Chechnya and that it requires Russian support. The head of the council also notifies Dudayev of this fact as well as of his assumption of full power.

August 2, 1994: Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev characterizes the Provisional Council's declaration as "a demarche organized by traitors to the nation." The president adds that "these

various 'dirty jobs,' and was killed by one of his own bodyguards in the courtyard of his home." So, he knew too much?

It seems that General Anatoly Kulikov hits the nail on its head when, speaking about this group, he wryly writes, "If we call things what they really are, the opposition of certain Chechen figures often bore a special character and was based not on ideological differences with Dudayev but frequently on his failure to share power or money with them. Their biographies often resembled the life stories of arrant gentlemen of fortune, while their political declarations as the opposition were in substance no different than the official Ichkeria propaganda: the same accusations against age-old Russian oppression, the same myths about the age-old war in the Caucasus, the same demands to recognize Chechnya as a sovereign independent state. One was forced to draw the conclusion that many opposition leaders suddenly turned flaming internationalists after being somehow slighted by Dudayev and were now carving themselves new niches in politics and business simply in order to survive." Having made an attempt to "independently figure out all the differences of the various Chechen opposition groups" (i.e. figure out whom to bet on!), Kulikov "invited a certain person well-known in Chechnya, who had once been a fellow servicemember. [...] To my question of whether he, if need be, would be able to offer his professional assistance to these people, my conversation partner answered without any enthusiasm whatsoever: 'Of course I can. But if you want to know my opinion — none of these people can be considered the opposition. These are the same mujahedeen as the other guys.'"

So who was the first to say "you're it," while looking at this "opposition?" According to Sergei Filatov, and as I've mentioned above, the main driver of the initiative was Yevgeny Savostyanov, "who was the deputy to FSK Director S.V. Stepashin and who managed the Chechen situation at his boss's behest." Supposedly it was he who "brought to my attention that Avturkhanov's opposition submits no conditions to the Russian leadership and recognizes the Russian Constitution." The persuasion attempt worked: "I agreed to a meeting. [...] Afterward, B. Yeltsin issued an order to the government of the Russian Federation to provide support to the Provisional Council in the form of training and the holding of elections in Chechnya." There was just one problem that the head of the presidential administration had to deal with: "There was no agreement among the opposition. Khasbulatov and Avturkhanov did not get along. Zavgayev plied his own line. Gantamirov first joined the opposition, then distanced himself from it. Labazanov did the same. Each of the opposition leaders was trying to pull the bed sheet over himself." This is why what happened later happened, even though Moscow "by that time had drafted a decree that would introduce a state of emergency in Chechnya. The leadership wanted to introduce MVD troops to help the Provisional Council hold on to power in Grozny. But this process was halted by, I believe, V.F. Yerin, the interior minister, who told the president that the events under way in Chechnya required several days of close scrutiny." A bit further in the text, Filatov quite characteristically babbles too much: "The FSK had the operative data. As usual, Yerin did not believe them. [...] The president did not sign the decree, which I had approved with basically every service and which was being awaited by Grachev, Stepashin and Yegorov." Oh what a bad guy this Yerin is — not to believe Lubyanka! However, we should thank Filatov the memoirist for pointing the finger at the real instigator of that inspirational special operation — that is, Lubyanka: All the information came from the FSK; the FSK found all the people; the FSK did all the planning; and it was the FSK that was going to do the implementation.

Anatoly Kulikov does not conceal the guiding hand of the secret services either: "At the time, the MVD command was not privy to state secrets, while the perspective of Russian MVD generals did not seem to interest the president too much: his advisers and intelligence

two or three people are collaborating with the Kremlin and Russian special services."

August 3, 1994: The former chair of the Russian Supreme Soviet, R. Khasbulatov calls for free elections in Chechnya with the assistance and oversight of international observers.

It is his conviction that the elections should be held no later than two months "after the Chechen people regain control over their land and remove the Dudayev regime from power."

August 5, 1994: General Aslambek Aslakhanov, professor of the RF MVD academy and former head of the RF Supreme Soviet's committee for legal issues, law and order and crime prevention, holds a press conference in which he states that "President Dzhokhar Dudayev will not voluntarily leave the political stage even if the entire Chechen people beg him to do so on their knees. [...] Even if Dudayev wanted to leave his post, the current environment would prevent him from doing so, since no one wants to be held responsible for the crimes that have been committed."

Night of August 5 to August 6, 1994: According to the Provisional Council, four republican soldiers are killed after they open fire on a military post of the so-called opposition located at the Ishchersky Bridge over the Terek River.

August 8, 1994: An opposition government is formed in the village of Znamenskoye — the center of Nadterechny District. It consists of thirteen people.

President Dzhokhar Dudayev opines that it will be possible to avoid civil war in the republic. He tells journalists in Grozny that "[a war] would only be possible between Chechnya and Russia — and solely through the fault of the Kremlin."

August 8, 1994: Republican forces enter Nadterechny District. According to the mass media, Umar Avturkhanov turns for help to Russian units deployed in the neighboring Mozdok District of North Ossetia, but his request is denied. By the end of the day, opposition forces have abandoned their positions along with their heavy weapons and gone into hiding throughout the various settlements in the region. In the vicinity of Tolstoy-Yurt, for instance, republican forces capture several tanks and personnel carriers. Having done so, the republican units return to their bases. Neither they nor the republican leadership wish to spill the blood of their fellow citizens.

This explains the approach chosen by Dudayev and the official security agencies, which though having the forces and the opportunity to rout the opposition, avoided doing so for a long time, unwilling to escalate the situation to a civil war.

August 9, 1994: Moscow temporarily halts all flights to Grozny.

August 10, 1994: An assembly is held in Grozny, which, unlike the one held by the opposition, is attended by delegated representatives from basically all areas of the republic. Characterizing the actions of Doku Zavgayev, Ruslan Khasbulatov, Umar Avturkhanov and other opponents to the president as "directed against the people," the participants demand the adoption of decisive measures for restoring order throughout the republic. Dzhokhar Dudayev signs a decree mobilizing Chechen forces and declaring a state of emergency in Nadterechny District.

sources were almost entirely from agencies other than the MVD." Even in these terse lines we can sense how affected the general was by the FSK's blatant disregard for his agency. He was also offended by the following: "I cannot but assume that the attention of the country's leadership at that time was turned exclusively to the archives of the former KGB, where, everyone figured, the most accurate recipes for fighting nationalism and separatism would be found." Kulikov follows this with a thrust at the FSK: "I would later notice this slavish devotion to the schemes of the secret services, among politicians and even among military professionals. The seemingly tried and true schemes were supposed to work perfectly in Chechnya. [...] I was however plagued by the thought that it was as if all these measures — whether shrouded in secrecy, or, to the opposite, completely demonstrative — had been copied straight out of American textbooks." In general, Kulikov's book is trove of information, if, of course, one knows how to extract it. The stunning thing is that he does not miss a single opportunity to thrust at the cloak and dagger men: "All these contacts with the opposition, all these manipulations with plans and leaders that were opposed to Dudayev were [...] 'the bread and butter' of the FSB's counterintelligence men and the GRU's intelligence men." The same Kulikov, in my view, explained abundantly why the political leadership chose these people and not his: the whole business was "in the archives of the KGB." In normal people language this means that the FSK had dossiers on certain individuals which allowed it to manipulate these individuals.

According to the Afghan scenario

Right after the humiliating failure of the assault of October 15, 1994, and the flight of the "opposition" leadership from Grozny, FSK Deputy Director and Director of the Moscow Directorate of the FSK Yevgeny Savostyanov held a "blamestorming" session in Mozdok. According Ruslan Khasbulatov, who attended this meeting, Avturkhanov and Gantamirov gave their accounts of the previous day's failure to Savostyanov and "asked for additional arms and tanks." Khasbulatov goes on to claim that "about two weeks after Avturkhanov's and Gantamirov's craven flight from Grozny [...] arms shipments to Mozdok intended for these activists, ceased." Though in truth, Ruslan Khasbulatov himself claimed that at the time Moscow "set the following condition: Arms shipments to the opposition will resume only if Khasbulatov leaves Chechnya." The connection between Mr. Khasbulatov's presence in Chechnya and the temporary suspension of further weapons shipments to the "opposition" is, to put it mildly, doubtful. It is abundantly clear that an operational pause was under way: Moscow needed to figure out the reasons for the defeat, determine what to do next and whom to bet on and then figure out a new approach. This did not at all entail the cessation of financial support for the proverbial "opposition," nor the end of weapons shipments for the "opposition's" militants. At times, armaments were given to the militants not by the military directly, but through an intervening "layer" in the form of the MVD troops. At least this is what General Kulikov, the then deputy minister of internal affairs and the commander of MVD troops, tells us in his memoirs: "When it came down to the technical side of the business, on the eve of the events, in accordance with a Russian government resolution, the internal troops began to receive weapons and equipment from the defense ministry that were destined for the opposition forces. Formally, this was performed through an MVD battalion in Mozdok, though practically, it took place already on Chechen territory where we sent several specialists to make sure that everything was handed over in good condition and in the pre-approved quantities."

In the words of Kulikov, he "followed his orders, though his heart was not in it. [He] understood that all it would take would be a slight change in the political winds for a part of the opposition — that had made such a show of its friendly disposition — to chicken out or, in the best case scenario, sell all the weapons at the market." The basic inability to undertake any kind of independent and effective actions became utterly apparent after the shameful fiasco that was the raid on Grozny of October 15, 1994. Judging by it all, this was also what gave birth to the idea of making up for the deficit of military specialists in the "opposition's" ranks by posting professionals there. According to Kulikov, the idea was first raised at a meeting called by Yevgeny Savostyanov, who was managing the Chechen problem for the FSK and "a few people thought the idea quite perceptive: on the one hand, Russia's reputation would remain unharmed regardless of what happened, and on the other, several generals were still enamored with the sweet nothings that Avturkhanov and Gantamirov had promised them: 'Give us several dozen tanks, give us crews that know how to shoot and the rest will sort itself out.'" Anatoly Kulikov sounds almost serious when he claims that, having first heard of these so-called volunteers, "I assumed that the FSK was planning on involving truly experienced people in the operation. [...] I imagined that these would be capable men who had been through many wars and for whom the art of war was the meaning of life itself — and battle, as natural as water to a fish." And yet even here he slips up (though this time after the fact) and mentions that he personally "thought Savostyanov's idea was a bit too exotic for our scale — resembling as it did, a Hollywood screenplay in which a handful of heroes from various secret services, aided by honest and simple-minded aborigines, throw down the gauntlet to an Eastern despot."

August 11, 1994: The pro-Russian opposition announces the formation of the Provisional Government of the Chechen Republic. Ali Alavdinov is "appointed" as its head, while Badruddin Dzhamalkhanov becomes the vice-premier.

August 11, 1994: President Dudayev orders mobilization and declares a state of emergency for Nadterechny District. Nevertheless, the republican government refrains from taking active measures for another 20 days. This is said to be due to the unwillingness of security agency employees to fight against their compatriots.

August 11, 1994: Russian President Boris Yeltsin announces that "violent interference in Chechnya will not be tolerated."

In a conversation with journalists, President Dudayev describes Russo-Chechen relations as "the violent aggression on the part of Russia toward Chechnya."

August 12, 1994: The Provisional Council makes a declaration demanding the president avoid a course of action that will cause bloodshed.

August 15, 1994: The Chechen Security Council holds an extended session, at which Aslan Maskhadov, the ChRI chief of staff, announces that the mobilization of the first reservist echelon has been completed.

The Provisional Council reinforces its armed posts.

August 16, 1994: An armed encounter takes place in the vicinity of Bratskoye village in Nadterechny District between a government patrol and a squad of the opposition.

August 19, 1994: Military equipment begins to flow into Nadterechny District, in particular an allotment of armored personnel carriers acquired from "one of the CIS countries."

In August alone, ten T-62 tanks are sent from Mozdok to Znamenskoye village. At the same time, Umar Avturkhanov receives 26 APCs, 46 new GAZ-66 trucks and four C2 (command & control) vehicles, one of which is immediately sent to Tolstoy-Yurt for Ruslan Khasbulatov's "peacekeeping force."

August 20, 1994: At a rally in Shali, Ruslan Khasbulatov calls for the creation of a conciliation commission and the signing of an agreement between armed groups to abstain from the use of weapons against each other.

August 21, 1994: Khasbulatov's supporters activate a radio station in Tolstoy-Yurt. They announce that their peacekeeping mission is being supplemented by seven armed groups.

August 21, 1994: President Dudayev's followers organize a rally in Grozny in support of republican independence. At the meeting the president announces that Russia has initiated an intervention in the ChRI.

According to him, thirty Russian armored vehicles as well as "instructors and mercenaries from among Russian military personnel" have arrived in Nadterechny District where the opposition's general staff is located.

August 22, 1994: Railway operations are suspended along the Chechen segment of the Moscow-Baku line.

August 24, 1994: The followers of Beslan Gantamirov attempt to enter Grozny with a column of APCs. They are stopped by tanks from the Shalinsky Regiment on the outskirts of the capital

Of course, all of this is nothing but details of a technical nature and without much significance. No one was actually seriously examining this "opposition," nor planning on putting it in power. Yeltsin's administration viewed the purpose of the anti-Dudayev formations fairly concretely and singularly: They were to serve as a pretext for a formal, full-scale introduction of troops to Chechnya — nothing more, nothing less. All they had to do was occupy the center of Grozny, at least the key government buildings and for a few days, even a few hours — it didn't matter! What was important was to create the illusion that a civil war had broken out in Chechnya, which would leave the Kremlin no choice but to get involved militarily — to protect the civilian population from the bloodshed, obviously...

In Kelimatov's memoirs, October 19, 1994, is a fairly noteworthy date: "Armed hostilities break out between the opposition and Ichkerian armed formations in Urus-Martan, Gekhi, Gekhi-Chu and Valerik. Spurred on by the secret services, the Chechens turn on one another and a new armed conflict erupts. Moscow demands immediate justification for introducing troops. It sees no further point in trying to solve the Chechen issue through peaceful means."

Then again, the same Kelimatov is more than happy to assist in the civil war's orchestration. On October 20, 1994, he is appointed the commander of Avturkhanov's "armed forces": "I immediately begin working on operation 'Ridge,' i.e. the liberation of the Tersky Ridge from Dudayev's forces. [...] This decision should have been made much earlier. But events unfold in the order and sequence that the secret services decide they should." By dawn, the ridge had been captured, and later on that day, Umar Avturkhanov sent yet another emergency dispatch to the Russian president and the ministers of defense and internal affairs, requesting them to get involved in Chechnya and, as Khasbulatov put it, "take measures to prevent the mass killings of civilians in Chechnya. Based on what people close to Avturkhanov told me, there were several such dispatches sent by the Provisional Council to the Russian leadership."

Khasbulatov goes on to claim that it was at this same time, in early November 1994, that his so-called "Peacemaking Group" greatly reinforced its position in Chechnya and supposedly even "managed to reclaim the leadership positions": Grozny was willing to compromise and the clandestine negotiations intensified. However, "just then, the feverish arming of the 'militant opposition' began in Znamenskoye as well as preparations for its 'advance on Grozny': 'A surfeit of arms again began to flow' to the strongholds of the 'militant opposition.'" Having taken trips to those parts, I can confidently say that although Khasbulatov greatly exaggerated his political standing, he did get the main thing right: Grozny was prepared to negotiate and even make concessions. However, solving the problem by non-military means was no longer on the table. According to Kelimatov, on November 1, 1994, Avturkhanov and Gantamirov returned to Nadterechny District after meeting with certain highly-placed Moscow officials. They were literally giddy with happiness: "Only these two people know when, where and along which routes, the troops will enter, as well as what we must still do before their introduction." On the same day, November 1, 1994, the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces issued Directive No. 312/1/0130sh, under which the North Caucasus Military District was to deliver forty T-72 tanks to the "opposition."

On November 10, 1994, the leaders of the "opposition" received the following information from Mozdok: The final decision to introduce troops to Chechnya had been made, but, as Kelimatov puts it, "the introduction procedure" was to be determined on Saturday November 12, 1994. The same day saw the creation of the so-called "Government of the Chechen Republic under the Provisional Council," which was headed by Salambek Khadzhiyev, the former minister of the USSR's oil industry.

Everything after that was already according to plan: The recruited "volunteers" are delivered to Mozdok where they begin to prepare the tanks for transit to Chechnya. On November 17, 1994, the first dozen T-72s and two trucks full of weapons are transported from Mozdok to Znamenskoye. Meanwhile, the "opposition" leadership is actively working on creating the pretext for introducing troops. Since there is no actual civil war in Chechnya, one is imitated: With support of Russian aviation, an operation is conducted to take the village of Bratskoye. Like Akhmed Kelimatov's boss, Umar Avturkhanov, told him back on November 15, 1994, "it's time we start going to Mozdok directly through Bratskoye." The "Pritirechye Army Commander" is promised assistance from the Russian helicopter corps. The gunships conduct airstrikes against the positions of pro-Dudayev units in Bratskoye at 3:30 p.m. on November 18. This is followed by shelling from mortars and artillery. The armor column arrives towards night. Such was the rehearsal — the very one that led Sergei Filatov, the president's chief of staff, to write later in his memoirs, "The civil war in Chechnya was growing larger."

The last military meeting about the advance on Grozny was held in Mozdok on November 22, 1994. The "opposition" leadership was able to attend courtesy of Russian Army Mi-8 helicopters, which flew them to Znamenskoye. The meeting was headed by Generals Kotenkov and Zhukov. The plan was as follows: Forty T-72 tanks crewed by either Russian or

and end up retreating. The incident passes without fighting.

August 25, 1994: The opposition holds a rally in the village of Staraya Sunzha, a suburb of Grozny. It is attended by R. Khasbulatov. The protesters call on the republican populace to join a political strike and civil disobedience to the republican leadership.

That same day, President Dudayev speaks at a rally of his followers, at Independence Square. Among other things, he announces that "Khasbulatov's goal is to provoke a war in Chechnya, in order to effect his return to the Russian political stage by spilling Chechen blood."

August 25, 1994: Republican special service agents capture Stanislav Krylov, an FSK counter-terrorism officer, as well as the people with him. Under interrogation, the officer admits that there are Russian military specialists and FSK agents in Chechnya who are coordinating the operations of the so-called Chechen opposition.

August 26, 1994: Twenty armed groups join Khasbulatov's "peacekeeping mission."

August 29, 1994: A meeting of task groups from the Provisional Council of Umar Avturkhanov and the "peacekeeping group" of Ruslan Khasbulatov, which is assembled to draft a document unifying the two wings of the opposition, decides to unite the anti-governmental forces under the aegis of the Provisional Council. Beslan Gantamirov becomes the commander of the armed units of the opposition.

August 30, 1994: From the newspaper *Segodnya*: "Avturkhanov's Provisional Council in Znamenskoye receives 'multifaceted assistance' from Russia, and not solely in the form of money for 'paying pensions and salaries' as was officially announced. North Caucasus units of the MVD and the defense ministry are being scoured for 'volunteers' to serve under the Provisional Council. It is said that General Kotenkov has been put directly in charge of this by Sergei Shakhrai, his former senior colleague in the government as well as within the Party of Russian Unity and Accord.

At the moment, it is difficult to say how just these accusations are, but they at any rate explain why during his press conference last Friday, Sergei Shakhrai was so confident when he claimed that "realistically, Dudayev has 120 people to defend him, while Umar Avturkhanov has three Special Forces battalions. How would a vice-premier without a portfolio know a thing like this with such certainty?"

July-August 1994: Under the command of B. Gantamirov, opposition forces take control of Urus-Martan and a large part of Urus-Martanovsky District, vacating the acting district administration (the district executive administration of the President).

Yusup Elmurzayev becomes head of the new district administration. According to some sources, several security agency personnel are killed during this seizure of power.

Late August and early September 1994: Several Russian helicopters conduct airstrikes against three Chechen villages. At the outskirts of Grozny, an armored column which, it seems, also included Russian military personnel, tries unsuccessfully to attack republican forces. Losing a tank, an APC and several people captured, the followers of the Provisional Council retreat. In reply, security personnel unblocked the Rostov-Baku line in the vicinity of Argun.

mixed Russo-Chechen crews storm Grozny (according to another version, there were 50 tanks); they are supported by 26 APCs and no fewer than 46 GAZ-66 trucks carrying "opposition" fighters. Communications with the headquarters in Mozdok as well as among the various subdivisions were to be provided by 80 R-105 "M" radio stations and four C2 vehicles, one of which was immediately given to the "peacemaker" Khasbulatov.

The overall number of "opposition" forces advancing on Grozny was supposed to be approximately 3,500–4,000 troops — at least, such was the number of knit caps, all of one color to ensure friend or foe identification, that was issued to the troops on the eve of the assault. The assault on the city itself was to be effected from two directions — from 16 starting positions in Priterechye to the north, under the command of Kelimatov, and from two starting positions in the direction of Urus-Martan to the southwest, under the command of Gantamirov. There was to be 20–25 tanks in each of the main columns. Another 18 assault groups were to remain in reserve. According to the plan developed in Mozdok, the assault groups were supposed to move on Grozny on November 26, 1994 at 4:30 a.m. — and were supposed to have already surrounded the presidential palace by 6:00 a.m. Besides this, the plan called for the occupation of the television station. The ground troops were promised air support from gunships.

As always, the plan began falling apart immediately. When at 3:00 a.m., "Pritirechye Army Commander" Kelimatov gathered the commanders of his assault groups, it turned out that the militants were not ready to move out yet. "The tasks that Avturkhanov had been responsible for had not been completed: There was a shortage of transportation and gasoline, and the radio station's batteries had not been charged. All of this was discovered at the precise moment that the advance was to commence." As a result, some troops set out in the transportation on hand, others set out on foot, "while the tanks began dashing around from gas station to gas station in search of diesel. There was basically no communication between the commanders and the columns." Sunrise found Kelimatov's assault group back on Tersky Ridge — instead of beside Dudayev's palace like the plan called for. Fighting in Grozny was already under way. Only around 9 a.m. did the column pass the cannery, but by that time the assault battalion had lost its command: Commander Yakhya Gerikhanov had been killed, while the head of the field staff and a company commander had been wounded. As it turned out, Gerikhanov's battalion, which had been the first to break through to the presidential palace, found itself in under fire from all sides: "The enemy had prepared an ambush throughout the entire residential sector."

I should think so! Given the way that the Grozny assault had been organized, it would have been astonishing if those whom it was directed against, knew nothing about it. How could they not, when entire columns of tanks and APCs were being driven from Mozdok straight through the entire republic, while 3–4 thousand armed men suddenly appeared in several strongholds. To say nothing of all the reconnaissance work that had been done at a time when the most sensitive information could be bought or sold for pennies — or simply leaked through relatives. Under these circumstances, the preparation of mobile anti-armor ambushes was strictly a technical matter.

And this is even more so the case considering that the "opposition" had no clear or comprehensible plans whatsoever. Having reached the House of Print, Avturkhanov halted his advance, set up his staff, contacted Mozdok and reported to his accomplishments to his masters. Instead of leading his assault groups, Gantamirov tarried there too, gradually losing contact with his subdivisions. As it turned out later, his formations got stuck near Chernorechye and never moved further. Another two battalions under Kelimatov's command, in his words, "vanished into thin air." In other words, utter chaos: no communications, no command, and no one knowing what to do. "Avturkhanov was silent. The 'operation' continued on its own," Kelimatov wrote later. "The main thing was to wait it out. Through his silent assent and with Mozdok's and Moscow's approval, it was indicated that everything was going as planned." Meanwhile, the tanks were driving around the streets of an unfamiliar city without any infantry support — from ambush to ambush, gradually melting away under the RPG fire. The "opposition" militants grew utterly demoralized. When Avturkhanov went out to address his men, no one was listening to him anymore "because the aircraft promised by him and Kotenkov had never appeared [...] and because he had failed to provide his fighters with transportation and communications and had let down the tank crews, betraying their trust and faith." Initially, the "opposition" field commanders were not particularly worried, since they remembered that according to the Mozdok plan, the Russian troops would follow right behind the "militant opposition" in order to establish "constitutional order" and therefore finish of "Dudayev's forces." And yet, Kotenkov's staff stayed quiet all day. As for the local residents, Kelimatov was to lament, "During the entire time that we were in Grozny, not a single volunteer from the city militia joined our forces."

The Chechen scenario was clearly developed on the example of the Afghan scenario: Enter Grozny with armor (and Russian crews) and then, as Ruslan Khasbulatov admits, establish "a puppet government of 'national revival' in Chechnya, which would issue a special decree legalizing the introduction of Russian regulars. [...] As for D. Dudayev, his fate was to be the same as that of Hafizullah Amin, shot to death during the assault on the presidential palace in Kabul — this was the plan." But everything went awry and, as General Kulikov writes, "Following this assault, which revealed the opposition's inability to deal with Dudayev on its own, new measures will be chosen." All told, the people from "the shelves of the KGB archives," did not do the job they were given and the Kremlin was forced to send in the army. And at the same time, could it be that this is exactly what the first set of puppets was supposed to do?

Several days later in the same city, units under the control of President Dudayev destroy the armed group of crime boss and political opportunist Ruslan Labazanov, which had been robbing and terrorizing the populace. A further attempt is made to cleanse Urus-Martanovsky District of pro-Russian opposition groups. However, the operation is canceled on September 1 as a result of protests by local citizens who do not want combat operations to take place in their vicinity. The republican forces retreat, having suffered 15 casualties killed.

The commanders of security agencies loyal to Dzhokhar Dudayev tried variously to avoid a full-scale civil war. As a result, hoping for a peaceful solution to the conflict, they were often willing to engage in mediation with their opponents. It was with this goal in mind, for example, that they met with representatives of Ruslan Khasbulatov and Beslan Gantamirov. However, the opposition, which was by this point being openly nudged to more decisive actions by Russian special services and was interested only in power, tried to exploit these opportunities to neutralize the president and the republican government. Consequently, time after time, negotiations would end up in a dead end.

September 1, 1994: A clash takes place in Urus-Martanovsky District between government forces and units loyal to B. Gantamirov, the former head of the Grozny city council. Both sides suffer casualties with, according to some sources, between 9 and 11 men killed and up to 5 wounded.

September 2, 1994: A brief clash takes place in the vicinity of Dolinsky Township between units of the pro-Russian opposition and government forces.

September 3, 1994: The Russian government disseminates an appeal to the Chechen people in which it calls on Dudayev "to find the courage to resign peacefully and honorably."

Night of September 5, 1994: Government forces repeatedly storm the positions of Ruslan Labazanov's armed group in the city of Argun. The opposition suffers serious casualties with dozens killed and up to 70 captured. According to the ChRI MVD, there are four Russian military instructors and one deputy head of the Provisional Council among them. Precise data about republican casualties is unavailable.

September 5, 1994: Troops in the North-Caucasus Military District are set to high alert. Russian leaders and hardliners increase their support for the Provisional Council. According to human rights activists, the RF General Staff issues directive No. 312/1/0112sh, according to which the North Caucasus military district is to use the MVD to supply the opposition with ten APCs and six helicopters gunships and their crews.

September 6, 1994: Grozny celebrates the third anniversary of the republic's independence.

The towns of Argun and Shali remain in mourning for the casualties of recent fighting.

September 7, 1994: FSK leadership submits a criminal complaint to the Russian Prosecutor General on the grounds of the mass killings in Chechnya.

September 7, 1994: Battlefield failures spur opposition leaders to seek closer coordination for their operations. Head of the Provisional Council Umar

Ida KUKLINA:

Only the Kremlin is responsible for the war

The first trip: A mistake with Dudayev

In mid-September 1994, as isolated reports were beginning to appear in the Russian press that Dzhokhar Dudayev had begun to fight with the opposition, Andrei Kamenschikov from the *International Non-Violence* organization came to our Committee (The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia — *Editor's note*) and asked if we wanted to take a trip to Chechnya. Before that, we would discuss the events in Chechnya, but we had not yet associated them with our immediate work. At this point, however, we were forced to ask ourselves: Is this "our" war or "not our" war? We decided that it was. The first to make the trip were Galina Sevruk and I. We went with a delegation assembled from various NGOs — Andrei Kamenschikov, Vladimir Sukhov, and the Quaker Chris Hunter. Five people in total. Andrei had his own plan for mediating the conflict, while we hadn't given it much thought, deciding that we would figure that out once we were there. We traveled by way of Nazran, waiting there for a long time until Chris Hunter, who knew people there, could arrange for a car to take us to Chechnya.

Back then, Dudayev's palace was still standing in Grozny. Across from it stood the Kavkaz, an old-fashioned Soviet hotel decked out in red plush inside. We settled down there and decided to pay a visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the morning. This decision, in hindsight, was a mistake. We spent a long time thinking — should we go to the foreign ministry or to directly to Dudayev? Since Chechnya had already declared its independence, we decided that it would be more polite to start with the foreign ministry. We went there the next morning and were received by the minister himself [Shamsuddin Yusef — *Editor's note*], a very impressive Jordanian — a large man with luxurious rings on his fingers.

The minister inquired about the purpose of our visit. We each explained what our respective organizations did. Galina and I said that we had heard rumors alleging that our soldiers serving in the Tank Division stationed near Solnechnogorsk were being approached with offers to go to Chechnya as tankers and were being promised a million rubles and a premature discharge to do so. There were already accounts that some of the soldiers had been taken prisoner. We asked minister to show us at least one prisoner and said that we would be okay not speaking to him: We simply wanted to make sure that this was really a Russian soldier. If it was, the military mothers would start an anti-war campaign against armed violence and, especially, against our country's armed forces killing their own citizens. Back in those days, the world was still divided into terrorists and peaceful civilians.

After the negotiations, we were offered to return to the hotel. After that, we spoke with the chairman of the Chechen Committee for Human Rights and met with various Chechen elders. In the evening, our Chechen hosts suddenly decided to relocate us to the "French hotel." In the morning, Galina and I were hungry, so we went to the market. The women there, the vendors, were very surprised to see us and began asking who we were and where we were coming from. From Moscow, we explained. Quite spontaneously a rally of women formed around us, all of them expressing their opposition to the war. And by the way, they were very critical of Dudayev, especially for his opposition to women's access to education. He said that women didn't need education — and were better off gathering pinecones in the woods. The women, on the other hand, said they did not want war, that with the beginning of the blockade on Chechnya, it had become more difficult to live, that formerly they would travel to Moscow, buy goods there and find some way to survive, but that all that had ended. Many of them had relatives in Moscow. After this rally, we began to understand the local situation a little better. We met with the Council of Elders once more, and we decided to pay a visit to Dudayev. However, the next morning a messenger from the foreign ministry told us: "Stay here [in the hotel] and wait." The commander of Dudayev's personal guard, as I understand it, his bodyguard, came to pay us a visit. His name was Arsanukayev and he examined us for about three hours. He was wearing a leather "paramilitary" jacket. I figured he had a pistol on him, but for some reason we didn't take all this very seriously because we were dead certain that we posed no threat to anyone. We had the purest intentions and so we instantly placed all our cards on the table. To be honest, we couldn't keep from giggling a bit as we answered his questions, which annoyed him very much. We were again relocated to the Kavkaz and told again to sit and wait until someone told us what to do next. Late that night, shooting broke out at the Square. We could see it from our balcony.

The next day, we were called to the foreign ministry and told that we, the two "Military Mothers" posed no particular threat to Ichkeria but had to leave Chechnya nonetheless. The officials began discussing how they would arrange our "deportation" in our presence. The discussion went on for a long while. It sounds funny, but that's what happened. At some point, I proposed, "Just give us a tank. I'll sit in front, on the barrel, and we'll be on our way." Here, the officials realized that they were overthinking things, so they furnished us with a Gazelle van and a driver who spent the entire trip complaining about how expensive gasoline was. They sent us back to Nazran. From there, we flew to Moscow. That first trip taught us that the Chechen War is our war: Our sons would fight and die in Chechnya. We, like the Chechen women, were against this war.

The second trip: The troops marched and marched

The organizers of the Assembly of Repressed Peoples invited us to the assembly which was to be held in Nazran (on December 5–12). That was right on the eve of the invasion of

Avturkhanov and former speaker of the Russian Supreme Soviet Ruslan Khasbulatov, whose representatives had arrived at the Council headquarters the day before, take the lead in developing a combined strategy.

September 8, 1994: Units from the North Caucasus Military District seize control of roads leading from Chechnya as well as the regional airspace **(according to an official sources cited in the newspaper Narod, Issue No. 4, September, 1994).**

Evening of September 13, 1994: Opposition forces attack a bridge across the Terek River in the vicinity of Chervlennaya Stanitsa. According to opposition sources, they manage to capture the bridge, a tank and nine government soldiers. Though Grozny acknowledges the attack and the soldiers' capture, it claims that it has retained control over the bridge.

September 17, 1994: Following a preliminary artillery barrage, government forces surround Tolstoy-Yurt. The cousin of the former chairman of the Supreme Council, Uvais, dies in the clash. Armor and even combat helicopters are used in this attack on one of the centers of the opposition. Officially, Grozny declares that Tolstoy-Yurt has been captured. It is also mentioned that Ruslan Khasbulatov's older brother, Yamilkhan, has managed to escape to Nadterechny District with three hundred refugees. There is no precise information about Khasbulatov himself by September 19.

Opposition forces tried to relieve their allies from Nadterechny District but were stopped near the village of Ken-Yurt. ChRI forces will decamp from around Tolstoy-Yurt on September 28.

September 19, 1994: Deputy Minister for Ethnic Affairs Alexander Kotenkov and the head of the Moscow FSK, Yevgeny Savostyanov, recall former head of the RSFR Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov, to Moscow. According to the former speaker himself, he manages "to find out that the armed forces were ordered to draft a plan to employ forces from the North Caucasus Military District in an operation in Chechnya and that a specialized command unit has been formed answering to the defense minister and the commander of the North Caucasus Military District."

September 20, 1994: Avturkhanov announces that a peaceful solution to the problem is on the verge of exhaustion and that the Provisional Council has the right to "deliver a blow against the Dudayev regime to ensure his fall."

September 21, 1994: Appearing at a press conference in Moscow, Ruslan Khasbulatov, the head of the "peacekeeping mission," announces that he intends to "convince Russian society of the need to provide military-technical assistance to the Provisional Council."

September 27, 1994: Republican security agencies attempt an operation in Nadterechny District. According to the opposition, more than 500 people with 10 tanks take part in an assault on several population centers around the district. The Provisional Council believes that the operation's objective is to surround opposition forces in Znamenskoye. But the operation is called off once more in the face of the threat of open conflict and casualties among the civilian population.

September 27, 1994: Opposition units from Urus-Martan launch a raid on Chernorechye, a suburb of Grozny, capturing ChRI prosecutor Usman Imayev who had gone out to negotiate with them.

December 11. We went to the assembly with a peace plan. It was called the "Blue Ribbon" plan. Today it seems naive, but back then, no one knew any better: we had no idea what to do or how to act in general. The "Blue Ribbon" signified that everyone who wanted could enter Chechnya, but that the Chechen border had to be closed to arms shipments. The plan was a very simple one: First a blockade of the borders and after that, negotiations. There were Chechens at the assembly, as well as representatives from all the oppressed ethnicities. There were Cossacks there too, and we noticed that there were serious disagreements between them. Back then we didn't delve too deeply into those kinds of things. I made a speech at the assembly, presenting our plan. As strange as it sounds now, people listened to me. And then came the news: It was announced that troops had appeared in Ingushetia. The invasion had begun. The assembly was interrupted and then resumed, but not for long.

The Chechens were very reserved during the assembly, saying simply that they would fight for their independence. And the Cossacks too — after all, this was an assembly of oppressed peoples, so anyone who had suffered from oppression during the Soviet era was represented at it. But no one knew how to react to the unfolding events. No one could imagine what was coming or its consequences. There was some kind of mental confusion: Some would say that it was necessary to pass new laws; others claimed that the laws already existed and simply needed to be enforced so that people could return to their land. Still others said that this was impossible. There was no concrete, clear understanding that a war was already underway. It was impossible to get into Chechnya. The Russian troops had closed the borders. Ingush women tried to stop the column of troops but without success. Meanwhile, I recalled how in 1956, Hungarian mothers would throw themselves under Soviet tanks. And all the while, the troops marched and marched closer to Grozny. We returned to Moscow, and initiated discussion at the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers: What could we do to facilitate peace?

We discussed all the issues among ourselves and began to think about what we would do next. The troops were on their way; our soldiers would be killed as would peaceful civilians. The ideology of our organization is nonviolence. And here, armed violence was erupting on all sides...

In mid-December we received a telegram from the Council of Elders of the Chechen Parliament: "The soldiers' mothers are welcome to come pick up their sons." We decided that we would go there and take back anyone they would release to us. So we formed a primary group of soldiers' mothers. However, due to our lack of experience, we told the Moscow mothers that we were collecting packages, including New Year's presents for conscripts that were fighting in Chechnya. As a result, we received an immense number of things. We did not yet understand what we had gotten ourselves involved in. Firstly, none of these things were necessities, which was dumb, and secondly it was impossible to deliver all of them. The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers had one tiny room and a telephone at its disposal. Nevertheless, somehow — I don't even know how — we managed to get a truck. Our committee's representative, Maria Kirbasova, took all these presents to Chkalovsky Airport. She spent two days there but didn't manage to send the packages. In the end, this groups of soldiers' mothers, headed by Maria Kirbasova, was the first to go to war-torn Chechnya by way of Makhachkala at the very beginning of 1995. Through Khasavyurt, she was brought to Grozny where the soldiers' mothers found themselves in Dudayev's palace. Russian POWs were being held there. They had been sitting in the palace's basement for quite a long while already.

The prisoners were released at long last. The Chechens gave us a car to transport them. Among the POWs there was a soldier who had been conscripted from Bashkiria. His mother had been the first to come to Moscow and approach our Committee for help. She managed to free her son, though she almost lost him again: As they were loading the POWs into the car, he fell behind (he was very weak) and was almost left in Grozny. But everything worked out successfully.

The generals' baggage

The soldiers' mothers were accommodated in the same basement where the prisoners were kept. It was a difficult time. They lived there for over two weeks, all the while trying to persuade the Chechens to release their sons. The convincing was long and hard, and all the while there were many unknowns. They got a good look at the terrible events that took place in Grozny during the winter of 1995 too. After the New Year's slaughter, when an entire brigade of Russian troops was basically destroyed, all that remained was wet snow, blood, dirt and bodies, many bodies. The Chechens then proposed a truce so that the Russians could gather their fallen. This was important to the Chechens due to Islamic burial rites, but the Russians refused. Dogs gnawed the bodies. The soldiers' mothers saw all of this. But they could not stop the slaughter. In those days they did, however, squeeze out a small but important victory — they returned to Russia with more than 20 living soldiers.

Something had to be done with the New Year's packages the Russian mothers had sent — the Committee was responsible for delivering them. To solve this problem, my two colleagues and I traveled to Chkalovsky Airport. I don't know how I managed it, but I finally reached the chief of the General Staff and caused a row. Nothing worked at first, but finally they gave us permission and stuffed an airplane chock-full of barbed wire with our packages.

We flew to Mozdok where the military base was located; however, due to the weather, we were diverted to Beslan. That's where a colonel from the RF Armed Forces told us the name of a servicemember, a conscript, who became the first entry on our long and mournful list of soldiers who had died during the First Chechen War.

When we reached Mozdok, we spent a long time trying to find someone who could help us distribute the cargo. We never found anyone unfortunately. In the end, we all but forced the hospital to take the packages, foisting the majority of them on the ward for the gravely wounded who were tended to by a brigade of doctors from Burdenko Hospital. Even that ward was already full of various domestic products that people kept bringing and bringing from the surrounding villages.

We accommodated alongside the lightly wounded. It was horrible to see the boys in there — some had wounded arms, some had wounded legs...They

September 28, 1994: The Russian government's press service announces that "the attack by Dudayev's armed groups" on populated areas of Nadterechny District supposedly signals the ChRI's authorities' final refusal to pursue a peaceful solution to the crisis. "This armed action against one's own people," according to the press release, has committed with the goal of "provoking Russia to introduce regular army units" and thereby unite "the dissolving ranks of Dudayev's supporters." Support provided to the opposition is strengthened. The Provisional Council is issued another ten APCs and six helicopter gunships with crew complements.

September 30, 1994: Unmarked helicopters shell Severny Airport (five civil and two military aircraft are destroyed) and the aviation training center in Kalinovskaya Stanitsa. Four such sorties are made by the end of November, with up to nine helicopters taking part.

It is well known that the "unidentified" helicopters are based in Mozdok. However, when asked about this by Russian media outlets, the press service for the defense ministry, the General Staff, the headquarters of the North Caucasus Military District, VVS command and Army Aviation command categorically denies any ownership of the aircraft bombing Chechnya — while encountering some difficulties in explaining how and why these UFOs are operating with impunity in Russian-controlled airspace.

October 2, 1994: Russian helicopter gunships that had been supplied to the Provisional Council attack a military airfield in the vicinity of Kalinovskaya Stanitsa.

October 3, 1994: Russian helicopters conduct an airstrike against a fortified military post manned by republican forces near the capital.

October 10, 1994: During yet another airstrike, 24 republican citizens are killed and more than a 100 are wounded. In response, Dzhokhar Dudayev announces a curfew in Grozny and a state of war across the republic.

October 13, 1994: Elements from the ChRI security agencies attack and disperse the base being used by opposition units in the vicinity of Gekhi in Urus-Martanovsky District. A portion of the heavy weapons given by the Russians to the opposition is captured.

October 15, 1994: At about 3 p.m., units of the pro-Russian opposition under the command of Umar Avturkhanov, Beslan Gantamirov and Ruslan Labazanov enter Grozny from Staraya Sunzha and Chernorechye. Preliminary airstrikes are made against several facilities in the city.

However, after the first serious casualties — 20 people killed and 10 units of armor destroyed — the opposition retreats to Nadterechny and Urus-Martanovsky Districts.

Several dozen people are taken captive, among them, according to official data, between 12 and 15 Russian officers. Nevertheless, judging from an October 16 interview with captured opposition fighters aired on Grozny TV, most of the prisoners are Chechens.

October 1994: Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev is directed by Yeltsin to form a General Staff Operations Group for Chechnya within the Russian General Staff's Main Operations Directorate. The group is tasked with developing case scenarios involving the application of high pressure on the republic and to coordinate the actions of the Russian Army, MVD, FSK and border troops. The task of this group is to develop scenarios, including troop deployment and military

really were only lightly wounded, but the mental trauma the war had inflicted on them was very serious indeed. They were all obsessed by one thought — to go back and continue fighting. I remember one young man yelling, as he barely hobbled on one leg, "Everyone in my company is dead! I'm the only one left! I want to go back!" We did our best to calm them and get them to at least write letters to their parents. The Mozdok base itself was surrounded by barbed wire. There was a major sitting at one of the entrances and to the question, "Where is my son?" asked by each parent of a crowd of parents surrounding him, he would reply, "There is no available information at the moment."

In the winter of 1995, Alpha-Bank announced that it would be sending presents for Russian soldiers "on the front." There were many generals on the flight to Mozdok with us. On our way back to Moscow, we were astonished by the number of boxes from Alpha-Bank that were being transported back with us. What was in the boxes, we don't know, but back in Beslan we had asked a little soldier guarding our plane whether he ever got anything from Alpha-Bank. "Yes," he replied, "I got a beanie to wear under my ushanka. When we arrived in Moscow, several Volga limousines drove up to the plane, quickly loaded up the baggage and the generals and departed. Meanwhile, we went walking on foot to the exits.

"Goods for exchange"

Over the following years, the soldiers' mothers visited Chechnya many times. I was in Sernovodsk and in Samashki, and I went two additional times during the negotiations with the OCSE. We spent a week living in a mountain village — a Polish correspondent had given us a tip about a POW, and the Chechens had promised to give us "a whole sack" full of military IDs collected from dead conscripts. Once, back at the start of the war, they gave me ten such military IDs, which led to an article in *Izvestia*, listing the names of the fallen. From the very beginning of the war, the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers began to compose lists of the fallen and the missing. We would regularly send this information to the General Staff. At the OCSE-monitored talks in Grozny, in the summer of 1995, we met a colonel from the Commission for Prisoners of War, the Missing and Internees. He had his own list and a portion of the last names on it matched our own information. But ours was twice as long! He began to copy from our list, writing down the names of those who could still be found.

Back in Moscow meanwhile, entire crowds of mothers would come to our Committee, asking for assistance in finding their sons. There were also some for whom we raised money, setting up a tent at the market with a banner that read "Help Find a Missing Son in Chechnya." We had a map of Chechnya hanging on our wall and we would explain to the mothers the various details of the possible routes — through Khasavyurt or through Nazran.

Initially, if the mother got lucky and found her son, the Chechens would release him. If he was a conscript and not a contractor or officer. Later, our armed forces decided they needed "goods for exchange" and began to grab anyone — civilians, women, combatants or noncombatants. That's when everyone started fussing about the POWs and it became more and more difficult to free them. All the while, Russian mothers were streaming and streaming into Chechnya. There were on average 200–300 mothers there, traveling the breadth of the republic, looking for their sons. And up until the end of the war, basically none of the mothers went missing (with the exception of one). The Chechens never harmed them. But by the winter of 1996, the mothers began having difficulties with lodging and food. They tried to survive in basements, they went hungry. The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers tried to ensure that those mothers who were in Grozny were given a place to sleep, in Khankala and at Severny Airport. They would sleep there, in bunk beds stacked three beds high and they would be given military rations to eat.

Night on the Bridge over the Sunzha River

In the fall of 1995, we went to Chechnya with Galina Sevruk to deliver money to the hungry soldiers' mothers there. The money had been collected for them by German women. I was terrified that someone would take the bag of millions (back then that was a lot of money) that I was carrying underarm. We distributed a part of the money right away in Severny Airport (lightening the load of responsibility considerably). Each mother would fill out a special form, detailing her search. Later on, a human rights organization based in Duesseldorf published these documents. After that we went to Khankala, where the "secondary base" of the soldiers' mothers was located. However, nightfall, which comes more abruptly in the south, caught us as we were in the center of town. There was no light at all — you could just as well pluck your eyes out. We made our way on foot toward the bridges spanning the Sunzha River. We asked for permission to spend the night, begging the MVD soldiers to accommodate us and showing them our papers (which stated that we were assistants to a parliamentary candidate: in 1995, we were working with Ella Pamfilova to form a bloc in the State Duma), but the soldiers refused. After that we approached the OMON riot police manning the checkpoint at the transportation bridge over the Sunzha and asked them to let us spend the night in their barracks. Here too we were turned away. They left us there without a second glance as they got on their bus. All that remained was a checkpoint that was barricaded with cement blocks to chest height. It was manned by our little soldiers — the conscripts.

It was they who gave us shelter that night, after obtaining permission from their young lieutenant (whose nickname was "Hundred Grams"). All of that night, the checkpoint was in a shootout with the Chechens. Our hearts would break as we listened to the soldiers' stories and observed them — the boys wanted us to see them as men who could protect us defenseless mothers. Yet we felt not fear whatsoever. We even found the time to have dinner in the evening. The soldiers (just kids!) were happy when we gave them chocolates. We ate canned buckwheat with corned beef. By midnight, I fell asleep, but Galina stayed up for a long time, conversing with the boys. I awoke at seven and stepped out of the cramped "shelter." All around me was a carpet of

operations. The group is headed by Deputy Head of the Main Operations Directorate Lieutenant-General Anatoly Kvashnin, and Lt. Gen. Leonty Shevtsov. In December 1994, the former will lead the Combined Forces fighting in Chechnya and the latter will become the operation's chief of staff.

During the same month, a detachment of the pro-Russian opposition in Chechnya consisting of 120 people under the supervision of officers from the 33rd Motor Rifle Regiment holds a four-week training course at the "Prudboy" training area of the Volgograd 8th Army Corps of the Russian Army.

October 19–20, 1994: Chechen security forces undertake the first major operation against the pro-Russian opposition. In the vicinity of the village Gekhi in Urus-Martanovsky District, a detachment of Beslan Gantamirov is defeated.

Backed by armored vehicles and artillery, republican troops launch an offensive against Urus-Martanovsky District, attacking the district center where the headquarters of Beslan Gantamirov is located.

Another force sets out in the direction of Tolstoy-Yurt, the residence of the "peace group" of Ruslan Khasbulatov; it does not however engage opposition forces located there.

October 20, 1994: Chechen security forces conduct another operation against armed elements of the pro-Russian opposition. Having blockaded Nadterechny District in several places (along the Terek Ridge to the south and east, at the Terek River to the north, and at the village of Bratskoye on the border with North Ossetia to the west), they launch an attack on a detachment of Beslan Gantamirov's militants that has taken refuge in the territory of the former Soviet missile unit near the village Gekhi in Urus-Martanovsky District. During the day the detachment is routed. It becomes obvious that even the well-armed elements of the opposition are unable to turn the tide in their favor. From that point onward, the Russian side transitions from financial and material support to direct participation in the inter-Chechen conflict.

October 25, 1994: An armored detachment of government troops tries to take Tolstoy-Yurt, but is met by village elders who persuade the troops to avoid engaging in fratricide. The column returns to Grozny in an orderly manner and the Chechen interior minister Ayub Satuyev who, according to some sources, is held responsible for this failure is dismissed.

October 26, 1994: According to the ChRI MVD, a formidable group of armed residents from Gudermessky District travels to Tolstoy-Yurt, seeking to avenge three compatriots who had been shot by the opposition on charges of organizing terrorist attacks in Tolstoy-Yurt. The militia members are not set on full-on combat and promise to leave if the main perpetrators of the execution — Khasbulatov and Labazanov — are handed over to them. According to ChRI Department of State Security staff, village elders as well as official representatives of the Chechen leadership took part in resolving the dispute.

November 1, 1994: According to human rights sources, the RF increases its support for the Chechen opposition Under General Staff directive DGSh No. 312/1/0130sh under which the North Caucasus Military District supplies the opposition with 40 tanks.

November 3–9, 1994: Officers of the FSK Directorate for Chechnya, acting

shells (they had been shooting from a machine gun and their AKs). Suddenly I see: The APC which had been pulled halfway into the checkpoint, had its side door open, and a soldier had laid down to sleep halfway into the vehicle to keep warm. We were ordered to go to Khankala on the first bus that pulled up to the checkpoint. The driver, an older Chechen with a large beard, was ordered to deliver us without any problems. He did as he was told.

It is the Kremlin that's guilty of this war

During the same trip, we got together with the Chechen women and organized a picket called "We are Against the War" at the entrance to Khankala. On my subsequent trip to Chechnya, I went with a large delegation from foreign NGOs. That time I almost managed to attend Dudayev's final (before his death) press conference with western media (which by the way was full of invective against the West). Unfortunately, the soldiers' mothers were denied access. It was then, by the way, that I met an old acquaintance of Abu Arsanukayev [Dudayev's chief of security] and asked him, "Do you remember us?" He replied, "I wish I didn't."

There was also a trip to Khasavyurt. We went there to retrieve some POWs and military IDs. In Khasavyurt we were led across the "border" — a path across a railway bridge spanning a desiccated riverbed. There was a fleet of gasoline tanker trucks parked down there. They would transport Russian gasoline to Chechnya and return with homemade Chechen gasoline. They even showed us some kind of device that would extract the oil, which would then be processed to gasoline practically by hand. For some reason, the finished product came in three colors. [Dyes are added to fuels for taxation purposes — Translator's note.] Apparently, it would then be used to dilute "official" gasoline in Russia.

During one of our trips, a woman from Duesseldorf found a helmet among the ruins. It was just like the one used in her organization's logo — an overturned helmet with a flower in it. As she was going through customs back in Moscow, however, she was suddenly told that this dented, rusty helmet was state property. So we had to make a scene and threaten that we would hold a press conference that very day about it. Back then, they were still afraid of that. In the end, acting through its customs agent, the state abandoned its property rights to the helmet and the helmet traveled to Germany in the company of the mother who had found it among the ruins of Dudayev's palace in Grozny.

Meanwhile, following the State Duma's amnesty for those who took part in the conflict, the process of finding POWs became more and more difficult. Under the terms of the amnesty, a POW could be released for any Chechen serving time in the Russian prison system. Accordingly, the value of a POW spiked overnight. What followed was a slave trade. Relatives of incarcerated Chechens would seek out POWs in order to free their own.

Sometimes the POWs would still be released for free or for a nominal fee. (After all, what kind of means can a soldiers' mother have?) And sometimes the captors would release their POW for the same price that they had paid to acquire him. But this would all happen less and less frequently. Even today, there are several hundred soldiers, who saw action in Chechnya, who are on the missing persons list. Despite repeated promises from the General Staff, the lists of those who died in the war were never released. On the Chechen side, there were no organizations like the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers — they simply couldn't exist due to the different mentality. A Chechen man is a warrior; it is impossible to imagine that a woman would interfere with his fighting. To the contrary, the women would work in unison with the men.

The Chechen authorities — under Dudayev and under Maskhadov — never got in our way. Naturally they were only acting in their own self-interest. In their view, we would publicize the problem in Russian and European society; the fact that we wanted peace suited them. The war was cruel and absurd and brought only sorrow. Everything could have been done otherwise. The war in Chechnya was the best illustration of the chaos of the '90s. The first thing the Russians bombed was the Bank of Chechnya, which had been gambling with financial information. But we didn't think about that; we didn't know about it and couldn't influence it even if we did. All we did was talk to people — as freely as we could. Our only goals were to arrange the prisoners' release and to make peace.

When we were living in a mountain village, the situation was as follows: There were two battalions — a tank battalion and an MVD infantry battalion — that had entrenched themselves about two kilometers outside the village. We were waiting for the Chechens to give us the bag of military IDs they had promised us and we were losing hope that we would find the POW we had come looking for. We asked for permission to visit the Russian soldiers. Obviously, the Chechens kept an eye on us, but they did walk us to the edge of the village, from where we began walking toward the Russian troops. We spoke with the units' officers for a long time; they were happy to speak with us.

I asked, "You're in the 'green' [wooded cover] right now, you can't go anywhere. You'll be killed." The commander replied, "Of course. Every day the Brass call on the phone and tell me to clean out the green. But I care for my boys, so we pop out, shoot off a few rounds and hunker back down." That was the way the two sides coexisted: "Don't hurt me, and I won't hurt you." That way everyone can live. The Chechens came out to meet us on our way back to the village. Much later, I learned that this large, ancient village had been wiped right off the map during the Second Chechen War.

Our troops tried to make agreements with the villages — this was documented. Every incident had its own specifics.

Tanks in Grozny

When that stupid assault on Grozny started [on November 26, 1994], no one understood what was going on. At one of the press conferences, I asked, "Why did the tanks go in first? I can't understand it." But what had happened in Hungary was quite similar — I was there in 1956, working for customs — the tanks went in first there too. The first thing that happens is someone tosses a Molotov cocktail at the tank, the tank goes up in flames, the crew jumps out and are either shot on the

under the Provisional Council of the Chechen Republic and with the approval of the Counterterrorism Directorate (commanding officer — Lieutenant General A.P. Semenov) and the FSK Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (commanding officer — Colonel-General A.A. Molyakov), begin recruiting tank crews from among detachments stationed in the Moscow Military District. Deputy Minister for Ethnic Affairs A.A. Kotenkov supervises the sending of troops to the Caucasus with authorization from Chief of the General Staff Colonel-General M.P. Kolesnikov.

November 16, 1994: Russian mercenaries arrive in Mozdok and begin preparing 40 tanks for an assault on Grozny.

November 17, 1994: The Provisional Council sets the date for their final assault on Grozny. It is to be led by Umar Avturkhanov and Beslan Gantamirov. In order to coordinate the operation from Moscow, a large group of officers headed by M.P. Kolesnikov arrives in Mozdok. Direct command of combat operations is to be carried out by the deputy commander of the 8th Army Corps of the Volgograd V.I. Zhukov.

November 17, 1994: Armed formations of the pro-Russian **opposition attack a stronghold of republican forces near the village of Bratskoye in Nadterechny District (near the border with North Ossetia)**.

November 18, 1994: Russian armored vehicles that had been supplied to the opposition set out from Nadterechny District, shell a republican military post near the village of Dolinsky and pass over the Sunzha ridge near the village of Samashki in Urus-Martanovsky District.

November 20, 1994: A Russian armor column sets out from Mozdok in the direction of Bratskoye.

The village militia, tasked with defending the borders of the republic from this direction, end up retreating after four days of heavy fighting. The resulting corridor is to be used as a supply line for transferring arms shipments to Nadterechny District. Along with a large number of armored vehicles, the ensuing logistics operation transfers officers from the Kantemir and Taman Divisions of the Russian Army, as well as conscripts, graduates of the Russian Vystrel military training courses and others to the opposition.

They are all consolidated into the opposition forces, significantly strengthening and enhancing them.

Night of November 22, 1994: Another 20–25 tanks are deployed to Nadterechny District from Mozdok.

November 23, 1994: Around noon, Russian helicopters carry out an airstrike against the Shali Armored Regiment.

November 24, 1994: With support from Moscow, the opposition announces the formation of the Government of National Revival. Salambek Khadzhiyev is appointed prime minister; Abdula Bugayev and Ali Alavdinov become deputy prime ministers. The obvious purpose of this move — appealing to popular support by appointing authoritative and well-known politicians — is however reduced to zero because key posts in the government are filled with people who have no connection to the republic whatsoever: Gregory Khopersky is appointed to head the "Chechen" FSK and Vladimir Shumov is appointed Minister of the Interior. Two days later, an attempt is made to take Grozny by

spot or they burn to death inside the tank. In Grozny, the tanks had nowhere to turn around. They were sitting ducks. I remember a tank general's explanation (he was running for the State Duma) for why the tanks burned in Chechnya. He explained it all, but it didn't make it easier. When a Molotov cocktail or a grenade struck a tank, the ammunition inside would begin to explode. It was a mess. The realization that this was no way to wage war only came later — when it was too late and there was no way of stopping anything: "the forest brethren," the illegal armed formations, had already assembled themselves. People's attitudes varied greatly. But we, the soldiers' mothers, shared the same view — that this was a stupid, unnecessary war, which could have been avoided. Perhaps without it, Russia would have developed differently. We always said that this war was the Kremlin's fault. The politicians had failed to come to an agreement. They had failed to solve their problems peacefully.

It was a long, exhausting and cruel war. When the Battle of Grozny happened in August 1996, I remembered that a month earlier, when I was in Grozny, I had been surprised to see our troops fortifying their positions with heaps of sandbags. Was this supposed to prevent the city's recapture? Grozny was taken without any problems. In early August 1996, when the Chechens took Grozny back, the soldiers' mothers crawled out of there on their hands and knees — the Chechens were shooting everywhere.

The final undertaking of the Alliance of the Committees of Soldiers' Mothers were the talks with Akhmed Zakayev in London. By then the "counter-terrorism operation" had become just everyday life in the North Caucasus. It seemed like it had reached a dead end and would never be over. Now no one knows what will come next...and there's ISIS to deal with too.

Back then we wanted to act as middlemen for peaceful talks that would galvanize European involvement in our cause — that was our goal. We wanted Europe to participate in peaceful, constructive negotiations. We sent a letter to our field commanders. The hope was to hold the talks in Brussels, on neutral territory, but the Belgians refused to issue us visas. So we had to go to London. The English welcomed us without any questions. The talks were very difficult. There were four of us; we understood each other without having to say a word. The powers that be wanted to depict Zakayev as the chief Chechen terrorist living abroad, but he struck us as a peripheral figure. Each time some [contentious] issue was raised, he would send a message and wait for an answer — evidently from some more-senior figure in the Chechen community. In the end we came up with a pretty good statement to make to the European Parliament.

The first war ended. The second overflowed the Chechen borders. Now a different war is underway, a global one. ISIS is a global problem, like terrorism in general. [After September 11, 2001, US President George W.] Bush declared a war on terror; it is still being waged. Even Kadyrov cannot avoid its consequences: We should recall the recent attacks in Grozny [on December 4, 2014]. The soldiers' mothers still believe that even a flimsy peace is preferable to open war, that human life has value and must be protected; the soldiers' mothers do not want their sons to become cannon fodder.

Taimaz ABUBAKAROV

DUDAYEV AND THE OPPOSITION

We are publishing here a chapter from Taimaz Abubakarov's book, ***The Regime of Dzhokhar Dudayev: Truth and Fiction: The Notes of Dudayev's Minister of Economy and Finance (Moscow: INSAN, 1998)****.*
Beginning in November 1991, Taimaz Abubakarov served as minister of economy and finance in the government of Dzhokhar Dudayev; in December 1994, President Dudayev appointed him deputy prime minister and head of the Chechen delegation at the talks with the Russia.

How Dudayev coddled the opposition

Without going into detail about the relationship that existed between the government and the opposition, it bears emphasizing that the popular idea that Dudayev never sought peace or accord with his opponents is simply inaccurate. In any case, he never turned a deaf ear to this problem and took steps toward reconciliation with those who had joined the opposition, inviting, for example, its representatives to serve in his government and other state structures. This was how the younger brother of the notorious S. Khadzhiyev came to serve as deputy chairman of Dudayev's first post-revolutionary government. He was in charge of the entire republican energy industry. Later, he was transferred to the post of CEO of the "50th Anniversary of the USSR" Chemical Plant, the largest such facility of the Soviet era. In May 1993, Dudayev dismissed him from this post when documents appeared proving that the CEO has used budgeted funds to purchase 200 firearms, supposedly for the facility's security — which numbered 20 people.

During the ensuing audit, the weapons were not found. It is possible that they had been transferred to the opposition. As for the CEO, he vanished in order to escape arrest. Dudayev tried to forget this ugly story in his next government and appointed R. Gairbekov, a brother-in-law of Khadzhiyev's to the post of vice president, tasking him with overseeing a construction complex. One day, R. Gairbekov went to the so-called Theater Square where the opposition was holding its rallies. He never returned to Dudayev again. Dudayev's response to this was terse: "You can

storm. The assault fails with the complete defeat of anti-Dudayev forces in what is to become a prologue to the First Russo-Chechen War.

November 26, 1994: An attempt is made to storm Grozny. The armored columns manage to reach the center of the capital, where they are destroyed by grenade launchers. Many tank crews are killed and captured. The operation involves 1,200 men and 50 tanks, of which only 12 are staffed by ethnically Chechen crews. According to other sources, at least 36 T-72 tanks, several dozen APCs and 46 GAZ-66 trucks with machine gunners enter the city. In total, more than 3,000 personnel are committed in the operation. Russian aviation provides air support. Republican units and militia abandon their posts, granting the column free passage into the city, and then launch a counter attack. They suffer 20 people killed and 39 wounded in the fighting but manage to destroy 39 armored vehicles. Altogether, 120 people are taken prisoner, 68 of them are active members of the Russian armed forces. By evening, the remnants of the defeated opposition groups flee to Nadterechny District.

Three columns entered Grozny from three different directions. The columns consisted of T-72 tanks with Russian crews and trucks carrying fighters of the Provisional Council. Mi-24 gunships with Russian crews provided ground support. Descriptions of the assault vary depending on source. The general picture is that in the first hours of the operation, the columns advanced almost unopposed, although there are accounts suggesting that the column that came from Tolstoy-Yurt came under fire as it approached Grozny, near the village of Petropavlovskoye. The television station was taken without fighting and a detail of three tanks was posted to guard it. The rest of the force continued to move in the direction of the presidential palace but encountered serious resistance before they could reach it. The tanks that had been detailed to the television station soon surrendered to the republican unit tasked with protecting the station. By the evening of November 26, Provisional Council forces were either destroyed or captured. The rest fled Grozny. During the same evening, despite the failure of the assault, Russian TV channels reported that Grozny had been captured and that Avturkhanov had made a televised speech announcing the transition of power to the Provisional Council.

November 27, 1994: The ChRI government parades captured Russian servicemembers before journalists from various world press agencies. The soldiers admit that they came to the North Caucasus under contract with the counterintelligence service.

It is established that they are Russian military personnel. Prisoners tell reporters that they are under contract with the FSK. The recruited mercenaries are from the 2nd Guards Taman Motor Rifle Division, the 4th Guards Kantemir Tank Division, the 18th Independent Motor Infantry Brigade and the Vystrel senior officer training program. In total, Russian security agents recruited 82 soldiers. Of these, 78 went into battle on November 26, 1994: 24 tank crews (i.e. 72 tankers) and six others who were deployed among "Chechen" tank crews.

feed strange wolves all you want, they'll still run back to their pack."

It is known that the head of the opposition "family," S. Khadzhiyev, was repeatedly invited by Dudayev to join his government, but he refused for "ideological" reasons. Subsequently, Dudayev described Khadzhiyev's reasoning as follows: "He wanted me to be his president and to keep my nose out of the economy."

Then again, Khadzhiyev was not the only high-profile figure to hold these kinds of views. And yet Dudayev refused to concede in such matters to anyone and was perfectly justified in doing so — under the Constitution of the Chechen Republic, the president is also the head of government. Neither did Dudayev make similar concessions when they were being sought by a group of Chechen commanders, including the legendary Shamil Basayev and R. Gelayev. In the winter of 1993, these Chechen commanders spoke on local television and offered Dudayev to surrender the powers of prime minister and to appoint to this post A. Albakov, the director of the Grozny Oil Extraction Plant and a man who was considered a reliable supporter of the president. This attempt at pressuring the Dudayev did not work either. It is true that A. Albakov claimed that Dudayev himself had offered him the post of prime minister and could not understand the reason for the president's failure to follow up in this matter. But on the whole these were all purely internal squabbles.


President Dudayev at a meeting with elders, 1991.

Naturally, the relations between Dudayev and the opposition evolved in a completely different way. The problem was that until a certain point in time, Dudayev's opponents held back from attacking the idea of independence directly and limited themselves to a general critique of Dudayev's regime. This tactic enabled them to conceal the true goals of their movement. Publicly they criticized Dudayev not for the fact that he pursued a separatist policy, but for the fact that he did so impulsively, making crude mistakes that supposedly discredited the idea of Chechen independence as a whole. As long as the opposition held itself to this type of polemic, Dudayev had no desire to bar its participation in the republic's government. In this regard, I am reminded of an episode from November 1991, when the Russian president declared a state of emergency in Chechnya. During the night of November 8–9, I encountered the famous Dudayev opposition member A. Bugayev and his younger brother sitting in Dudayev's reception room. Both were armed and both declared to Dudayev that, despite their disagreements with his methods of governance, they were ready to defend their country. The president sincerely welcomed their outpouring of patriotism. The brothers spent that entire anxious night in Liberty Square among other volunteers, demonstrating a willingness to speak out against the invasion of Chechnya by Russian forces. And yet, hardly six months would pass before they would turn their weapons against Dudayev and, failing to achieve their desired objectives, begin to openly incite the Russian leadership to solve the Chechen problem militarily. On the whole, it is difficult to say when exactly the anti-Dudayev opposition turned anti-Chechen.

In my view, the question of Dudayev's commitment to resolving the situation can also be illustrated by an incident in the spring of 1994, when R. Khasbulatov paid a visit to Chechnya. Dudayev, despite his strained relations with the former speaker of the Russian parliament, decided to meet with him in Grozny. Thus, R. Khasbulatov was met at the airport by Chechen State Secretary A. Akbulatov and presidential aide M. Salamov. The two officials formally invited R. Khasbulatov to a meeting with Dudayev at the presidential palace. Khasbulatov, however, avoided the meeting, citing travel fatigue. The former inmate of Lefortovo spent that same evening frantically calling for an armed insurrection "against the tyranny of Dudayev." This was the kind of "peacemaker" he was.

How Dudayev pacified the opposition

The opposition made its first armed sortie against the Dudayev regime in the early morning of March 31, 1992. The rebels managed to capture the republican television center and the House of Radio. Upon hearing the news, I set out to meet Dudayev, who was still at home. He had already been apprised of these events. There was no anxiety in his demeanor. Later on, I would often notice that the president seemed to feel more confident in the most precarious situations than when everything was normal. When I reached Dudayev's home, I found Grozny Mayor B. Gantamirov and other supporters of Dudayev already assembled there. The guests, like the owner of the house, conducted them-

Four were fortunate: They remained in reserve.

November 28, 1994: Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev rejects the possibility that his soldiers were among Chechen opposition units, referring to this claim as "nonsense."

Night of November 28: The Russian president issues an ultimatum to the belligerents "to cease hostilities, lay down their arms, disband all armed groups and to release all captured or forcibly detained citizens."

November 29, 1994: ChRI President Dudayev announces that if the Russians do not recognize the prisoners as Russian soldiers, they will be shot. However, Russian officials still refuse to recognize their soldiers. During its session on the following day, the Security Council of the Russian Federation decides to take military action against Chechnya. In a speech at the session, Minister for Ethnic Affairs Nikolai Yegorov claims that "70% of Chechens support the deployment of troops," while the remaining 30% are indifferent.

November 30, 1994: Russian President Boris Yeltsin signs Secret Presidential Decree No. 2137s "On measures to restore constitutional law and order in the Chechen Republic," which provides for "the disarmament and elimination of armed groups on the territory of the Chechen Republic." The decree also confers specific powers — including some not provided for by the Constitution or laws of the Russian Federation — to the task group in charge of disarming and eliminating the armed groups.

According to the decree, "the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, MVD troops and the Federal Counterintelligence Service was ordered to stabilize the situation and disarm illegally armed formations (IAF) in the Chechen Republic." To implement the presidential decree, the RF General Staff issues directive number 312/1/00143sh which provides for the planning and carrying out of a special operation in Chechnya in cooperation with MVD troops, Federal Border Service troops and FSK subdivisions. The decision to go ahead with the operation is set for December 5, 1994. Per general staff instructions, troops from the North Caucasus Military District and the MVD start preparing for and planning the operation on November 30.

November 1994: Twelve people are killed during the shelling of Argun.

Late November, early December 1994: Russian military districts and the Russian Navy begin consolidating military units to be sent to the North Caucasus. Frontline aircraft and helicopter gunships are transferred to "designated airfields." According to the original plan, the operation is to be quick and, of course, "victorious." The concentration of MVD and MOD troops is to be completed by December 6. The advance to Grozny is to take place December 7–9, followed by a blockade of the city. The capital is to be taken by December 13 so that after another

selves as if there was nothing at all unusual occurring in the capital. Everyone was passing the time in quite general and unsubstantial conversations. For the sake of propriety, I gave them some time and then proposed we discuss the situation at hand. B. Gantamirov immediately stated that everything was under control, that the necessary measures had already been taken and that the opposition would be no more in an hour or two. Who could have known then that a year later this very man would become one of the main figures of the opposition? Yet by late evening the armed insurrection really had been squashed — though, not without casualties. It became evident that this would not be the end of the conflict. Naturally, we wanted to believe in unity and fraternity, but these were all illusory.

Dudayev, by the way, was so dissatisfied with the views of the individual members of his government on the events of March that he called for everyone to rid themselves of illusions and operate in a manner that would bolster resistance to the enemies of independence — a call that painfully recalled Stalin's famous thesis on the bolstering of the class struggle on the way toward socialism.

I would not attempt to judge the reasons for all of those events, but the confrontation with the opposition was rapidly approaching a tragic resolution. The climax came on the night of June 4–5, 1993, when republican armed forces were used to disperse an over-protracted rally in front of the Dramatic Theater in Grozny. Doubtlessly the protests really did interfere with everyday work, growing as they did in their aggressive obtrusiveness with each passing. There could be no possible talk about reforms or stabilization in that kind of environment. And there was certainly a need to ease the tension — though not at the price of bloodshed. There were many who told the president that such a turn of events would be inadmissible, including members of his government. I witnessed some of the talks that took place back then between Dudayev and officials from governmental and non-governmental organizations. I do not consider the president's position to have been unconstructive. In effect, he sought first the dissolution of the protests and second a dialog about all disputed issues. M. Mugadayev repeatedly raised the issue of appointing the well-known opposition members G. Elmurzayev and A. Bugayev to the posts of deputy prime ministers on social issues and foreign policy respectively. It appeared that Dudayev was ready to discuss and resolve this issue in principle but without making reference to a specific person until the protesters had dispersed. He even decided to demonstrate his peace-loving mood by personally visiting the opposition rally, stopping there while on his way home despite the late hour of the day. The protesters, however, were wound up by their own speeches and rumors of Dudayev's intention to disperse the rally and therefore regarded this visit as the start of violence, panicked and rudely attempted to stop the presidential motorcade. Dudayev's nephew was fatally wounded in the ensuing gunfight. A few days later, a car carrying the president's close associate I. Arsamikov and his friend was fired upon by the protesters. Both men died at the scene. Thus, under the guise of talk about peace and harmony, the bloodshed began even before the rally's dispersal. Afterward I frequently heard many people say that Dudayev simply decided to avenge the deaths of those close to him. I do not believe this was the case. Of course he was no pacifist, and he was capable of seeking revenge, but in this case his decision to fight the opposition with arms was dictated by different considerations.

The fact that Dudayev did not dramatize the situation and was not inclined to use force is evidenced by many facts, including the business trips he took abroad in those days — when the opposition, frightened by rumors of the government's nefarious designs, was feverishly arming itself. In my opinion, the straw that broke his patience was the collusion between rally leaders and the then leadership of the Interior Ministry, headed by acting Interior Minister Sh. Lorsanov, who reached his post as a result of a "collegial" conspiracy — a conspiracy between the ministry's Collegium members directed against Interior Minister S. Albakov, a supporter and protege of Dudayev's. Convening a meeting about a motion of no confidence in the minister, the Collegium members violated established procedure by blaming him for the inability to manage the fight against rioting and criminality. Without notifying the president, and in the absence of the minister himself, a majority of the Collegium voted to approve an unprecedented decision — to remove the minister from office and ask the president to approve this decision. In every possible sense, this was a conspiracy not merely against an unpopular minister but the president himself. Rumor had it that the threads of the conspiracy led to former friends of Dudayev's, including B. Gantamirov, who sought to place his own person atop the republican Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). Yet back then, there could be no talk of appointing one of the Grozny mayor's supporters to this post. Neither would it have been productive to attempt to keep S. Albakov in the minister's post, since by this point, it was not so much his work as his name that had become unpopular. The ensuing compromise had S. Albakov go on vacation which was to be followed by his resignation, while post of acting minister of internal affairs would be occupied by Sh. Lorsanov — a career civil servant with "vague" political views which enabled him to play both sides. It was he who assured the president that the potential rally had exhausted itself and would collapse any day now; in his view, it would be enough for the authorities to make a show of their readiness to act decisively. However, according to the acting minister, the police did not have enough firepower to put on a convincing enough show and he therefore requested Dudayev's permission to arm the regular police with rifles from the MVD's special armories. Initially, it seems that Dudayev did not trust any policeman whatsoever, and so he hesitated for a good while before finally giving his permission. When he finally did assent, the president set two conditions: no shooting and no violence. It soon became clear that the issued two thousand rifles simply fell into the hands of the opposition: It follows that Dudayev reinforced not his police, but his enemies. In addition to this, there was another incident involving the MVD. At the airport, MVD agents seized a

week, "the military situation can be stabilized" throughout the republic.

December 1, 1994: The Russian president declares that everything possible will be done to save the Russian soldiers. However, the defense ministry objects, sending a letter to the State Duma, which states that none of the prisoners are Russian military service members.

Russian aviation conducts airstrikes against the airfields in Kalinovskaya and Khankala, disabling the aircraft stationed there — mainly training aircraft manufactured in Czechoslovakia.

December 2, 1994: Following the publication of irrefutable evidence in Izvestia, Russian secret services are forced to admit their involvement in the failed assault on the Chechen capital.

December 3–6, 1994: A group of Liberal Democratic deputies from the State Duma arrive in Grozny. After meeting with them, Chechen officials release two captured soldiers.

December 5, 1994: The forces that are to invade the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria from the directions of Mozdok, Kizlyar and Vladikavkaz are basically assembled.

In Grozny, the delegation of deputies from the democratic faction of the State Duma (Grigory Yavlinsky and Sergei Yushenkov) tell Dudayev that he can stay in exchange for the release of prisoners. Dudayev refuses. But two days later, on **December 7**, seven more prisoners are handed over to the deputies.

December 6, 1994: A meeting between ChRI President Dzhokhar Dudayev and Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev takes place in Ordzhonikidzevskaya Stanitsa.

Following the meeting, Grachev says that the problem of Russian POWs will be solved and that based on his report, Yeltsin and the Russian Security Council "will make the final decision about how Russia will conduct itself toward the Chechen Republic." The defense minister remarks that as two fellow soldiers, Dudayev and he came to an understanding but that another meeting would be required. The status of the republic was not discussed.

December 6–10, 1994: The Russian invasion force continues to be assembled.

December 8, 1994: The State Duma adopts a resolution "On the situation in the Chechen Republic and measures for its political resolution," in which the actions of the Russian government are deemed unsatisfactory. During the session, deputies say that the conflict in the North Caucasus should be resolved peacefully. Furthermore, some of them send a telegram to Boris Yeltsin warning him that he may be held personally responsible for possible bloodshed and demanding that he explain his position publicly.

December 9, 1994: Yeltsin issues Presidential Decree No. 2166 "On measures to curb the activities of illegal armed formations in the Chechen Republic and in the Ossetian-Ingush conflict zone." According to the decree, the Russian government is ordered to "use all available state resources to

plane that had arrived from Georgia with 200 million rubles belonging to pro-government businessmen; instead of delivering this cargo to the National Bank and despite the presentation of the relevant documents and the protests from the accompanying officials, the MVD agents took it to the office of the acting minister of internal affairs. After much wrangling, a portion of the funds finally did reach the bank; the rest had already been distributed among the police as wages. This was essentially a racket and it enraged the president.

From that point on, Dudayev considered the police to be opposition collaborators and would not leave them alone right until the beginning of the war, frequently repeating that many of the republic's troubles were the fault of police of the Soviet mold and that the fewer of them there were, the more orderly the republic would be. It follows that the opposition had some hand in pushing Dudayev to use force, though the decision itself was not taken within the government.

After hearing of the tragic events in Grozny, Mugadayev and I decided to ask Dudayev for an explanation, since peace was no longer guaranteed and peace had been one of the conditions of our participation in the government. Mugadayev expressed his doubts about this issue in his resignation letter to Dudayev. The president, however, rejected his resignation and explained the dispersal of the opposition rally by claiming that all peaceful options had been exhausted and that all that had remained was to land a preemptive strike. Otherwise, he claimed, the opposition would have struck first.

He was not dissembling — the opposition had indeed been arming itself and not simply to provide security for their rally. Its goals included the overthrow of the republican government. Nevertheless, the bloodshed during the rally's dispersal was unacceptable, since it cleared a direct path to civil war. We had paid for a tactical success at the expense of strategic considerations. The opposition was not crushed, merely scattered — and not politically but only geographically. It moved from Grozny to Nadterechny District, reorganized itself into a kind of autonomous enclave and with the Kremlin's military and financial support set out to overthrow the existing government at any cost. A year later the opposition would launch a direct attack, which would end on November 26, 1994, with the complete defeat of the Russian mercenaries who had joined its ranks. This was the prologue to the Russian-Chechen War of 1994–1996. We had considered such an outcome a possibility but did so rather in a theoretical sense than a practical one. Some of us hoped that the opposition would exhaust itself on its own. Others looked to the success of direct talks between Dudayev and Boris Yeltsin, which were rumored to be forthcoming as early as 1993 — following the armed dissolution of the RF Supreme Soviet in October.

Yet, what happened — happened. It makes no sense to talk about how right or wrong it was. Both parties showed that they had not outgrown resorting to a bloody confrontation. Today this is evident, but back then, having won our "victory," we entertained the hope that we would be able to use the temporary respite to accomplish something productive.

ensure national security, the rule of law, human rights and freedoms, the protection of public order, crime prevention, and the disarmament of all illegal armed formations." In turn, the government publishes resolution No. 1360 "On ensuring the national security and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, the rule of law, human rights and freedoms, and the disarmament of illegal armed formations on the territory of the Chechen Republic and adjacent regions of the North Caucasus." In this manner, a special regime, similar to a state of emergency, is enacted throughout the Chechen Republic. Though human rights activists point out that this falls short of a formal declaration of martial law.

December 9, 1994: In accordance with Presidential Decree No. 2166 and RF government resolution No. 1360, the North Caucasus Military District, together with the MVD, VDV, the Special Caucasian Border District and the FSK, are instructed to carry out a special operation to blockade and disarm illegal armed formations in Chechnya.

December 9, 1994: The Russian defense minister issues directive No. 312/1/006sh, formalizing the military objectives: The assembled forces are to advance to Grozny from three directions under the cover of frontline and army aviation. They are to blockade the city and create such conditions as will abet the voluntary disarmament of militant groups. In the event that the militants refuse to disarm, the forces are to carry out an operation to capture the city. Afterward, measures are to be taken to stabilize the situation throughout the republic.

December 11, 1994: The Russian president signs Decree No. 2169 "On measures to ensure law and order and public security in the Chechen Republic," which amends the earlier decree to enable the group tasked with disarming and eliminating militant groups to operate indefinitely and outside of the state of emergency.

Later on, the Russian Constitutional Court will uphold, finding constitutional, most of the decrees and government resolutions that justify the actions of the federal government in Chechnya.

MOD and MVD units enter Chechen territory. Yeltsin addresses the Russian public with a short speech, explaining the purpose of sending troops into Chechnya as follows: "To find a political solution to the problems of one of the subjects of the Russian Federation — the Chechen Republic; and to protect its citizens from armed extremism." And yet, at the moment, the peace talks as well as the free will of the Chechen people are imperiled by the danger of full-scale civil war in the Chechen Republic. The troops advance in three columns from three directions: Mozdok (from the north: through areas of Chechnya controlled by the anti-Dudayev opposition), Vladikavkaz (from the west: from North Ossetia and through Ingushetia) and Kizlyar (from the east: from Dagestan).

Thousands Chechens form a human chain from the border with Ingushetia to the border with Dagestan in an attempt to draw the attention of the Russian and international public to the impending, full-scale war.

Residents of the sister republics, Ingushetia and Dagestan, also came out with the goal of preventing the Russian advance into Chechnya.

Tamerlan Gorchkhanov, the Ingush minister of health, becomes the first victim of the nascent war when he uses his car to block the road in front of oncoming Russian tanks. The minster's

Grigory YAVLINSKY

Founder of the Russian United Democratic Party Yabloko

I would like to speak not only about the events themselves, but also about some of the causes for what happened back then — and is largely happening today too. It is no surprise that after 1990, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a number of deeply-buried cultural and historical processes associated with Russia's past (and especially the USSR's) floated up to the surface. All this, of course, played a significant role in the events that began to unfold in the Caucasus, particularly in Chechnya, and in some republics of the former USSR. Some of these events ended up engendering very serious consequences indeed.

But what was the response of the authorities to all these processes after 1991? It was a wholly traditional, Soviet, Bolshevik response. Essentially, it boiled down to a rejection of dialog. It bore no implication of equality and respect, or the understanding of the historical causes of certain problems. It was based on the age-old principle: "I am strong, you are weak, and you will do what I tell you."

But by '94, this style of governance had also been complicated by the context of the reforms, which are little mentioned these days. And that context was very important because what happened in '92 was the confiscation of everything that people had and, therefore, affected simply everyone who lived in the former Soviet Union. This was the result of the completely insane decisions made during the economic reforms, which led to a hyperinflation of 2600% and were then further compounded by the colossal scam that was the voucher system and the defrauding of 150 million Russians, the violation of their property rights. All of this came to a head in the bloody events of '93, which demonstrated how simple it was to bring the situation to the point of fratricide.

Such was the atmosphere at the beginning of these events. In addition, there were also (now forgotten) statements such as Yeltsin's response to the Volga Germans' desire to gain autonomy in the Volga region. The head of state

responded that the only autonomy they would have would be limited to military firing ranges and cemeteries — or something in that spirit at any rate. Later, the discussions about Abkhazia, Georgia and Tajikistan were conducted in the same style — perhaps the words were different, but the gist remained the same. The same thing was happening and could be easily observed in the economy: incompetence and despotism in the Bolshevik spirit (i.e. "the end justifies the means") ran amok and, most importantly, there was a profound disregard for human values and human life.

Just as the reforms of January 2, 1992, emerged from these same issues, so they went on. In addition to all the problems associated with the reforms of that time, there was another one, which is not mentioned today: a complete refusal to re-examine the Soviet past. In other words, a refusal to re-examine de-Stalinization, the events of 1917, the civil war, the collectivization and repression of 1937, the lessons of WW2, the rejection of an honest analysis of the Stalinist and post-Stalinist period. This refusal really did play a huge role in what followed, in Chechnya in particular. After all, if this vital aspect of the reforms had been carried out, then quite likely, the more promising possibilities of engaging in dialog would have appeared obvious. In truth, they were evident even as things stood, but a reasonable turn of events would surely have provided entirely different opportunities. If the new Russian state had honestly told its people what had happened, why it happened and how it pertained to the current situation, a lot of events could have unfolded otherwise. But this did not happen.

All of the events surrounding this war evolved in this environment. The principle behind the authorities' actions was very simple: The territory is ours, the people are not and so have no importance whatsoever. Yes, we might have to destroy everyone, but we must retain the land. That in a nutshell was the entire approach employed in [Chechnya].

Well, what is there to say? The war claimed tens and possibly hundreds of thousands of lives and played a crucial role in the decay of Russian society — the consequences of which we are now witnessing. The war made bloodshed and violence a part of Russian life. The war entrenched terrorism in Russia as a method of solving political problems. The war opened the floodgates of corruption, graft, military treachery and war crimes. The war caused incredible damage that would be irreparable even if anyone were interested in repairing it. And finally, the war has remained with us as a deeply latent conflict that even today smolders like burning peat: We can't see it, but it's there, and given the right conditions, it will flare up again.

Many people know about the failed assault on Grozny of November 26, 1994. That date may be considered the beginning of the war. Prisoners were taken: It was announced that dozens of Russian servicemembers had been captured and placed in a pit and that they refused to state their names, were operating under aliases or had no insignia. Back then, Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev said, "We know that these are Russian servicemembers, and we declare that if Russia recognizes these people as her servicemembers, then they are prisoners of war who were following orders and we will release them; otherwise, they are mercenaries, and we will shoot them." What else can be done with armed mercenaries?

The Russian defense minister replied that he knew nothing about any of this and that there were no Russian servicemembers in Chechnya whatsoever. The interior minister likewise denied any knowledge about these people. The head of the Federal Counterintelligence Service (the predecessor of today's FSB), who recruited these soldiers himself and was personally responsible for conceiving of this seemingly simple plan — to order some officers to conduct an operation, without insignia and without using their real names — also washed his hands of the affair: "We do not know anything." Thus, across the defense ministry, the ministry of internal affairs and the intelligence services — no one knew a thing. The president stayed silent (at least, I do not remember him saying anything) and the prime minister also said that he did not know anything.

So what could be done? Well, for my part, I began to intensively discuss the problem with other people in Moscow — those who had not insisted that they knew nothing. There were some who were well aware of the situation and understood it thoroughly. For example, I discussed it in detail with my close friend Viktor Kogan-Yasny. As a result of these discussions, I called Dudayev and told him that as a deputy of the State Duma and the leader of one of its parties, I admit that these are Russian servicemembers and that they were acting on orders. On behalf of the Russian government, I took responsibility for them and requested their release. And if he wished for my colleagues and me to travel to Grozny, we were prepared to go and remain as long as necessary in exchange for the release of these soldiers, who indeed had been merely obeying orders.

In reply, Dudayev told us to make the trip. The conversation was pretty brief. I approached my companions about this, and a number of them, including Sergei Mitrokhin, Alexey Melnikov and Vladimir Overchev, agreed to go with me. I called Ruslan Aushev [the president of Ingushetia] and asked for a plane. He arranged one for us, and the next morning, 12 hours later, we were already in Chechnya.

The negotiations were complicated — unbearably complicated. We spent the first half of our first day just being shown around the city. Several journalists from Echo of Moscow were also there — for example, Daniel Galperovich, who had flown with us. Sergei Yushenkov, a deputy, was there as well. We were taken around Grozny. We held some discussions with some man who introduced himself as the justice minister. But the main impression I had, had nothing at all to do with that conversation. When we were shown the bodies of our soldiers lying in the courtyards, I realized that the task before us was not only to rescue those who were in captivity, but also to arrange for the return of these bodies. They had to be delivered to Moscow and turned over to their parents — and yet there were many of them, very many. How could we make this happen? After all, we would need coffins and we would need to come up with a suitable transport plane...

Well, in general, there was plenty to think about and do. And in the afternoon, the situation suddenly took a strange turn — I was invited to meet with Yandarbiyev [the vice president of

car is crushed under tank tracks, while Gorchkhanov himself is beaten to death by Russian soldiers.

Talks between Russian and Chechen officials are scheduled for **December 12**. "We must prevent their disruption. [...] I order all officials responsible for carrying out measures for the restoration of constitutional order in the Chechen Republic to avoid using violence against the civilian population — to take it under their protection." Despite this, civilians go on suffering enormous casualties. The negotiations do not yield any results.

December 11, 1994: Russian troops advance in three columns from three directions: Mozdok (from the north: through areas of Chechnya controlled by the anti-Dudayev opposition), Vladikavkaz (from the west: from North Ossetia and through Ingushetia) and Kizlyar (from the east: from Dagestan). Only the northern column avoids any serious difficulties during its progress to the suburbs of Grozny.

On December 12, the column approaches Dolinsky where it comes under fire for the first time from Grad rocket artillery. After suffering heavy losses, the troops stop. They spend the next three weeks shelling populated areas, resulting in heavy civilian casualties.

The Russian column from Kizlyar, meanwhile, never manages to enter Chechen territory. The Chechen-Akkin residents of the border region of Dagestan, block the troops' advance. Several groups of Russian soldiers are captured and delivered to Grozny.

Local residents also block troops coming from Ingushetia. Near the village of Barsuki, they manage to destroy several armored vehicles and cars. In response, the Russians call in helicopter gunships, which attack the village of Gazi-Yurt, destroying homes and killing civilians. Despite Ingush resistance, by December 12 the convoy reaches the border with Chechnya, where it comes under artillery fire for the first time outside of Assinovskaya Stanitsa. Russian troops blockade this village and, circumventing it, make their way to Noviy Sharoy. Here, unwilling to move forward, they remain standing for a week. The commanders explain their inaction through their unwillingness to cause causalities among the civilians who have blocked the column's path (crowds of people numbering in the thousands really were blocking the roads). However, one could suggest an ulterior explanation as well: the road to Grozny from this direction passes near settlements rife with armed militias, while the local geography is heavily wooded and therefore convenient for defensive battles.

December 12, 1994: Russian troops fire on Senior Police Lieutenant B.A. Chaniyev, the chief of the Sunzhensky District MVD for Ingushetia, after he, having formally introduced himself, attempts to establish the identity of one of the soldiers.

December 12, 1994: The Russian column in the vicinity of Assinovskaya Stanitsa (the Pskov Airborne Division under the command of Major General I.I. Babichev and the 13th Motor Rifle Division under the command of Colonel G.I. Kandalin) comes under fire from Chechen militia. The Russians suffer casualties, both killed and wounded.

Chechnya under Dzhokhar Dudayev]. He engaged me in a long conversation. An hour passed, then two, then three — we were talking about everything under the sun except the reasons that had brought me there. Then I realized that I could not leave that room even if I wanted to. There were people with guns there and though everything was very polite and civil, the subtext was perfectly clear.

A few hours later I began to understand that I had gotten myself into something like a hostage situation and that no one was going to explain what was going on. This went on for a long time and by evening, I had grown tired of the whole charade and began to demand a meeting with Dudayev. It took quite a bit of perseverance. Finally I was told, though not immediately and very reluctantly, that Dudayev was in the midst of talks with Grachev [the Russian defense minister]. Then it became clear why they were keeping me there and I understood that I would be able to meet with Dudayev only after he had finished with the negotiations. He returned later on that night. And I was immediately released from that room, which meant that I was the guarantee that he would return. When Dudayev came back, I met with him. At first the conversation again dealt with unrelated issues: about improving the economy, about "serious issues," and about the city's problems.

State Deputies Grigory Yavlinsky, Sergei Yushenkov and Anatoly Shabad with ChRI President Dzhokhar Dudayev.

Finally, Dudayev said to me, "You need to leave urgently. Immediately. This is what Grachev is demanding, and he a very powerful person, so you must do what it says."

"I understand," I replied, "but you have to hand over the soldiers to me — then I'll leave."

"No, I will not do that," he said.

Then I told him, "But how! You made a promise and that was why I came here!"

"Circumstances have changed," said Dudayev. "We've agreed with Grachev that I won't do this. I will release them another time, to different people. Or I won't release them at all. In short, I will not do it right now."

And it's here that the main part of the story begins. I won't tell you the whole thing — it would take too long. In the end, we agreed to the following: half the detainees would be released to me, and the other half would be handed over to Pavel Grachev. This is how our negotiations ended. Then supper was served. I remember it because it was strange: Afterward, a significant part of my delegation did not feel well and could not work. I don't know why, but something had happened. And when I returned to Dudayev's palace around 1 a.m., I was met by Dudayev's chief of security — a man in a fur cap — who told me, "You have to leave, because it is very dangerous at night and the trip to the airport is long and runs through the length of Chechnya. Meanwhile, the shooting has already begun."

"So give me the soldiers you promised!" I said.

"They won't be coming with you," he replied.

I was astonished: "What do you mean they won't come? I had an agreement with Dudayev!"

"No matter. They won't go."

"Well, alright," I said. "In that case put me in touch with Dudayev."

"Dudayev is sleeping — and you need to go."

"No, that's impossible."

"Look, possible, impossible, it doesn't matter. You have to go. Dudayev is asleep and we won't give you anyone."

"Well, then okay," I said. "But I want to see them, the Russian soldiers."

You have to understand that the way I'm telling you this now is fairly concise, but at the time it all seemed pretty convoluted. And so after lengthy negotiations, these soldiers were brought in and arranged in front of me. I don't remember how many of them there were — about 10--20 — but they all fit within that room. The senior officer stepped forward and said, "Dear Mr. Deputy, this is senior captain such-and-such reporting. We have decided not to return to Moscow because you are allowed to take only half of us, while the other half will be killed and we cannot leave our comrades here. Such is our decision." That's when it became clear to me that this was just a ruse and I decided to take some time to think about this situation.

Meanwhile, time really was running out. I had to leave Chechnya as soon as possible. It was already the middle of the night and we still had to get to the airport and so on and so forth. Some of the delegation really began to panic, including some pretty high-profile figures. I gathered those of us who were from Yabloko and I told them that here was the situation and that I had an idea: I would send everyone else to Moscow, while we would remain here with our soldiers. Alexey Melnikov and Sergei Mitrokhin agreed to stay with me and the captured officers. Our feeling was something like "let whatever happens to them happen to us too." Then I returned to Dudayev's chief of security and announced that my two friends and I would stay there and that was it: "We're not going anywhere. You can do with us what you want. You can

December 12, 1994: Assinovskaya Stanitsa suffers airstrikes and artillery bombardment, leading to civilian casualties. Afterwards, the village is surrounded and the Russians establish an MVD group headquarters and a filtration point on its outskirts. The headquarters is used by Generals Anatoly Kulikov, Mikhail Labunets and others, while the filtration point is destined to become a destination for captured Chechen residents. The blockade of Assinovskaya — accompanied by numerous incidents involving looting and the killing of local residents — is to continue for many months.

December 12, 1994: In the morning, a Chechen delegation headed by Minister of Economy and Finance Taimaz Abubakarov sets out for Vladikavkaz to negotiate a settlement of the Chechen conflict. The Russian side of the negotiations is to be represented by a working committee of the Russian government headed by Deputy Minister for Ethnic Affairs and Regional Policy Vyacheslav Mikhailov. On the border between North Ossetia and Ingushetia, the Chechen delegation is detained in order to allow a military convoy to pass into the Chechen Republic. According Taimaz Abubakarov, upon reaching the site of the negotiations, the Chechen delegation strongly protested against the Kremlin's policy of continuing military aggression under the guise of peace talks. Vyacheslav Mikhailov, however, replied that he knew nothing about the introduction of troops into Chechnya, and that he received notice of this at the airport, shortly before his delegation was to depart for Vladikavkaz.

During the talks, the Russian delegation proposes to immediately begin the disarmament of "illegal armed formations" on the basis of the Russian Constitution. The Chechen side insists on the unconditional withdrawal of Russian MOD and MVD troops from the Chechen Republic. Only once this is done will the Chechens discuss developing a mechanism under the Chechen Constitution to disarm illegal militant groups.

December 12, 1994: At 2 p.m. near Dolinsky village, ChRI units under the command of the Vakha Arsanov fire Grad rocket artillery at a detachment of Russian VDV troops. According to Russian data, 6 soldiers are killed and 13 wounded. The Russian side responds with airstrikes on militia positions as well as residential areas of Dolinsky and other nearby villages. According to Chechen sources, 200 Russian soldiers are killed during the defense of Dolinsky, which lasts until December 22.

December 13, 1994: Vice-President of the Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus Zhantemir Gubachikov speaks at a session of the Russian State Duma. On behalf of the Chechen people and all Caucasians and on assignment of the extraordinary congress of the peoples of the Caucasus, held on December 11, 1994 in Nalchik, he demands "the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Chechnya, [...] the abolishment of the old decision of the RF Supreme Soviet concerning the illegitimacy and illegality of the election of the President of the Chechen Republic, [...and] the bringing to justice of those who armed the opposition, thereby unleashing this war."

put us in a hole. You can lock us up in the palace. You can take us back to Yandarbiyev! We're not leaving and we're not going to abandon our soldiers here."

Apparently, this was not part of their plans. There followed a period of very difficult negotiations, which finally resulted in them allowing us to take a considerable part of the Russian POWs back with us. Then we returned to Moscow. There was also a whole affair involving the trip on the bus. But in the end, as far as I remember, we delivered eight servicemembers to Moscow, or seven or nine — something like that. [*A voice from the audience yells: "Seven — and three coffins!"*] We brought over three coffins in the plane with us and sent another set of coffins in another plane at the same time — the one that several *Izvestia* correspondents had tried to get onto only to be turned away; they were very offended about it all later...(If you recall, we are talking about the *Izvestia* of that time; now it is an utterly different organization.) I remember how these boys' parents gathered at the entrance to the State Duma and how we — Sergei Mitrokhin, Alexey Melnikov and I — we were simply passing them right into the hands of their parents.

After that came the criminal privatization...When a war is under way, you can do whatever you want. In the spring of '95, the privatization ceased to follow the voucher system and became blatant criminal misappropriation, in which people were simply giving out state assets to their friends. And this was the state of affairs when the [presidential] elections were held in '96. Their main significance isn't that Mr. Yeltsin held onto his office, but that the freedom of the press was abolished during their course. After these elections, there was no more free press. It became clear that control over television allowed the authorities to attain whatever political goals they sought — to solve any problems. That was when the current age really began! Turn on the tube and that's it! It'll solve all your problems. You don't even need to worry about public policy: Just buy two or three news anchors, pay them and tell them what they need to say on the news.

What followed were the bombings of the apartment blocks and the Second Chechen War, which you are all quite familiar with. Back then, Yabloko was the only party to speak out against everything that began in 1999. We were the only party to condemn the so-called second war in the form in which it was fought.

And all of these events gave birth to the current regime in Russia. We now have what we have. This knowledge is vital to avoiding these same mistakes when the time comes to create a new modern Russia. For, these kinds of mistake — they lead to crimes. We have to understand this and keep it in mind. What is now happening in Ukraine seems quite different in fact, and yet the methods, the way of solving problems — this attitude toward people that treats them like trash — is exactly the same.

We are faced with a huge task. How can we get out of the situation we find ourselves in? How can we extricate ourselves without war, without mutual humiliation, without bloodshed? This is a very difficult problem. And it can be solved only on the basis of past experience — honestly and collectively.

December 13, 1994: Rockets fired from helicopters destroy four civilian vehicles, including one ambulance, on the Rostov-Baku highway in the vicinity of Noviy Sharoy.

December 13, 1994: Russian soldiers shoot at a car, wounding its driver, Usman Yevloyev. The incident takes place on an Ingush stretch of the Rostov-Baku highway. On the same day, Russian soldiers open fire without warning on a car from Reuters. The incident takes place near an Ingush MVD traffic police checkpoint near Sleptsovskaya Stanitsa. The car, which was carrying photojournalist V. Korotayev, producer S. Karaziy and cameraman A. Dobrovskaya, was hit 12 times.3 When the car stopped, the soldiers confiscated the journalists' video equipment, though they later returned it in exchange for two bottles of vodka.

December 14, 1994: The third day of the ongoing talks in Vladikavkaz is interrupted when the Russian side demands that the Chechen delegation sign a document under which Chechnya would recognize itself as a subject of the Russian Federation.

December 14, 1994: A Mi-8 helicopter from the 325th Independent Helicopter Regiment is hit by ground fire and crashes behind Chechen lines near the village of Noviy Sharoy. Two crew members are killed; a third is fatally wounded and dies in captivity.

Yuri KALMYKOV

"THIS WILL END IN A TRAGEDY"

At a November 29, 1994, meeting of the RF Security Council, at which it was decided that the military operation against Chechnya was to go ahead, then member of the Security Council and Russian Minister of Justice Yuri Khamzatovich Kalmykov resigned both posts in protest against the actions of the Russian leadership. Working to prevent the war up until the last possible moment, Dr. Kalmykov held talks with Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev and made every effort to arrange for direct talks between the leaders of Chechnya and Russia.

Valery Khatazhukov
(Journalist and head of the NGO Adyge Khase during 1993–1997; currently the head of the Kabardino-Balkarian Human Rights Council):
Without a doubt, Kalmykov's preoccupation with this problem was due to the fact that he, a Russian official and politician, was well aware of the war's possible consequences for the whole country. But it is also quite obvious that his special interest in the Chechen issue was related to the fact that he was himself a Caucasian through and through; he loved the Caucasus and could not imagine life without it. Knowing the details of everything that was happening in the North Caucasus, as well as the views of the hawks among the Russian leadership, he could imagine all the possible consequences of the outbreak of war, not only for Chechens but also for the ethnic groups in the North Caucasus. He belonged to a breed of idealists, men of honor, and so to him there could be no half-measures or double standards

December 15, 1994: A group of senior Russian officers refuse to lead troops into Chechnya, expressing their desire to receive a written order from the commander-in-chief "before beginning a major military operation that could result in mass civilian casualties." Grachev relieves them of their commands. The operation is entrusted to one of Grachev's intimates, Commander of the North Caucasus Military District Colonel-General Alexei Mityukhin.

December 15, 1994: The Russian column heading into Chechnya from Kizlyar reaches the village of Tolstoy-Yurt.

December 16, 1994: The RF Federation Council passes a resolution in which it suggests that the Russian president should immediately cease hostilities and begin negotiations. The same day, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin says that he is willing to personally meet with Dudayev, under the condition that he disbands forces loyal to him.

December 17, 1994: Yeltsin sends a telegram to Dudayev ordering him to "without further delay, meet Yegorov and Stapashin, my authorized representatives, in Mozdok." (Nikolai Yegorov, the then RF presidential representative in Chechnya; Sergey Stepashi, the then director of the FSB.) Dudayev is to sign a document that provides for a ceasefire and the surrender of weapons. The very next day, multiple airstrikes hit Grozny, including its residential areas.

December 17, 1994: The Russian president issues Presidential Decree No. 2200 "On the reinstatement of federal territorial authorities in the Chechen Republic."

December 17, 1994: Russian troops stationed near Assinovskaya Stanitsa move through fields and woods to the village of Samashki and surround it

in such matters. He was ready to go to the end, regardless of the price he would have to pay himself.

This is the only way I can explain his speech at the Security Council meeting. He spoke out against the war, presenting his position comprehensively and scorning the typical stereotypes and rules that governed the Russian leadership's discussion of these problems.

When he called me after the Security Council meeting, he sounded agitated and asked, "Can you arrange a meeting with Dudayev for me?"

"No problem," I replied. "When do you want to do it?"

"Today if that's possible."

"Are you kidding?" I asked. "What do you mean, today?"

"What about tomorrow then?"

"Sure," I replied.

I called up Yandarbiyev and told him, "Tomorrow Kalmykov wants to meet with Dudayev; can you arrange it?" He replied, "I'll do it."

We set out for Grozny in the early morning of the second day. When we got there, we found Ella Pamfilova [then State Duma deputy; currently the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation] in Dudayev's reception room. The Democrats were also trying to influence the situation, sensing that something was about to happen. Yandarbiyev came out and asked us to wait. He said, "He [Dudayev] wants to tell everyone to leave so he can have a thorough discussion with you."

I will never forget the meeting between Yuri Kalmykov and Dzhokhar Dudayev, which I was lucky enough to witness firsthand. I had met Dudayev several times and knew him fairly well. His face was always some kind of mask.

And here, for the first time, I saw a human face — the face of a person who understood that something ineluctable was coming.

This was a conversation between two experienced Caucasians, who were well aware of the scale of the impending disaster. Each one of them felt an immense responsibility for what was happening. During the meeting, Kalmykov kept repeating, "If there is even the slightest possibility to get out of this situation without being pulled into the war and condemning our people to new trials, new suffering, we must do everything we can." Dzhokhar Dudayev was in complete agreement with him: "I will do everything possible to avoid war. I will not let anyone provoke me. I do not want to go down in history as the man who doomed his own people." He was ready to sign the articles of federation with Russia and, in general, to conduct any negotiations that would avoid the war.

I remember some other details from that conversation. Dudayev said that Tatarstan was ready to sign a version of the federation agreement, if only to avoid war. Kalmykov's replied ironically, "No, you should seek another option, one that ensures you a higher status; otherwise, it won't be clear what you were fighting for to begin with."

I am sure that Dudayev would have fulfilled all the obligations he took on. But the then leadership of Russia needed a "small victorious war" to distract people's attention from the country's acute social, economic and political problems. I think all of this can be clearly seen in the documentary *On ushel ranshe* [*He Departed Earlier*], dedicated to Yuri Kalmykov. And it is further supported by the accounts of such well-known figures as Viktor Chernomyrdin and Sergei Stepashin.

On our way back to Nalchik from our meeting with Dudayev in Grozny, Kalmykov handed me a paper and said, "Read it."

It was a resignation letter for his post as justice minister, which he was going to submit in the event of the outbreak of armed hostilities in Chechnya. I do not remember right now the date of our meeting with Dudayev, but I know that it was no more than ten days before the beginning of the war. Kalmykov ended up keeping his word: He officially tendered his resignation on December 12, immediately following the official announcement that Russian troops had entered Chechen territory.

Yuri Kalmykov always stayed true to his people. He was a true Adyghe and Circassian and he understood that the peoples of the North Caucasus were in fact a single mega-ethnos, in which each ethnicity had its own original culture and language, and yet at the same time all of the ethnicities shared a common culture, customs, identity, and most importantly — interests. This is why he believed that all the ethnic groups of the North Caucasus had to work together to defend their interests — to support each other to the utmost.

Yuri Kalmykov was confident that the peoples of the North Caucasus should stay with Russia. But with a Russia that was a truly federated, democratic and lawful state, a Russia that would provide all the necessary conditions for the self-determination and preservation of each ethnicity's culture. That is why the ideas, views, and actions of Yuri Kalmykov today hold such a persistent significance to both the peoples of the North Caucasus and Russia as a whole.

In He Departed Earlier, a 2004 film by documentary filmmaker Izmail Kozhemov dedicated to the memory of Yuri Kalmykov, senior Russian officials of that time and friends of the former minister, describe how acutely and painfully Kalmykov sensed the impending tragedy and what actions he took to prevent it. Below, DOSH publishes extracts from the film's transcript.

Viktor Chernomyrdin
(Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation, 1993–1994):
"When we held the Security Council meeting and began to discuss the question of introducing troops, the discussion turned serious."

Sergei Stepashin *(FSK Director, 1993–1994):*
"It seems to me that Yeltsin specifically sought — not so much to protect him — but to avoid putting him in an awkward position. With a view to the situation in 1992."

Chernomyrdin:
"My position was that — before taking this step — we needed to prepare for it, to make sure we had done everything we could beforehand. Yet how could we assume that we really had done everything if we hadn't even spoken with Dudayev?"

Stepashin:
"I remember Kalmykov's speech to the Security Council, though I do not know whether a transcript remains or not. He was sitting directly across from me. He had stayed silent for a long time and was one of the last to speak. He then launched into 15-

from one side. An RF MVD checkpoint is established between Sernovodsk and Samashki; in the future it will be manned by the Novocherkassk OMON (riot police).

December 17, 1994: Russian soldiers in armored personnel carriers fire on a convoy of passenger vehicles (9–10) evacuating refugees from Grozny. The incident takes place in Ingushetia, near the administrative border with the Chechen Republic between Assinovskaya Stanitsa (Chechnya) and Nesterovskaya Stanitsa (Ingushetia). Afterward, three cars are crushed by a tank. Ten people, including several women, die in the incident. Their bodies are taken away by the Russian military. Ingush law enforcement manages to find only one body.

Ingush first responders — ambulances, police and republican officials — are met with a hail of fire. The Russian military refuses to grant access to the site of the incident from 6 p.m. until 4:30 a.m. the next day. Ingush doctors and law enforcement reach the site of the attack only next morning, after the Russian armored vehicles have disappeared.

December 18, 1994: Starting from this day until the New Year assault

December 19, 1994: The planned-on final day of Russian operations. The plan has failed. Unwilling to move through the dangerous plain, Army Group West, under the command of Major General Ivan Babichev, circumvents Samashki to the north and approaches the outskirts of Grozny along the treeless Sunzha Ridge by December 20. On the southern slope of the ridge, facing towards Samashki, Noviy Sharoy and other villages, Russian forces take up firing positions and commence regular shelling of these settlements. In general, Army Group West entrenches itself along the Samashki–Davydenko–Noviy Sharoy–Achkhoi-Martan-Bamut axis. By December 20, Army Group North has penetrated about 10 km into Chechen territory and occupied Kerla-Yurt. They stop and dig in along the Dolinsky–Pervomaysk–Petropavlovskaya axis. Alexei Mityukhin is removed from the operation's command. Colonel-General Eduard Vorobyov is offered to lead the force but he refuses and is dismissed. On December 20, Deputy Chief of the Main Operations Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces Anatoly Kvashnin is given command of the Joint Group of Russian Forces, while Leonty Shevtsov becomes the operation's chief of staff.

Another two generals — Deputy Defense Ministers Boris Gromov and Georgy Kondratyev voice their opposition to the Chechen invasion and refuse to lead the operation "to restore constitutional order."

Later on in his official statement, Colonel General Gromov says that he is "not so much opposed to reinstating the rule of law in Chechnya, as to methods that are incompatible with the concepts of 'constitutional order' and 'democracy.'" He explains that "the army should not perform law enforcement functions — this is not its job. This is the reason that results have been woeful."

In an interview with *Vechernaya Moskva* on February 13, 2014, Boris Gromov recalled the first weeks of the war in '94: "I told my former subordinate Pavel Grachev directly that this

minute-long monologue. Yeltsin typically wouldn't let anyone at the Security Council speak for longer than three minutes. As a rule, the meetings lasted about an hour. Kalmykov's speech was not simply a monologue by the justice minister, but rather by a [person] wise with experience, who understood where we were heading."

Chernomyrdin:
"He was in opposition to the idea, he was against it — against resorting to harsh measures."

Vyacheslav Sysoyev *(Assistant to the RF Justice Minister in 1993–1994):*
"[RF Defense Minister Pavel] Grachev was presenting about how the Chechen issue had to be solved by military means. About how we needed to send in the troops. And about how the conflict wouldn't last long — no longer than a month or two. We began to exchange views. Grachev brought up Panama [Operation Just Cause] — how the Americans took Panama in two weeks supposedly. [Mr. Kalmykov] objected, 'Well, first of all, Chechnya isn't Panama. You have to know the history of the Caucasus. This is an entirely different people. And this will end in tragedy.'"

Stepashin:
"You have to give Yeltsin his due — he never allowed himself to make negative pronouncements, at least publicly. And he didn't do so now either because Kalmykov was fairly delicate in expressing his views. He understood that the situation was complicated and that effectively a war was already under way. He wrote up a statement, explained his position, and he left."

Chernomyrdin:
"We did not have to go that far. Necessary or not, whether it happened or not, it is still difficult to say. But I have always thought — I have an ache in my soul — we hadn't exhausted all our options."

Stepashin:
"At the time, Yeltsin thought about it very seriously and for a long time. He made changes to the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs and he personally ordered the Security Council to go to Dudayev and make another attempt to speak with him."

Stepashin:
"I remember that a few days before the invasion, he had tried to personally negotiate with Dudayev in an attempt to raise the discussion to a legal level. Unfortunately, nothing came of it."

Khatazhukov:
"As we were on our way back, I remember his mood — he had some hope. He said that maybe something would come of it, something would work out."

Stepashin:
"Unfortunately, it is a rule that I have seen hold true several time already, that when the state machinery, in particular the machinery of war, gets going, it is quite difficult to stop it."

Khatazhukov:
"Later he told me: 'I returned to Chernomyrdin and told him that I would act as the guarantor, that [Dudayev] had given me his word.' He explained the mechanism [to Chernomyrdin], they checked it, got in touch with [Dudayev] and he confirmed it."

Chernomyrdin:
"The president said, 'How can you? Do you know who this [Dudayev] is? He is a criminal. We can't work with him.' Then, I proposed, 'Let us speak with him too. What if I meet with him? I don't know him and he doesn't know me. But I am the chairman of the government, and at least I will listen to what he wants. We are all acting on information we've received from someone.' But he [Yeltsin] replied, 'It's not necessary.'"

Khatazhukov:
"Kalmykov says to me, 'I meet with Chernomyrdin the second time. I was thinking that the negotiations process was being arranged, and instead Chernomyrdin tells me, "That's it, no negotiations." I told him, "If we have a chance why wouldn't we take it?" "No, there will be no negotiations," he replied.'"

Chernomyrdin:
"When the shooting starts — that's it. Everything is already falling apart. Regardless of prior agreements or legal norms, the bloodshed and suffering is already happening. That's what happened to us too. And Kalmykov really did understand the depths of it, and where it would lead us."

Yuri Kalmykov was a politician, Doctor of Law, professor, civil law scholar, Honored Scientist, Honored Jurist, founder of the Saratov State Academy of Law's School of Civil Law, as well as the founder and first chairman of the International Circassian Association. Born on January 1, 1934 in the city Batalpashinsk in the Cherkess Autonomous Region of the RSFSR, Dr. Kalmykov graduated from the Law Faculty of Leningrad State University and went on to do his postgraduate work at Saratov State University. He worked as a people's judge in Khabezsky District of Karachay-Cherkessia Obast. In 1968, Dr. Kalmykov became head of the department of civil law at the Saratov Law Institute. He was elected deputy of the USSR on March 26, 1989.

Dr. Kalmykov chaired the Supreme Soviet Committee on legislation and was one of the preeminent jurists of the 20th century. He participated in the drafting of laws "On Constitutional Supervision in the USSR" (1989), "On the popular vote (referendum) in the USSR" (1990), and the section of the RF Civil Code titled Fundamentals of Civil Legislation of the USSR and the republics (1991). He authored ten books and approximately 200 academic articles on property law, civil law, civil legal relations theory, contractual and non-contractual obligations, housing, family, and inheritance law. In 1991 and 1995, he edited a two volume textbook on civil law for the Saratov State Academy of Law.

Beginning in 1992, Dr. Kalmykov became chairman of the Kabardian Peoples' Congress. During 1990–1993, he served as President of the International Circassian Association. Beginning in 1993, he became State Duma Deputy of the first Congress. From August 1993 to November 1994, he served as RF Minister of Justice.

From late 1996, he was rector at the Russian School of Private Law.

A preeminent politician, scholar, true friend and brother of the Chechen people, Yuri Khamzatovich Kalmykov died on January 16, 1997, and was buried the same day in his native village of Abazakt in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic.

was going to be a debacle which will drag out for a very long time. Back then, he was under tremendous pressure from the political leadership.

I refused to lead soldiers into a senseless fray. Time has vindicated me. All the countless losses and the devastated cities and villages resulted in nothing. Even now, when the guns are long since silent, terrorism spreads from one region to another — from Chechnya to Dagestan and into the neighboring regions of the Northern Caucasus. And yet everything could have been solved without a single gunshot in the mid-'90s. Wars are started by politicians, but it's soldiers who die in them."

December 19, 1994: The center of Grozny is bombed. Beginning on this day and lasting up until the New Year's assault on the city, Russian aviation conducts daily airstrikes on the Chechen capital. To make matters worse, the majority of the bombs and missiles strike residential areas where it is well-known that no military targets are stationed.

December 19–20, 1994: Elements of Army Group West (i.e. Vladikavkaz) make contact with Chechen troops tasked with defending the western approaches to Grozny. Most of the heavy fighting happens to the north of Alkhan-Kala and on the ridge near the village of Karpinskiy Kurgan. The Russian forces suffer heavy losses in personnel and equipment.

Night of December 19, 1994, two Russian bombs fall in the vicinity of a one-story building at the intersection of ulitsa Moskovskaya and ulitsa Noya Buachidze in Grozny. Eighteen buildings are either completely or partially destroyed. According to human rights activists, one man is killed and a woman is heavily wounded. According to other sources, another elderly woman and two children are killed.

December 20, 1994: Chechen militia shoot down an RF MVD Mi-8 helicopter with a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) near Petropavlovskaya Stanitsa. Five Russian soldiers are killed.

December 20, 1994: Pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 2200 "On the restoration of territorial federal executive bodies in the Chechen Republic," the Russian government passes resolution No. 1411 "On the territorial administration of federal executive bodies in the Chechen Republic."

December 20, 1994: After weeks of heavy fighting, Army Group North-West (Mozdok) takes the village of Dolinsky.

Night of December 20, 1994: During Russian shelling of Artemovskiy village, which is located on the outskirts of Grozny, a round hits the house of the Musayev family. There are ten children inside: seven from the Musayev family and three from the Selimkhanov family which had taken refuge here after fleeing from Pervomayskaya Stanitsa. Five children are killed instantly in the explosion, five more wounded are taken to Children's Clinical Hospital No. 2 in Grozny. Another two girls die in the hospital: Khadizha Musayeva, 5, and Kheida Musayeva, 6. Three more children are hospitalized with wounds: Zelimkhan Musayev, Khadizha

Dzhokhar DUDAYEV:

Political opportunists in Moscow — the ideologues of war

DOSH presents a fragment of the ORT's (currently, Channel One Russia) interview with President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria Dzhokhar Dudayev, recorded several weeks after Russian troops invaded Chechnya.

We were discussing the situation with Grachev and we agreed that a military solution was unnecessary. These are all exclusively political issues. Grachev assured me that he would convince everyone else of this, since he himself was convinced after our conversation, and he thanked me for meeting with him.

There was not a single issue that remained unsettled between us. He promised to persuade Yeltsin that this conflict could not be resolved through military means, but only through political methods. Afterward he announced the same thing to the journalists. Yet in the depths of my soul, I felt that the political leadership had already planned its cynical program and was acting in accordance with this plan — and that it would not allow Grachev to avoid armed conflict and resolve our problems through political means. And so I barely found the strength to tell the thousands of people who had gathered waiting on the street that which I did not really believe myself. With difficulty, I said, "We have agreed to resolve everything peacefully."

Already knowing, sensing, that they would forsake peace.

In saying this, I am certain that Grachev is not as spoiled as certain generals and officers, even though he has been unwillingly tainted by these political opportunists and their lies. I am also certain that he really did try his best to prove to Yeltsin that military involvement was not required and that mutual understanding could be reached through negotiations with Dudayev. As well as with the government of the Chechen Republic as a whole. Yes, I know this: He did meet with Yeltsin one on one and tried to convince him.

Yet in the depths of my soul, I felt that the political leadership had already planned its cynical program and was acting in accordance with this plan — and that it would not allow Grachev to avoid armed conflict and resolve our problems through political means. And so I barely found the strength to tell the thousands of people who had gathered waiting on the street that which I did not really believe myself. With difficulty, I said, "We have agreed to resolve everything peacefully."

But the political opportunists were also lobbying Yeltsin from their side. Yegorov and Stepashin are the chief ideologues, after them come Shakhrai, Yerin, Soskovets and Lobov. The so-called Security Council (I would rather call it the Threat Council). There are more of them of course, and they managed to impress something entirely different onto Yeltsin — even though Yeltsin himself repeatedly told the entire world, "As supreme commander-in-chief, I ordered the bombings to stop," well, so on and so forth.

It was precisely right after this order of his that the long-range aviation, the one that has the most destructive weapons, began to carpet bomb a vast area, to wipe out residential areas and destroy anything moving on the ground. One time and then a second time. Chernomyrdin came to an agreement with our delegation and began discussing conditions for starting negotiations. But the military people refused to follow his orders.

No doubt many of our generation remember how the myth of the Sicilian Mafia was invented. And how everything bad that would happen would be blamed on the Sicilian Mafia. Everything that was evil. It was boring

to death, this myth. The West quickly refused to believe it. But here, among the Soviet people, that myth never really had time to develop, since we were so isolated from the rest of the world.

Instead, they quickly concocted a myth about Zionism and ascribed all human evil to it, seeing that Jews were always the whipping boys anyway: If anything's amiss, beat the Jews! They're guilty of everything! The Jewish Conspiracy, Zionism, was to blame. Of course, this too became deadly boring. Those who were invested in it and didn't want to give it up were still there, but the Jews had grown strong and you couldn't play those games with them anymore. They had accumulated a large amount of capital as well as mass media. Over the centuries of unjust persecution, despite all the

Selimkhanova, both 12, and Akhmed Selimkhanov, 4.

According to Reuters, altogether twelve airstrikes are carried out against Grozny that night.

December 21, 1994: At a meeting of the Russian Security Council, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev is forced to admit that the Russian invasion force has met stiff resistance "resembling active and concentrated defense" at the outskirts of villages and at crossroads near Grozny, and that the republican leadership "is enjoying broad support among the Chechen population."

According to the defense minister, the Chechen leadership's position on the disarmament of "illegal armed formations" promotes the escalation of the armed conflict and the complication of the situation in the North Caucasus and southern Russia as a whole.

Night of December 21, 1994: Two people are killed during airstrikes near the Grozny State Oil Institute. In addition to this, a missile fired from an aircraft destroys the top two floors of an apartment building.

December 22, 1994: Russian artillery intensifies its shelling of Grozny. The barrage is aimed at the residential neighborhoods deeper inside the city and behind where the Chechen defenders are dug in. According to the HRC *Memorial*, 15 people — most of them passersby — die that from the shelling of the urban area near the Grozny State Oil Institute. Two more people die when a bomb explodes near the Kosmos cinema. The same day, a bomb dropped on the intersection of ulitsa Gurina, prospekt Kirova and ulitsa Sadovaya hits a cluster of cars. As a result, 10 cars are destroyed with 12 people inside and altogether 20 die in the incident as a whole. In addition, 3 single-story houses are completely destroyed and 22 are seriously damaged. Elsewhere, 7 houses are destroyed and about 40 damaged as a result of the bombing of the so-called Bashirovka building. On December 22, ambulances delivered 34 heavily-wounded civilians to the city hospital's emergency room. Of these, eight people die (including one woman). Furthermore, four bodies (including of one woman) are delivered to the hospital morgue. The hospital did not record the number of people with more minor injuries, who were taken away by relatives or were discharged on their own after having received medical assistance. The military hospital received 20 wounded civilians (including one child).

Night of December 22, 1994: Grozny suffers more airstrikes. The Children's World store, a bank and numerous smaller buildings are destroyed, and fires break out throughout the city.

December 23, 1994: In the early morning, federal forces try to cut Argun off from Grozny. Russian forces also deployed in the Khankala airport. The State Duma issues a statement claiming an immediate moratorium on military operations in Chechnya and expresses its condolences to the

bereaved families and relatives. Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev asks Commissioner for Human Rights Sergei Kovalev, who is in the Chechen Republic, to ask the republican leadership about their conditions for starting

monstrous attempts to destroy the entire Jewish people, this ethnicity had developed its own version of Stoicism, its own form of immunity. It had learned to resist this disease.

So now the need for a new myth ripened, since the Jews fight back very well and have something to fight back with. So it became necessary to invent the Chechen Mafia. The whole thing was feverishly concocted to replace the evil Zionism. This was all planned back on the eve of perestroika. Beginning in 1986, rumors began to spread — a form of propaganda. In 1987, the first publications began appearing in the mass media: the Chechen Mafia, the Chechen racket — that's the beginning of all the troubles of the Soviet people, if not the entire world.

By 1989, the Party newspaper *Glasnost* was openly voicing its position that the Chechen Mafia must be treated as the main source and manifestation of evil. From then on, it would be blamed for everything that the imperial chancelleries decided to cook up. Meanwhile, they'd hold mock negotiations with us: like, go figure it out with the military people. Instead of adopting a radical decision at the governmental level, allowing us to control the process, they'd say, "Go on and work it out with the field commanders, with the unit commanders at their bases, let them figure it out among themselves." And in playing this dishonest game, they drew out the process...

So what about the Chechens? They will begin to make preparations for the spring-summer campaign. It's not worth expecting any talks in the next month. There'll just be this nonsense in their stead. What can I say? The Chechens will not sit by idly. We need to clear our land and move on to creating...and we need to prepare for a large war. It might go on for another fifty years. This war has already overstepped the local boundaries. It has already gone far, very far indeed.

Oleg ORLOV:

War — a PR technique for securing power

"The bloodshed will be great"

When unidentified helicopters conduct airstrikes against an airport and when certain soldiers, who authorities claim no longer serve in the Russian army, sit behind the controls of tanks spearheading opposition columns into Grozny, it becomes obvious that a major war is on its way. All of this, of course, is reminiscent of the current situation in the eastern Ukraine; it's almost a carbon copy. At the moment, the conflict in Ukraine is being fought by volunteers who, as it turns out, either do not serve in the Russian army at all, or are simply on furlough. It is not clear where the armored columns moving westward along the roads of Donbass have come from.

Back then, fifteen years ago, it was the same thing, the same sense of impending war.

HRC *Memorial* was not silent; we protested; we appealed to the public; unfortunately, we could not stop the impending disaster.

The announcement that troops were being introduced came on December 11 — this was the official beginning of the war. At the same time, Yeltsin declared that further negotiations were to be held. On December 12 (!), Grachev flew to Vladikavkaz supposedly to hold talks with officials from Dudayev's government. But the troops were already on their way.

On December 13, a meeting took place in Moscow in memory of Andrei Sakharov. The meeting was open to the Russian public and it is not hard to guess who came to this evening dedicated to Dr. Sakharov — all people who held staunchly democratic views. There were also representatives of the Russian officialdom, for instance Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Kozyrev. Among the speakers were Sergei Kovalev, the then commissioner for human rights in the Russian Federation, head of the presidential human rights commission, and State Duma deputy. He spoke of the beginning of the war in Chechnya. I also spoke, before Kovalev, on the same topic. Those who understood what the Caucasus is and what, unfortunately,

negotiations. The human rights activist responds that Dudayev is ready to negotiate on all issues, including the disarmament of his troops. Moscow, however, neither replies nor reacts to this news.

December 23, 1994: Shelling and airstrikes involving high altitude ordnance continue against Grozny. The bombs strike concentrated residential areas. During the day, the Central Republican Hospital receives six wounded Grozny residents (among them two women, 72 and 65, and a man, 62).

Night of December 23, 1994: The Russian 129th Motor Rifle Regiment and the 133rd Tank Battalion make a forced march and entrench themselves one mile east of Khankala, cutting off Argun from Grozny.

That same night three bombs dropped by Russian aircraft over Grozny hit houses on pospekt Pobedy and ulitsa Rozy Lyuksemburg. The only plausible targets in the area are two nearby barracks which have stood empty for several months. As a result of the falling bombs, peaceful civilians are killed in their houses. Two of them are later identified as a husband and wife surnamed Volkov. That same night, a bomb destroys a four-story apartment house on Sheikh Mansour Sqaure. There are no casualties, as the residents were in the bomb-shelter at the time.

December 24, 1994: Aircraft over Grozny begin dropping leaflets explaining to the public (especially those Russians who had not yet left the city) that Russian troops were coming to "liberate" them. According to human rights sources, that day, there were 19 unidentified bodies, casualties of the bombing, in the morgue of the Central Republican Hospital. They were most likely Russians. As a rule, the Chechens would retrieve the bodies of their dead relatives for burial as soon as the death certificates were issued. On the evening of December 24, more airstrikes hit the center of Grozny causing more casualties. The *Krasniy Molot* factory is also bombed. Two bombs hit the facility and two more fall in a residential area, on ulitsa Griboyedova; several houses are destroyed.

December 25, 1994: Missiles strike Grozny at 4:45 p.m. Four missiles hit houses Nos.16 and 18 on ulitsa Ionisiani (the buildings are five-story apartment blocks). The facade of house No. 18 is completely destroyed. Seven residents are wounded and one man is killed. Among the casualties are the Zhukov family: Galina Alekseyevna, her husband Oleg Petrovich and their 14-year-old granddaughter.

During the night of **December 25, 1994**, Chechen militias attack Russian troops entrenched near Khankala. Several soldiers are killed and one BTR-70 is damaged. Tanks and other armored vehicles available to ChRI military units move out of Grozny. Russian artillery opens fire on the column. One Chechen tank is hit.

December 26, 1994: Russian aviation begins a series of precision airstrikes against villages. According to human rights sources, Russian aircraft bomb about 40 villages over the course of three days.

December 26, 1994: Once again, the opposition announces the creation of a "government of national revival" headed by Salambek Khadzhiyev — it is the same government that was discredited in the eyes of the public during its attempted storming of Grozny in November. The announcement mentions the new government's willingness to discuss the creation of a "confedera-

Oleg Orlov
and Sergei Kovalev in Chechnya.

our army is, could clearly see where this would lead us — the war would not be an easy one. However, it seemed to me that many in the audience did not understand. Apparently they reckoned that this was to be just another small skirmish in the Caucasus. And here, in Moscow, there were better things to do. During his speech, Mr. Kovalev voiced his concern that the bloodshed would be considerable:

"As the Commissioner for Human Rights, I should be where the bloodshed is. I intend to fly to Mozdok, the headquarters of the Russian troops that are being sent into Chechnya. From there, I will travel to the conflict zone in order to monitor the condition of the civilian population." But then he added that he was being denied entry into the conflict zone.

Following his presentation, he was approached by Kozyrev, and eventually was sent to Mozdok. Kovalev had collected a group that included four other deputies (V.V. Borschev, M.M. Molostvov, L.N. Petrovsky, Yu.A. Rybakov) and myself, as a public representative. Later on, until March 1995, the commissioner's group in Chechnya would be joined by L.A. Aleynik, A.Yu. Blinushov, V.N. Gayenko, E.B. Gelman, A.Yu. Daniel, N.A. Mitrokhin, N.G. Okhotin, S.V. Sirotkin, A.V. Sokolov and S.D. Khakhayev.

That moment marked the beginning of my involvement in the war. But the first attempt to fly the group to Chechnya did not work out — the plane turned back in the air, allegedly due to ice on the airstrip in Mozdok.

It was obvious that the hawks had simply decided that Kovalev had no business being there. So we decided to fly to the Caucasus on our own.

The first lie that people say about Kovalev's group is, "You lot instantly and deliberately decided to go to Grozny. The troops are entering Chechnya, the war is beginning, and you are going to meet with Dudayev." In fact, it was the authorities (we do not know exactly who) who did not want Kovalev and his group first in Mozdok and later in the occupied part of Chechnya. Therefore, we took the regular flight to Mineralnye Vody, having previously phoned Ruslan Aushev, the president of Ingushetia. Kovalev and he had established a good rapport earlier, when in the fall of the same year, Kovalev had worked in the Caucasus on the issue of refugees from the Ingush-Ossetian Conflict of 1992. I had met Aushev earlier as well, since HRC *Memorial* had also done work in the region and he was familiar with us.

Aushev sent a car to Mineralnye Vody that took us to Nazran and then to Grozny. Our journey passed without difficulty as the troops were still in the process of taking up positions on Grozny's northern outskirts. The military columns invading from the west passed through Ingushetia without difficulty but were forced to stop at the village of Noviy Sharoy due to a crowd of local residents that had blocked the roads. In the east, the column coming from Dagestan never did manage to enter Chechnya during that war.

In Grozny, we met with the president — General Dudayev. Kovalev had set out two goals for our group. The first was to monitor the treatment of the civilian population. On the very first day we witnessed the effects of the bombing: the shelling and killing of civilians. Kovalev's second goal was to arrange negotiations between Dudavey, his government and the Kremlin. Unfortunately we failed in this second task. As for the first goal, Kovalev's group did become a powerful source of information about what was happening to the civilians in this war.

The Kremlin's pantomime negotiations

By and large, both sides had a hand in starting the war and both were incapable of holding talks. However, it seems to me that the Russian side was more culpable for the absence of true negotiations. Firstly, because it was the more powerful of the two. Secondly, because the Kremlin did not really wish to negotiate and saw negotiations only as cover for military preparations and later the war's continuation. The objective was clear — to occupy Chechnya and implement the so-called operation "to restore constitutional order."

tion with Russia" and to begin negotiations without making demands for the withdrawal of Russian troops.

December 26, 1994: The Russian Security Council decides to send troops into Grozny. Prior to this, there were no specific plans for taking the Chechen capital.

December 27, 1994: Boris Yeltsin appears on TV in an attempt to justify a violent solution to the Chechen problem to the Russian public. He says that he has instructed the heads of the military operation in Chechnya — Nikolai Yegorov, Anatoly Kvashnin, and Sergei Stepashin — to lead negotiations. The next day, Sergei Stepashin explains that the president did not actually mean negotiations so much as the presentation of an ultimatum to the Chechen leadership.

December 27, 1994: Russian President Boris Yeltsin announces a halt to the bombing of Grozny. The same day, as well as in forthcoming days, Russian aviation continues to carry out airstrikes against Grozny and other Chechen towns and villages.

On the night of **December 27, 1994**, a group of Russian human rights activists located in Grozny records six airstrikes against the city. Early in the morning, three missiles fired from aircraft destroy a four-story boarding school for orphans (the children at the time of the bombing are sheltered in the basement). The missiles also completely destroy a private home (the home's owner is counted as missing). At 3 p.m. of the same day, the neighborhood adjacent to Minutka Square suffers a missile attack.

December 28, 1994: Russian forces begin to advance on Khankala. They encounter stiff resistance, leading to fierce fighting in which both sides employ artillery and armored vehicles. According to official data, Russian forces (the 129th Motor Rifle Regiment and the 133rd Independent Tank Battalion) suffer 9 casualties killed and 18 wounded, and lose a C2 (command & control) vehicle, 2 BTR-70s and 5 tanks. Chechen forces also suffer casualties and losses. Among them is Umalt Dashayev, one of the most experienced Chechen military commanders.

December 29, 1994: Russian human rights activists in Grozny visit the Central Republican Hospital. Doctors report that 10 wounded civilians — among them 2 children and 3 women — were admitted that day. Most of the wounded are from the village of Staraya Sunzha which is located on the outskirts of Grozny. Meanwhile, the same day, 8 bodies — among them 2 children and 2 women — are delivered to the morgue. Beginning in the end of December, the shelling of the city's outskirts becomes more intense.

Late December 1994: Civilians fleeing Argun, which is suffering regular shelling, repeatedly come under fire along the road from Argun to Grozny.

December 31, 1994: After hours of large-scale artillery strikes, Russian troops launch an operation to seize Grozny.

Chechen militiamen. December 27, 1994. Photo by Oleg Nikishin.

The Chechen general staff orders its forces to make an orderly retreat into the city where positions have been pre-

Sergei Kovalev's group in Grozny.

What negotiations? A quick, small, victorious war to strengthen the authority of Yeltsin's Kremlin and his entire team. That was the main point.

There were, of course, also other factors. Chechnya had for several years served as a convenient place to launder so-called "air money." Local crooks and Russian bankers were "working" together. Oil was flowing from Russia to Chechnya, which was at least de facto no longer a part of the Russian Federation. From Chechnya, that oil was funneled abroad, while a portion of the proceeds wended its way back to Moscow offices. It seems that after some time, these schemes had ceased to work and the time came to destroy their traces.

What this war was *not* about was Chechen oil. Chechen oil was neither then nor now a prominent resource. It is true that it is of a very high quality, but its extraction has always required massive investments — not the primitive infrastructure in place at the time. In the context of the oil industry as a whole, Chechen oil is an insignificant fraction.

Indeed, the war was a struggle for another, much more important resource — power in Russia. The First Chechen War, like the Second, was a public relations campaign aimed at consolidating or retaining power in the Kremlin. During the first war, the campaign failed; during the second, it succeeded flawlessly.

Realizing this, Kovalev nevertheless sought to "build bridges." He sounded Dudayev and his entourage for how far they were ready to go to reach a compromise. He negotiated with them about possible peace proposals. Then he would contact Kozyrev in Moscow as well as other officials through Gaidar. There were several occasions when, unable to communicate from Grozny, we would travel to other places, such as Gudermes. We would drive through shelling (since the war was already under way) and we would contact Moscow. Kovalev would tell them, "There is an opportunity to reach a compromise. The main thing is to start the conversation and stop the war." The reply would be, "Yes, yes, Mr. Kovalev. Thank you, Mr. Kovalev!" And that was it! Later, when the fighting had already reached Grozny, Kovalev again appealed to the Kremlin: "Let's take a break from the fighting to allow the civilians to flee and to collect the corpses of Russian soldiers which the dogs are beginning to eat out in the streets." The reply was the same: "Yes, yes." And nothing changed. It was only once the planned-on small, victorious war began to encounter reality and fall apart that Moscow sought any dialog. Unfortunately, earnest negotiations began only after the terrible events in Budyonnovsk. Prior to that, for the Kremlin, negotiations were simply a pantomime.

By and large, both sides had a hand in starting the war and both were incapable of holding talks. However, it seems to me that the Russian side was more culpable for the absence of true negotiations. Firstly, because it was the more powerful of the two. Secondly, because the Kremlin did not really wish to negotiate and saw negotiations only as cover for military preparations and later the war's continuation. The objective was clear — to occupy Chechnya and implement the so-called operation "to restore constitutional order."

Dudayev

As for the Chechen side, both Dudayev and Yandarbiyev were very complicated figures. Yandarbiyev was an ideologue, and a very unpleasant one in my view. He was not Wahhabi — that did not yet exist in the North Caucasus. The strengthening of this movement in Chechnya was a consequence of the first war. However, it is quite likely that Yandarbiyev would have gone in that direction were it available to him. In lieu of it, he was a fundamentalist-nationalist and stood for complete independence from Russia, no matter the cost. He was able to torpedo the talks.

A dialog with Dudayev was not out of the question and perhaps he would have sought a compromise despite his surroundings; however, in his personal characteristics, he was a very difficult man.

My first meeting with him left a deep impression on me. Russian deputies

pared for them. The plan is to invite the column into the city and, after it has spread out, to perform a pincer maneuver and destroy it. Fierce fighting follows, in which the local militias enjoy an advantage. ChRI Chief of Staff Aslan Maskhadov, a retired Soviet artillery colonel, oversees the general defense of Grozny.

December 31, 1994: Near Nesterovskaya Stanitsa in Ingushetia, Russian troops fire on a car, gravely wounding civilian M. Dzhuguthanov.

No end in sight: Winter 1995.

January 1, 1995: Fierce fighting is underway in Grozny.

January 2, 1995: The Russian government's press service reports that the center of Grozny has been taken by federal troops and that the presidential palace is under siege. However, information coming in from Grozny, furnished by Deputies Lev Ponomaryov, Gleb Yakunin and Victor Sheynis, is at odds with the official line: "After fierce bombardment and shelling, approximately 250 armored vehicles entered the city. Dozens of them broke through to the city center. Grozny's defenders scattered the armored columns and began to destroy them systematically. The crews were either killed, captured or scattered around the city. The forces that entered the city had suffered a devastating defeat."

January 3, 1995: By this point, the Russian units that spearheaded the assault on the city have ceased to exist as military formations. The 131st (Maykopsk) Independent Motor Rifle Brigade has been almost completely destroyed. Other units have also incurred significant losses, such as the 81st (Samara) Motor Rifle Regiment, a detachment of the Pskov Airborne Division and others. The city's streets are strewn with thousands of dead Russian soldiers. More than a hundred people (according to official Russian data) have been taken prisoner. Of the more than 250 tanks, armored personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles that entered the city on New Year's Eve, only a handful have managed to escape the massacre. The rest were either destroyed by grenade launchers or captured along with their crew. The Chechen militias successfully fought off the first assault. However, the Russian soldiers managed to entrench themselves in several parts of the city: at the train station, near the Baronovsky bridge and in the Ippodromny subdivision.

January 3, 1995: Russian aviation conducts targeted attacks against the civilian population, dropping a total of 18 cluster bombs with ball and needle shrapnel on the market, gas station and hospital in the town of Shali. A school building and a communal farm are also hit. One of the aircraft even strafes a cemetery. Fifty-five residents are killed, including five medical workers; 186 are injured. According to other sources, the death toll in Shali exceeds 100 people.

January 3, 1995: Russian aviation conducts airstrikes on the village of Arshty in Ingushetia, which at that time had accumulated up to two million refugees. The Chechen villages of Melkhi-Yurt and Bamut also suffer airstrikes.

January 3, 1995: Near the town of Shali on the Rostov-Baku highway, a passenger vehicle carrying journalists James Meek (*The Guardian*), David Filippov (*Boston Globe*), Nikolay Zagnoyko (*Itar-Tass*) and Marina Perevozkina (*Russkaya Mysl*) is struck by missiles fired from a plane, which makes a special dive to carry out the attack.

January 3, 1995: Fleeing from the Chechen forces defending the city, offi-

had arrived in Chechnya and one would assume that if a person is concerned about his country and its citizens, he would seize such an opportunity for negotiations. After all, a massive force was on its way from the north, and a serious discussion was required to find possible ways of resolving the crisis.

The deputies were met by a uniformed man in a flight cap — a smart, slender general. He greeted everyone and immediately, without hearing why the guests had arrived or what they wished to offer, launched into a monologue about how Russian troops would find their graves here, how thousands upon thousands of volunteers from all around the world were already on their way to help, how Russia as a whole would collapse as a result of this war, how the country had dug itself a grave and so on and so forth. It was impossible to stop him. The Russian deputies kept trying to start a discussion: "Good, wonderful, your opinions on what is happening are very interesting — but let's talk." Dudayev would simply say that, yes, he was listening and then continue his monologue.

Indeed, the war was a struggle for another, much more important resource — power in Russia. The First Chechen War, like the Second, was a public relations campaign aimed at consolidating or retaining power in the Kremlin. During the first war, the campaign failed; during the second, it succeeded flawlessly.

At some point, his aide came in and reported that bombers were approaching the city. We were offered to go to the shelter. We go down to the basement and take a seat. Then Dudayev comes in and continues his monologue.

We left dumbfounded. I said to someone beside me, "And this is the man that we have to seek negotiations with?" Later, however, Kovalev did manage to establish a constructive dialog with Dudayev. If Moscow had indicated its willingness to start a serious conversation, it is likely to have led to some acceptable compromise. But this opportunity was not taken. In this, the Russian authorities shoulder a terrible guilt.

Civilians

People's attitudes were very diverse. The Russian-speaking populace that had remained in Grozny — many Russian, Armenians, Jews and people of other ethnicities — were horrified by the coming war. But not all. Some told us naively, "We have suffered here. We want the Russian army to come: the sooner the better. It will quickly occupy Grozny and set everything in order." I must admit that these people were quite reasonable in their complaints about their treatment by the Dudayev regime. Once state agencies became exclusively Vainakh, there arose both criminal lawlessness and various forms of discrimination. After all, there were times when even Dudayev did not have complete control over Grozny. The mobsters committed violence against the most vulnerable, and whereas Chechens had relatives, *teips* and large families that could protect them, the Russians and Russian-speakers frequently did not. People told us all this.

But we asked those who were waiting for the Russian army, "Are not you afraid that fighting will break out in the city, that there will be shelling and airstrikes? Are you not afraid that after the soldiers take Grozny, the ensuing lawlessness may be no less than what the mobsters are doing now?" Naturally, these people did not want such consequences. And unfortunately we were the ones who were right — everything went according to the worst possible scenario. Probably, a significant portion of Russian speakers, if not most of those killed in the shelling of Grozny in general, were people who had nowhere to flee to.

The Chechen populace was afraid as well. Those who could, fled or sent their children away. They sought refuge in the mountain villages, believing that there would be no bombings there. Even the Chechen fighters held different views. Some said, "I was just a hard worker doing my job. I never participated in any structures of the Dudayev regime; I've taken up arms now because I must defend my homeland. But I do not want war and wish it weren't happening. We need peace negotiations." There were those who said, "War? Wonderful!" And they would recite all of Dudayev's ideologemes, albeit with more brevity.

Prisoners

Initially, the Chechens treated their Russian prisoners in compliance with international humanitarian law. Of course, a prisoner is no guest, but they were not beaten or tortured and were kept in reasonable conditions and fed normally. We spoke with the prisoners several times, face to face. This applies equally to those prisoners who were captured during the first stage of the conflict, before the Kremlin officially recognized that its troops were in Chechnya, as well as those who were captured during the nightmarish New Year's assault on Grozny. Both the wounded prisoners and the wounded Chechen fighters were treated in the same hospital, in the basement of the presidential palace.

There were, of course, exceptions. One wounded Chechen regained consciousness in the hospital and saw that the wounded man in the neighboring bed was a captain of the Russian army. Somehow, the Chechen still had a dagger, and, perhaps assuming that he was in Russian captivity, tried to kill the captain. Fortunately he was stopped and restrained. He had only managed to seriously scratch the prisoner's throat. There was another incident that we managed to stop: a POW had been brought in; suddenly there was a lot of noise and shouting and a mob of militants appeared. We asked what was going on. The militants start yelling that the prisoner was a sniper. Snipers, like pilots who conducted airstrikes against civilians, were treated very poorly. But we intervened and took the sniper to the other prisoners.

We began to collate lists of Russian POWs and in so doing discovered a new area of activity. Kovalev was the first to return to Moscow with a list of POWs — those who were held either in the presidential palace or nearby. The

cers and soldiers of the 81st Guards Motor Rifle Regiment break into the Republican Hospital in Grozny and seize hostages from among the doctors and patients located inside. The Chechen leadership begins negotiations with them, promising safe passage in exchange for the captured civilians. This is the first incident involving the capture of a medical facility and the use of human shields.

January 3, 1995: Immediately following the failure of the initial assault, a group of Grozny residents is taken prisoner by forces under General Lev Rokhlin. All of the prisoners are men. They had been hiding with their families in a bomb shelter near the cannery. The soldiers do not touch the women and children, but they load the men into two trucks. When one of the trucks breaks down, they move the prisoners to the other one. People are stacked in six or more layers. The ones at the bottom suffocate. If anyone moves, the soldiers open fire. At least eight people are killed. The rest are taken to Mozdok and held in railway cars near filtration points as hostages. Some of them are later exchanged for Russian soldiers captured in combat.

January 3, 1995: Russian aviation conducts airstrikes against groups of refugees moving south along the road from Grozny to Shatoy, at its intersection with the Rostov-Baku highway. In particular, the missiles strike a truck, killing its driver, and a Zhiguli. All of the passengers in the car are also killed. However, there are still more casualties, both killed and wounded.

January 4, 1995: In the villages of Gvardeyskoye and Benoy-Yurt in the Nadterechny District, as well as in Shelkovsky District, Russian security forces — OMON and MVD troops — begin to arbitrarily detain civilians during operations in order to seize weapons and check passports. That same day, the village of Stariye Atagi is bombed.

January 5, 1995: An MVD Mi-8 helicopter is shot down with an RPG near the village of Kargalinsky. Four crew members are killed.

January 5–6, 1995: In Grozny, the fighting continues at the railway station, at the so-called Baronovsky Bridge and in the Ippodromny subdivision. Russian forces have been largely expelled from or destroyed in other parts of the city.

January 5–6, 1995: Chechen units engage Russian forces near Assinovskaya Stanitsa in the west of the country. During these days, Russian MVD troops also carry out a joint operation with OMON riot police in Assinovskaya Stanitsa and Noviy Sharoy, as well as the stanitsas of Chervlennaya, Mykolaiv and Ischerskaya, in the north of the country.

January 6, 1995: Sergei Kovalev offers Yeltsin to declare a truce on the occasion of Orthodox Christmas. The Russian president replies that the right time has not yet come.

January 7, 1995: Without any provocation, the armored column that entered Chechnya through Ingushetia, opens small arms fire on a Niva passenger car that is trying to pass it on the highway. The incident occurs at the entrance to the city of Nazran. As a result, 16-year-old Shamsuddin Arselgov is killed.

January 7, 1995: General Lev Rokhlin is assigned commander of Army Groups North-East and North. Ivan Babichev becomes commander of Army Group West. Russian units regroup and renew their assault on the center of Grozny.

The change in the treatment of Russian POWs took place after the first prisoner exchange on January 27, 1995, when the Russians handed over Chechen POWs who had been incarcerated in the filtration points — where they had been subjected to torture and abuse.

list was handed over to Russian officials. We extended this work, collating more and more lists.

On the other hand, the Russians' treatment of Chechen fighters was from the outset bestial and shameful. They were treated not as prisoners, but as criminals who had no rights. Although, in fact, even criminals enjoy legal protection. Chechen POWs were transferred to the jurisdiction of personnel from the MVD, the secret services, and the prison system. That is, those who had long since become accustomed to all kinds of cruelty and legal infractions. Moreover, here, they sensed a complete lack of oversight and acted with impunity.

The change in the treatment of Russian POWs took place after the first prisoner exchange on January 27, 1995, when the Russians handed over Chechen POWs who had been incarcerated in the filtration points — where they had been subjected to torture and abuse. They returned in a terrible state. The same day, Russian POWs were beaten in the ChRI Department of State Security detention center in Shali. It was the first serious incident of a mass beating perpetrated by the Chechens. The worst was at the end of the war, when Russian POWs were concentrated in one place in the vicinity of Bamut and were subjected to starvation, torture and summary executions.

In March 1995, I accompanied a large group of POW mothers to the headquarters of Aslan Maskhadov (the chief of the general staff of ChRI armed forces). He had promised to return the prisoners to their mothers. But this time he said that from now on there would only be exchanges. And yet, even then, he returned the eight privates whose mothers had managed to meet with them. He refused to release any officers. I had a chance to speak to the prisoners at Maskhadov's headquarters back then, as well as with the released prisoners later on. All of them said the same thing: "We have no complaints about the conditions of our captivity."

Results

As the war went on, there was further brutality on both sides.

And if at the beginning of the war, Russian soldiers near the village of Noviy Sharoy did not want to fire on the unarmed crowd blocking their path, then by the spring of 1995 the mood had changed drastically. An example of this was the Samashki tragedy (April 7--8, 1995). At the insistence of local residents, a large group of militants had retreated from the village. All that remained was a small village militia composed mainly of the same local residents. When the troops began to enter the village, the militia put up a short-lived resistance and then also retreated. At this point, a massive punitive operation began in the village. I think that it was sanctioned by the Russian command, which authorized its soldiers to do something that goes well beyond the proper conduct of military personnel. The thinking seemed to be: Let them know what will happen to any village that dares put up even token resistance. Thus, a *zachistka* (cleansing operation) commenced in the village. It involved the killing of civilians, abuse of detainees, and the looting and burning of houses. Similar punitive operations took place in other villages as well.

By the end of the war, taking civilians hostage became standard practice.

There were many such incidents during the last of the fighting in Grozny. An example of this is when Russian soldiers fighting in Grozny occupied Hospital No. 9 and took the civilians inside hostage. This incident is detailed in our report.

War never leads to anything good, and in this case, the war caught up with Russia and did great harm to it. The hardliners' unaccountability, their absolute power and dominance in power, as well as their nihilistic regard for the law, are all to a large extent the consequences of this war.

The first serious suppression of the freedom of expression is also associated with this war, since it happened at the same time. For instance, the information we gathered about the events in Samashki was virtually censored.

The terrible blow to the economy was likewise a consequence of the First Chechen War.

The Budyonnovsk tragedy, which occurred shortly after Samashki, was a consequence of the Chechen fighters' transition to the path of terrorism. From that moment on, Basayev became the leader of a terrorist movement. Later this movement intensified — and it should be noted that Basayev accomplished nothing good for Chechnya. Although, at some point, he did become a national hero, which is also very sad. I can understand it, but I cannot condone it. Sadly, through his terrorist methods, Basayev managed to force the same negotiations that everyone else had failed to attain earlier.

The death of Dudayev played a bad role. What good could it have done? He was replaced by Yandarbiyev, who was utterly against seeking peace through negotiations. But then again, the Russian hardliners did not want peace either. Through their bellicose measures, which often went beyond the bounds of the law, the Russian side only strengthened the extremist wing in Chechnya. In doing so, they endowed Basayev with the image of a defender of the public. The war helped strengthen the radical, fundamentalist, Islamist wing in Chechen politics. Then came the Second Chechen War.

And so, unfortunately, we now have a terrorist underground that has already sworn its allegiance to the "Islamic State." The results of the two Chechen wars may be assessed in different ways. But obviously, in terms of the rule of law, the respect for human rights and liberties, the re-established "constitutional order" is very deplorable indeed.

January 8, 1995: A car carrying journalists from the channel WTN is shot at from positions held by the MVD's Vityaz Special Forces unit.

January 8, 1995: Chechen militia capture 47 soldiers from the GRU's 22nd Independent Brigade 30 km south of Grozny. In response, the Russian command issues an ultimatum to the residents of the nearby villages of Komsomolsk and Alkhazurovo: Release the prisoners or suffer bombings.

January 9, 1995: Grozny's presidential palace, residential areas, and oil storage facilities are engulfed in fires. The Grozny State Oil Institute and the airport are occupied. Artillery fire rains from all sides; heavy mortars are being used, as well as rocket artillery.

January 9, 1995: Russian troops in Grozny shell the Municipal Children's Hospital No. 2.

Kovalev contacts Chernomyrdin from Nazran, offering to call a truce for urgent humanitarian measures: Bodies must be removed, civilians evacuated, and seriously wounded prisoners must be exchanged. Chernomyrdin agrees. The Chechen side supports the initiative. However, Anatoly Kvashnin and Leonty Shevtsov who are leading the operation from the Kremlin, are suddenly nowhere to be found.

Night of January 9, 1995: The Russian government issues an ultimatum to ChRI units to surrender within the next 48 hours. According to the statement, the Russian side will unilaterally cease fire during this time frame. But the lull is short-lived and fighting resumes in Grozny that same day, according to human rights sources.

January 15–16, 1995: ChRI officials — Economy Minister Taymaz Abubakarov and Prosecutor General Usman Imayev — set out for Moscow. They meet with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Shakhrai and Deputy Minister for Ethinc Affairs Vyacheslav Mikhailov.

January 16, 1995: Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdin offers to start ceasefire negotiations for the first time publicly on television. The next day, he meets with Abubakarov and Imayev and agrees with them on a phased ceasefire. The preliminary time for the planned-on ceasefire is 6 p.m. on January 18.

January 16, 1995: Salambek Khadzhiyev, one of the leaders of the pro-Russian Chechen opposition before the war, is appointed chairman of the pro-Moscow Government of National Revival of Chechnya.

Later in the year, on October 23, 1995, he will be dismissed for making critical statements about Russian soldiers who, according to him, are engaging in robbing, looting and kidnapping.

January 17–19, 1995: Russian aircraft carry out airstrikes on Shatoy. In the village, homes are destroyed and there are many casualties, dead and wounded, including among them refugees from Grozny. The casualties admitted to the hospital, according to a correspondent of *Izvestia*, include women, children and the elderly.

January 18, 1995: During an attempt to enter Samashki under the guise of an

Sergei KOVALEV:

Incidents from the First Chechen War

In January 1996, Mr. Kovalev tendered his resignation: He requested to be relieved from the post of chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, claiming that he was doing so in protest against "Boris Yeltsin's complete abandonment of the policy of democratic reform." He addressed an open letter to Yeltsin in which he stressed that the president's policy resulted in "numerous grave human rights violations in Russia and the unleashing of a civil war in the North Caucasus, which has killed tens of thousands of people."

The operation in Chechnya had been prepared a long time in advance. Naively, I refused to believe that everything would turn out this way. I held this belief until I learned that the troops were on their way.

Reference: ***Sergei Adamovich Kovalev*** *is a Soviet dissident and a Russian human rights, social and political activist. Mr. Kovalev was one of the authors of the Russian Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1991, as well as of the second chapter of the Russian Constitution "Rights and Freedoms of Man and Citizen." He has served as the chairman of the Russian historical-educational organization HRC* Memorial *and as president of the Human Rights Institute. Mr. Kovalev was a deputy in the State Duma during the legislative body's first, second and third convocations. In January 1994, he became the first elected Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation; he was dismissed by the State Duma from his post in March 1995. Mr. Kovalev has received numerous international awards, including the Europe Prize, the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award, and the Award of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee. He has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize several times. The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria conferred upon him the Order of "Knight of Honor" (Mr. Kovalev refused to accept the award until the end of the war in Chechnya and subsequently received it in January 1997).*

During 1994–1996, Mr. Kovalev was sharply critical of the Russian authorities' actions in Chechnya. From the first days of the war, he was in the country working in the war zone. He headed the Mission of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the North Caucasus (later — the Mission of Public Organizations under the Leadership of S.A. Kovalev), which was created with the support of HRC Memorial and other public organizations.

Fax to President Yeltsin

In early December 1994, we ran into Georgy Satarov (political scientist; from 1994 to 1997 an aide to President Boris Yeltsin) in the Kremlin's corridors. At the time, he was engaged in the search for a "Russian national idea," at Yeltsin's behest. I began our conversation with my usual jest — "how's the idea coming?" — but we went on to discuss the ongoing military developments. Satarov said that we should not worry too much — he claimed that, most likely, this was merely preparation for diplomatic negotiations. I replied that such preparations sometimes end badly and that I would try to speak with Yeltsin. Saratov's answer to this made everything clear to me — he like my idea and said that I should try to get an audience but needed to hurry because Yeltsin was due to go to the hospital: "no big deal, he has a crooked nasal septum and it is necessary to straighten it out a bit." I realized that things were looking bad indeed and called Echo of Moscow with the news that a military operation, it seems, really was about to begin. My sadly since-deceased close friend Mikhail Molostvov (State Duma deputy during 1993–95; human rights activist and philosopher), then joked: "Yeltsin is hiding from the problem behind his nasal septum."

At the time, I was the federal commissioner for human rights, so I quickly made up my mind to go where the war was beginning. I wanted the expedition to have an official, parliamentary character. Who at the time could be included in the parliamentary delegation? Clearly people from Gaidar's Choice of Russia as well as Yabloko, but I decided to speak with Zyuganov as well. His reaction surprised me: "Yes, of course, it's time to go there! We've been wondering why the human rights commissioner is still sitting in Moscow!" I suggested we recruit some of his faction; he agreed and suggested Leonid Petrovsky. For a time he worked with us, leaving us on the eve of the assault after saying that it seemed to him that he would be more useful in Moscow. But he wholly agreed with our delegation's position. Indeed, when he returned to Moscow, he continued to act in this spirit — I have no complaints here.

Thus, our team consisted of legislators Molostvov, Valery Borshchev, Petrovsky and myself. There was also Oleg Orlov, and pretty soon we were joined by Yuly Rybakov. Additionally, HRC *Memorial* would constantly send us people.

And so we had to find some way to get there. Naively believing myself to be a constitutional official, I thought that the state was obliged to send a mission appointed by parliament. There were no public flights to Chechnya, and it had not yet occurred to us to travel through Ingushetia. As commissioner, I had my own "hotline" — a direct line to the Kremlin. I began to make calls and explain what we needed for our trip. The response was pretty tepid; after a bit, the hotline ceased to work altogether. This was unprecedented — the first and second lines to the Kremlin use different channels and can never be disconnected. I went to the office of Sergei Yushenkov (State Duma deputy from the Liberal Russia party) and tried to make calls from there. The incredible happened — within five minutes, this hotline also ceased to work. This was followed by an expedition with Anatoly Shabad to the General Staff — where at first we were denied entrance.

EMERCOM convoy, a Russian infantry fighting vehicle is incapacitated by local militia. Six soldiers jump out of it and are killed. Fearing retaliation against the village, the locals begin to flee — on foot and in cars.

Shortly before the incident with the IFV the Samashki militia had also attacked a Russian armored personnel carrier. The APC caught on fire, but managed to retreat to its own lines.

January 18, 1995: Five km from the village of Achkhoi-Martan, a car carrying *Radio Russia* correspondent Nadezhda Chaikova and two other civilians is shot at from a military helicopter. According to the journalist, when the passengers fled the car, the helicopter continued to fire on them, even launching two missiles.

January 18, 1995: Boris Yeltsin appears on television and announces, "We will not be speaking with Dudayev." That same night, the presidential palace in Grozny, which became a symbol of the Chechen resistance after the Russian army tried but failed to capture it on December 31, 1994, is destroyed by bunker-busting bombs.

January 19, 1995: Chernomyrdin publically states, "We don't negotiate with bandits." What remains of the "presidential palace" is occupied by federal forces. Yeltsin announces an end to the military phase of the conflict.

January 22 (according to other sources this took place on February 23), 1995: Russian aviation conducts airstrikes on athletic facilities near Lake Kezenoi-Am in the south. At the time, the facilities are occupied by refugees. According to HRC *Memorial*, five women and children from Chiri-Yurt die in the attacks. The total number of casualties is 15.

January 24, 1995: Russian aircraft drop cluster bombs with ball and needle shrapnel near the city of Gudermes. In January alone, the following republican settlements are bombed: Barmut, Stariye Atagi, Chechen-Aul, Chishki, Achkhoy-Martan, Argun, Gudermes and others.

January 24, 1995: A vehicle traveling along the Rostov-Baku highway, carrying a group of journalists from *Deutsche Welle* — Edward Neumayer, Leo and Vladimir Sergeyev, and Vladimir Karin — is bombed. V. Karin is wounded in his arm.

January 25, 1995: Two Mi-24Vs from the 178th Independent Combat Helicopter Regiment crash due to poor visibility (according to other sources, they are shot down by Chechen forces) in Chechen territory. There are no survivors.

January 26, 1995: Russian artillery carries out large-scale shelling of apartment blocks in Chernorechye on the southern outskirts of Grozny. There are no Chechen troops or military facilities in the neighborhood, but there are many civilians.

January 26, 1995: According to human rights sources, the first prisoner exchange takes place: Near Khasavyurt in Dagestan, 41 servicemembers from the GRU's 22nd Independent Brigade are exchanged for Chechen detainees.

January 27, 1995: Around 4 p.m. six helicopters attack the outskirts of Samashki. Missiles strike the woods to the east of the village as well.

January 28, 1995: Samashki is attacked again. This time, seven helicopters fire missiles at the outskirts of the village, the village train station and the adjacent residential area.

Eventually, however, the then deputy chairman of the General Staff came down to us on the street and personally escorted us to his office. We talked to him about Chechnya. He assured us that there would be no military actions. Shabad pointed out that all general staffs had military contingency plans for every region that could see conflict and inquired what the plan for Grozny was. The deputy chairman became irate and began yelling at us.

I tried to call Mr. Yeltsin from every possible phone but could not reach him. Then I asked his secretary about how I could contact the president about a serious matter. And, in the event that he was not available, whether I could send him a fax. "We do not have a fax," replied the secretary, discouraging me completely. A little later, at an evening in the memory of Andrei Sakharov, which was attended by Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and Yegor Gaidar (then deputy prime minister of the Russian Federation), I requested to speak out of order. Explaining my intention to go to Chechnya, I concluded with an offer to chip in for a fax machine for Yeltsin — after all, a president should have such an important device. Kozyrev was the first to approach and contribute some money. Many others followed, but I have no idea what happened to it. I suppose, in the end, they all paid for their drinks with it.

At the same evening, Kozyrev suggested that I call Oleg Soskovets (at that time he too was a deputy prime minister). I got in touch with him easily. He began thusly, "My dear Mr. Kovalev, how long has it been, how many years!" At the time I was not at all familiar with him. Soskovets began to inquire what the problem was. I explained: It is necessary to fly to Chechnya or wherever the army is headed. The deputy PM said, "Of course! When?" I said, "Tomorrow."

Soskovets gave me the number to Chkalovsky Airport and promised that our group of five would be granted transportation. We arrived early in the evening of the next day. We were met by a general and invited to have tea. Then they put is in a huge, empty plane, and we took off. We were in the air for more than an hour when suddenly the captain emerged from the cockpit and announced that the airfield in Mozdok would not accept us due to ice on the airstrip and that the authorities had ordered us to return. We returned to Chkalovsky Airport late at night. And we decided to wait until they sent us on another flight. Entering the same room where we had been accommodated only a few hours ago, we found a modest tea service waiting on the table. We decided to have a cup, but just then an officer entered and told us that it was not for us. "And in general," he added, "get out of here."

I objected, "You must get us there." He replied, "I don't know anything about it." An hour and a half later they rolled out another aircraft. We managed to learn that it was taking an emergency military team to Chechnya. Yet we were not allowed to board, as we were not on the list.

After a row, we decided to fly there ourselves. We went to the airport, used our deputy IDs to buy tickets and flew to Ingushetia. We were met by [Ingush President] Ruslan Aushev, who furnished us with a car and a bodyguard, and the next morning we set out for Grozny. So began this expedition.

"We served side by side with these guys!"

We arrived in Grozny and met with Dzhokhar Dudayev. He gave orders to accommodate us. One of his ministers gave us an apartment where we first lived. There were no combat operations during the first stage of our work, though they were looming — tanks had shelled an Ingush village on the way to Grozny. The military later claimed that allegedly the tank column had been fired upon from this village.

We toured the Russian military bases, in particular, near Assinovskaya Stanitsa. The military tents reached right up to its outskirts. The entire area was impassable with mud and marsh mush; the winter had not yet set in. Suddenly, some pompous officer popped out of a tent and began screaming at us, "Deputies, what are you doing here? Go on back to Moscow! Your place is there! You have to convince everyone that there won't be any military action. We served side by side with these guys!" It was embarrassing to hear this, but at the same time we understood that he was merely very mistaken in his assumption that we could stop what Moscow had started.

After that the airstrikes began. Grozny was the first target. Skirmishes began to erupt.

Our group appealed to the warring parties to respect the rights of civilians and POWs and to record civilian losses in Grozny. This turned out to be impossible, though we did record as many as we could. Unfortunately, the bodies were simply pouring into the hospital. And it was important to consider the Muslim rite of burying the dead on the same day they died. Thus, relatives and neighbors would quickly retrieve their dead from the morgue and, on top of this, the hospitals kept no records. Furthermore, there was only one decently functioning hospital anyway.

The opposition

On November 26, during the first assault on Grozny, Avturkhanov and other opposition leaders from Nadterechny District came riding in on tanks. Where had they acquired these tanks? I know about how Sergei Stepashin [the then director of the FSK] recruited their crews. These were Russian tankers, who had been granted leave without pay and "contracted for this little war." They were promised a lot of money, but they got captured. The armor column was smashed to bits.

The beginning of the war and Chechen assistance

The incident that Vladimir Zhirinovsky would later describe as, "Kovalev was holed up in Dudayev's bunker, while in the streets of Grozny, our boys were dying with a smile on their lips," — really happened as follows.

On the morning of December 31, we approached Dudayev with a very urgent piece of business: Grozny's Russian residents were fleeing the city; two groups of buses had been permitted to leave and one more had been due to depart on December 30, but it was barred by Chechen authorities. At the checkpoint, the refugees were told, "You live in Grozny, Grozny is being bombed, why do you want only Chechens to suffer the effects? No, you'll have to share the misfortune

January 29, 1995: During a *zachistka* (cleansing operation) in Grozny's Butenko neighborhood, Russian soldiers kill a 52-year-old local resident and father of 11 children. He is shot, thrown into the cellar and covered with the corpse of his shot dog.

January 30, 1995: An armored column of Russian marines from the Pacific Fleet tries to enter Samashki. Village elders and officials come out to the road and ask the soldiers not to enter the village so as not to provoke a clash with the local militia. Opening fire on the residents, the column moves forward. The local militia returns fire, killing three Russian servicemembers and burning several APCs and C2 vehicles. Seventeen people are wounded (according to other sources, this number is nine). The wounded are taken prisoner and transferred to the hospital. The Chechen militia also captures a satellite communications vehicle and hands it over to the Chechen leadership. The Russian column retreats from the village.

January 31, 1995: At 11:45 a.m. Russian tanks and helicopters begin shelling the outskirts of Samashki. Russian troops have surrounded the village. Several houses are destroyed, a gas pipeline is set alight, electricity and water service is shut off. The shelling ends at 5 p.m. People began to flee Samashki towards Achkhoy-Martan. The road to Sernovodsk has been cordoned off. Chechen militia in the village pours fire on the soldiers surrounding it. The next day, the Russian command confirms the death of one of its soldiers and the wounding of another twelve. Four village residents have been killed — two men and two women.

February 1, 1995: MVD General Anatoly Kulikov is given command of the operation. His first step in his new positions is to order checkpoints set up along the Chechen-Ingush border. This measure immediately throttles the flow of people fleeing the combat zone. All future successes enjoyed by Russian forces in Chechnya will be achieved by a combination of two tactics: *zachistkas* (cleansing operations or raids) which involve the kidnapping or summary executions of non-combatants and bombing threats against populated areas. According to official sources, the number of Russian troops deployed in Chechnya grows to 70,000.

February 1, 1995: ChRI President Dzhokhar Dudayev is placed on Russia's Most Wanted list; the Russian Prosecutor General's Office announces that a criminal complaint has been filed against Dudayev and claims that he intends on detaining him.

February 2, 1995: Two more residents of Samashki die as a result of a mine explosion in the yard of the house on ulitsa Chapayeva during a funeral for women killed two days earlier. Several people suffer wounds of varying severity.

February 3 1995: The killing of people in the Butenko neighborhood of Grozny continues. This time, the Russian military shoots two brothers and a sister from the Gagayev family.

February 3, 1995: A Su-24M crashes (according to other sources, the plane is shot down) southeast of Chervlennaya Stanitsa. Both crew members are killed.

with them." Instead of reaching Dudayev, we were forced to speak with Yandarbiyev. I had to overcome his psychological resistance, but in the end we agreed to grant the buses passage. But, alas, at this point the assault on Grozny commenced, street fighting broke out and we could not get back to our apartment.

We finally reached the place only to find an unexploded rocket lodged in one of the walls. Who knows what would have happened if we had been sleeping there.

The bunker was in the former building of the Republican Committee of the Communist Party. It was one of the main buildings in the city and had been sturdily constructed. It was blown up only after Grozny had been taken — neither shells nor mortars nor bombs had any effect on it.

We did not observe any extraordinary atrocities at the beginning of the war from either side — excepting of course the fact that a peaceful city was being bombed. Initially, the Chechen side was humane in its treatment of captured enemy soldiers. The building we took cover in also had a hospital, where the wounded from both sides were receiving treatment. The Russians were treated quite well. Unfortunately the quality of medical care was barely adequate: The doctors were excellent, but there were no supplies, no bandages. Still, the medical personnel improvised as best they could.

There was another incident that exemplified the Chechens' attitude to prisoners of war. A Russian helicopter was shot down. I was approached at a fairly high level: The pilot was gravely wounded and it was not possible to provide the necessary medical assistance in Grozny. I was asked to speak with Moscow and arrange for the pilot to be evacuated. As strange as it seems in hindsight, despite the military operations, communications were still working and I could get in touch with Moscow all the time — not a single NTV news bulletins would air without one of my reports. So I raised the issue of the pilot with the leadership several times, to no avail. Only after a while they began to ask — what was required and what the preconditions would be. I approached the Chechens. But the pilot was already dead.

At the same time, toward the beginning of the war, Dudayev gave us a car to go to a village near Grozny called Noviye Atagi. The village was full of solitary Russian seniors, men and women, who were living scattered about the Chechen homesteads. We were told that this was not a government initiative, but simply the work of neighbors who, fleeing Grozny, had brought their elderly neighbors along with them. Such was the attitude of Chechens to their close acquaintances.

Maskhadov's proposal

One day Aslan Maskhadov called me in and told me that a Russian unit had been surrounded near the railroad station: "We can obliterate them without much problem. But why inflict needless casualties? If you are ready to act as envoys to them, you may. We will release them, but only with their personal weapons. They will have to surrender their heavy weaponry." We spent a long time discussing this offer among ourselves, considering, among other things, that this could be a ruse. But in the end we decided to accept the offer. So the later accusation that I offered Russian soldiers to surrender has no basis: Nothing of the kind ever took place and indeed could not have taken place. We agreed solely because we understood that the decision would be taken by the belligerents' respective commands anyway, and no one would believe anything the other side said. In order to ensure that all the conditions were met, we would have to form a Russian-Chechen commission, in which our group would act as the parliamentary guarantor.

A bus brought us within a few blocks of the railroad station and then we had to get off and walk. Corpses of Russian soldiers lay strewn along our path; there were no Chechen ones because they would collect their dead. The entire city was covered with steel splinters and broken bricks. We walked with a white flag, accompanied by a priest who was the rector of Grozny. Reaching the destroyed building, we climbed to the third floor where the unit's officers were waiting for us. A brief conversation took place. I related the position of the Chechen side and offered them to contact senior command over the radio before announcing their decision. Their answer was as follows: "We have been in contact with headquarters; both our commanders and we are categorically against this; if we must fight, we will fight."

At this point we took a brief break in the discussion and spoke about more general matters, such as the war as a whole and where it was heading. Neither I nor my companions made any attempt to conceal what our true assessments were. After that, we left. As we were walking away, a burst of machine gun fire rattled over our heads. It had come from the windows of the building behind us — they wanted to scare us.

On the way back, Molostvov and Rybakov were concussed — they were in another bus from me. Later, for some reason, a journalist claimed that I had offered the soldiers to surrender over the radio. Over a radio? That I had taken from the separatists? Utter nonsense. To surrender as a prisoner of war when POWs in Russia were treated as terribly as they were? It was simply impossible. Despite this slander, we stubbornly continued doing our work.

The Kremlin's response

When Kozyrev was still accessible by telephone, I told him: Something must be done; I am convinced that the Chechen side is ready to negotiate. Rather sluggishly, Kozyrev suggested I speak with Dudayev. So I did. Dudayev instructed his assistant to draft a proposal for the Russian side. It was full of boilerplate: a proposal to hold negotiations, considerations about the need for a truce and for the troops to retreat and so on. Dudayev signed this document. At this point, we lost our telephone connection; there was no other. Orlov and I were given a car and had to drive out to the last station along the railroad in order to call Moscow. However, we did not manage to get in touch with Kozyrev; the best we could do was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

There was no alternative, so I slowly dictated Dudayev's short message over the phone. I don't know what happened to it afterward. But there were many similar attempts. This was still before the assault on Grozny, before the street fighting. Otherwise, no one would have let us go anywhere.

February 3, 1995: The Russian command creates Army Group South and tasks it with blockading Grozny from the south, where Chechen units have moved freely up till now.

February 4, 1995: Using anti-air artillery, Chechen separatists shoot at two Russian Su-25s from the 368th Independent Assault Aviation Regiment near the village of Chechen-Aul. One plane crashes, the second is damaged but manages to return to the airfield.

February 7, 1995: Argun officials warn local residents about possible heavy shelling. The same day, the city is hit with Grad and Uragan rocket artillery as well as airstrikes. On ulitsa Nuradilova alone, at least 10 homes are damaged. Many residents are wounded. There is no information about the deceased. The shelling of Argun continues for days.

February 8, 1995: Units of the Chechen resistance abandon their positions in the center of Grozny and retreat to the city's southern and southeastern suburbs. Most of the city is now under the control of Russian troops.

February 8, 1995: Russian soldiers conduct two raids on the village of Staraya Sunzha in the Grozny rural district and kill at least 10 local residents. A few people are injured and at least one person is disappeared. The killings are carried out deliberately outside the combat zone. The Russian soldiers slit the throats of several people. Others are tortured and killed, while some are burned alive inside their homes.

February 8, 1995: The RF Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights publishes its data on the number of dead among Grozny civilians — about 25,000 people.

"The small victorious war" has so far lasted two months and there is no end in sight. According to HRC *Memorial*, instead of growing popularity for the executive authorities, opinion polls show a sharp drop in approval ratings.

February 9, 1995: Kh.G. Dzhamulayev, an employee of the Sunzha District Department of the Republic of the Ingush MVD, who lives on the territory of Chechnya, is heading to work when he is arrested by the Russian military in the village of Samashki.. He is taken to the Russian base in Assinovskaya Stanitsa. There, Kh. Dzhamulayev is subjected to severe beatings. He is illegally detained until February 13, and then released after having his documents, money and clothes taken from him.

February 12, 1995: Russian artillery shells the village of Alkhan-Yurt.

A cloud of smoke from the ensuing fires hangs above the village, its destroyed homes and buildings. There are almost no residents remaining. According to their accounts, the fiercest attacks began on February 11, though there were others before — on February 10, in particular. The southern part of the village, adjacent to the Rostov-Baku highway, is especially damaged. There are casualties, both killed and wounded. Among them, for example, is the imam of the local mosque (though, according to other sources, he was killed in Chechen-Aul).

Mid-February 1995: Due to constant bombing, the hospital in the village of Stariye Atagi is evacuated.

February 13, 1995: During talks in Ordzhonikidzevskaya Stanitsa (Republic of Ingushetia), General Anatoly Kulikov, the Russian Joint Force commander, agrees on a temporary truce with ChRI Chief of Staff Aslan Maskhadov. An exchange of POWs takes place in Grozny. The truce is sup-

Budyonnovsk

The seizure of the Budyonnovsk hospital was the only terrorist attack on Russian soil in which the lives of the hostages remained a priority. The tragedy in Moscow — the Nord-Ost attack — and the Beslan school siege were different.

During the Nord-Ost attack, the decision to use poison gas was taken at the highest levels. At the level of President Putin. To this day, the government has not revealed what kind of gas was used, but most likely it was not a chemical warfare agent; rather, the gas was probably a narcotic agent that is lethal in excessive dosages. As a result, the poisoned victims were rescued in a monstrous manner, without any information on hand about the proper antidote.

The hostage crisis in Budyonnovsk unfolded quite differently. I do not know how many victims there would have been if the assault had gone on. Hostages died as a direct result of the storming of the hospital.

Upon arriving to sign a draft of the joint agreement between Chernomyrdin and Basayev, we took a look at what had happened inside. The scene inside the hospital was something truly monstrous. In the scorched surgical unit, a woman's body still lay on the operating table. She had died during the operation. The surgeon was seriously injured. There were bodies piled beneath the stairs — not of the militants, but of the hostages who were killed during the assault attempts.

I do not wish to justify Basayev's actions in any way. When his men rounded up city residents and forced them into the hospital, there were civilian casualties. Basayev's men shot seven people: helicopter crewmen who had arrived on their own, armed only with handguns. The militants killed them one by one, demanding a meeting with journalists, which was promised many times, but never took place. There is no justification for the killing of hostages or civilians. But terror is terror.

Throughout the civilized world, there is one basic rule: You can deceive terrorists any way you want, doing so is inevitable. However, the lives of the hostages remains the priority. Promise anything you like but ensure that the hostages go free. Throughout the world, the history of fighting terrorism contains few instances of assault. And it is worth pointing out that the ones that did take place, were different from our own.

I do not know how many people we saved in Budyonnovsk. The first assault had passed. When we began our negotiations with Basayev, there were still more than a thousand hostages remaining.

During the assault, I was able to reach Gaidar and tell him what was happening. At the time, we were not allowed to approach the hospital; we were kept isolated. Suddenly, someone came running for me: "Hurry up, which one of you is Kovalev? Chernomyrdin's on the line." It turned out that Gaidar had spoken with Chernomyrdin and persuaded him to entrust me with leading the negotiations. And we managed to rescue the hostages. Without that, nothing would have happened. The generals who had flown there, even Stepashin himself, were ready to bomb the hospital irrespective of anything. And that's it.

After the talks, after the protracted bargaining, Chernomyrdin signed an agreement. The people were released. We went with Basayev as hostages. The group was divided across several buses. I sat by the window, as a human shield, next to an armed militant. All of us were seated in this way.

There were intentions to attack the convoy; it was a difficult "excursion." Initially we took the short route toward Beslan, through North Ossetia, but we were cut off.

Flares set the fields around us on fire; helicopters buzzed overhead. The authorities kept calling Basayev to negotiate and he kept stepping out to do so. In the end, we reached Zandak [a Chechen village on the border with Dagestan,] in Chechnya and the militants released us.

Several journalists participated in this trip with Basayev, and they deserve honor and praise. There were also many hospital patients who sacrificed themselves to release the rest. Russian officials sent to the site of the terrorist attack were trying to force these people to sign a release form: "I (so-and-so) am voluntarily going into the mountains with Basayev's terrorists. I take full responsibility for my decision, which can affect my subsequent fate."

We were able to tell these people not to sign this Soviet garbage.

Resignation from civil service

The Duma forced me from my role as ombudsman for my position on the war in Chechnya. And it did so illegally, since Parliament has no power to deprive someone of this post. This happened on March 10, 1995. Yet no one could keep me from my work in Chechnya; by that point, we were no longer subordinate to anyone.

I still occupied many posts. I was a State Duma deputy, chairman of the presidential commission on human rights, and head of the Russian delegation to the annual meetings in Geneva on human rights. I refused all of these positions, writing a strongly-worded statement. All the members of the Commission joined me in resignation.

posed to last until 6 p.m. on February 19.

February 18, 1995: Both sides violate the truce. Russian troops use rocket artillery to bomb Chechen positions along the Shali–Argun–Gudermes front. According to them, about 80 Chechen militants had shelled their positions with RPGs and mortars.

February 19, 1995: The Russian government claims that the attack on Russian troops in the southern part of Grozny has violated the peace initiative.

Night of February 20, 1995: Russian units attack Chechen positions south of Grozny.

February 21, 1995: A Chechen delegation on its way to negotiations in Ordzhonikidzevskaya Stanitsa is barred passage at a checkpoint near Samashki. The soldiers claim that they have received no relevant orders. At 12:30 p.m. Russian helicopter gunships fire on a section of road in front of the motorcade carrying the Chechen delegation, write human rights sources. Colonel-General Anatoly Kulikov explains his refusal to continue negotiations as caused by "the treachery of Maskhadov, who yesterday began an offensive and moved to new positions in the vicinity of Shali, Argun and Gudermes."

February 21, 1995: Grozny is completely blockaded from all directions. Meanwhile, OMON and MVD troops comb the Russian-controlled areas of the Chechen capital.

February 23, 1995: Russian aircraft conduct airstrikes against the village of Dyshne-Vedeno. The only son of the Mutalibov family is killed. He was 15. A girl aged two loses both her legs. Her parents are killed. There are further casualties in the village, both dead and wounded.

February 26, 1995: The area around Samashki comes under fire. Some of the villagers flee to the nearby Sernovodsk. From this day until March 3, village elders and officials attempt to negotiate with the Russian military to prevent further attacks and civilian deaths. However, in early March, Russian troops again shell the outskirts of the village. Militants in the village return fire on Russian positions, wounding three soldiers.

February 20–29, 1995: Street fighting is underway in Grozny, especially in the city's southern districts.

Guerrilla war. Samashki. Spring 1995.

Night of March 1: Two local residents are killed during the shelling of Staraya Sunzha.

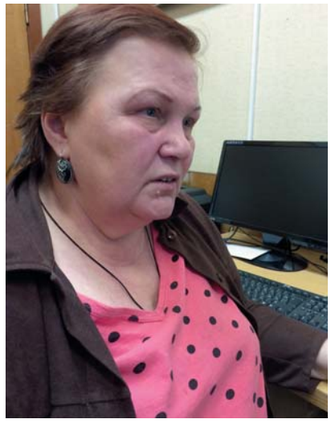
March 2, 1995: Shali is subjected to new airstrikes, causing civilian casualties and destroyed buildings.

March 3, 1995: The Russian command demands that ChRI units abandon Argun, Samashki and Gudermes by issuing an ultimatum to local residents in which it threatens further shelling and bombing.

March 5, 1995: Russian troops attack Chechen units near Achkhoy-Martan and seize the road connecting it with Samashki.

March 6, 1995: Russian forces seize Chernorechye — the last ChRI-held district of Grozny.

The city's defenders make an orderly retreat to the south.



Maria FEDULOVA:

If the mothers had simply retrieved their children back then...

It is a nightmare that you cannot ever wake up from. Recently we [the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers] were visited by a woman who had spent 20 years trying to find her son who died in Chechnya. Every time you encounter something like this, you think, "Lord, did this really happen to me too?"

In search of the missing

Like the other boys, my son ended up there through deception. He told me how in December of 1994, they were taken to Vladikavkaz. There, they were told that they would be sent to Grozny solely for patrol duty. Naturally, there were no patrols whatsoever. He served in a support battalion. They would drive out to Grozny, winch disabled armored vehicles and retrieve the boys who had been wounded or killed. He would then drive all of this out of Grozny.

At first I did not even know he was there. He did not communicate with me. Correspondence was prohibited, as was passing along any information. His birthday was in December and I decided to go visit him at his permanent site of deployment; I had already bought the ticket. But a day before I was due to leave, I received a call from someone in his unit who asked me whether I was planning on visiting Denis. When I said I was, the reply was, "Don't bother. He is taking part in training exercises." What training exercises? I worked in the Moscow Military District myself, and Denis was stationed in Kursk. We hadn't been paid in six months — what talk could there be of training exercises? The war was already under way in Chechnya.

I started trying to figure out where he was through acquaintances and friends whose husbands worked in the General Staff. No one would tell me anything. One officer suggested I take the trip to the unit anyway; otherwise, no one would tell me anything, he said. So I went to his base in Kursk. The commander came out to meet me, a handsome officer who told me that [Denis] was in Chechnya. I asked how they could send him there. He had held a rifle in his hands three times in his life: during training, during his oath of enlistment, and during the funeral of the previous commander. He is a good mechanic, the officer answered. Excuse me, I said, but the war needs fighters not mechanics. As I was leaving, the officer called out to me: "If you find out anything, let us know." I wanted to take something and hurl it at him; I don't know how I refrained. I come home to find my entire family waiting for me, my sister was all in tears. She told me to get my things together and go to Grozny — they had called the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers and been told that a group was heading out the next day. They had received news that Denis had been taken prisoner.

We [the mothers] were sent through Dagestan. We arrived in Khasavyurt. We were the second group; the first was in Ingushetia. We conducted our searches the best way we could think of, just poking around, following rumors heard through the grapevine. Our glorious army did not help us. We

set up a base in Khasavyurt. Journalists would go there. People from Chechnya would bring notes, containing information about the POWs' locations. We would get our things together and go. We traveled with notebooks — when we found out where some POWs were, we would write down their addresses and phone numbers. Then, we'd make calls, send telegrams and notify their relatives that their boys had been captured and that they needed to come help them. The army didn't tell us anything. The only thing they said was that the POWs were the job of the FSK's [Federal Counterintelligence Service]. "And what crime had our children committed," I asked the officer, "that the FSK considers them its job? What are we, living in '37?" He gave me an angry look.

This war inflicted suffering not only on the soldiers but on the civilians as well. For some reason, no one talks about the suffering of the Chechen civilians. We, the mothers, also suffered — our children disappeared there, or died, or were disabled by the bombings. But no one talks about any of this.

Whenever we would arrive somewhere, the people would gather around us. Everyone had something to tell us, everyone had their troubles. In one of the villages we were approached by a woman. "You'll set your boys free now," she told us, "and then forget us." I had not even considered going to work for the United Committees of Soldiers' mothers then, but I replied that I would not forget.

As we traveled, Chechens would accommodate us in their homes. We didn't have any money for hotels — not that there were any. It was a very difficult time, a kind of nightmare. One day I was staying with a Chechen family with some other mothers and one of them told me that she had seen Denis among Shamil Basayev's captives.

March 6–7, 1995: Russian forces shell Achkhoy-Martan and Bamut.

March 8, 1995: ChRI units have abandoned some towns in the west of Chechnya (Samashki is abandoned even earlier, on March 6 and 7). Unwilling to expose the civilian population to shelling by Russian aircraft and artillery, Chechen militias have moved to the hilly regions around Bamut, Yandi-Kotar (Nut) and Stariy Achkhoy, whose residents had voluntarily surrendered their homes to the militia for the "defense of the republic."

March 8, 1995: Village elders and the head of the Samashki administration conclude an agreement with the Russian command stipulating the withdrawal of village militias and the cessation of attacks on Russian troops in exchange for a halt to the shelling, the introduction of Russian troops into the village and permission for MVD forces to conduct whatever operations they deem necessary against the civilians in the village. General Yu. Kosolapov signs the agreement for the Russian side. After the Samashki delegation leaves, residents from Achkhoy-Martan, Noviy Sharoy and Davydenko come to negotiate with the Russian command. They also sign similar agreements.

March 10, 1995: Russian troops attempt to take Bamut but are repulsed. The assault units suffer casualties and retreat. The siege of the village, accompanied by bombardments, will continue for a long time.

March 11 (**March 12**, according to other sources), **1995:** Another airstrike is conducted against Shali. A bomb falls directly on a house, killing a number of civilians, including children, whose remains are gathered from among the ruins the next day. One of the victims is Sharip Ismailov, 41. As a result of the bombing, 68 houses are destroyed on ulitsa Mozdokskaya alone.

March 11–14, 1995: Fighting continues in the vicinity of the villages of Achkhoy-Martan and Shami-Yurt in the west of Chechnya. The forest located south of Samashki, where the militia retreated to, is subjected to repeated airstrikes in the following days.

March 14, 1995: In Moscow, the "Plan for the cease-fire and subsequent peaceful settlement of the Chechen crisis" is adopted at the Caucasus Peace Initiative Conference, chaired by RF Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council Ramzan Abdulatipov and Sergei Kovalev. Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin do not participate in the conference, having previously sent their regards. During the event, Shakhrai claims that the government has a peace plan.

March 15, 1995: Fighting breaks out in Argun. Despite Russian numerical superiority, local militias hold the city for a week.

March 17, 1995: A military train approaches Samashki. Until March 22, Russian soldiers repair the stretch of railroad between the village and Sernovodsk. In response, Chechen forces blow up two bridges along the same stretch.

March 22, 1995: Russian forces conduct airstrikes and artillery barrages against Shali, which is flooded with refugees from Grozny.

March 22, 1995: On this day, according to State Duma Deputy Lev Ponomarev, Dzhokhar Dudayev tells him, "By May, I will no longer be able to control the situation, and I am delighted about this fact. The militias will get a good look at what Russia is doing and I

The next day we went to Basayev's headquarters. A Chechen came up to me and said that his relative had been arrested and that I could try to approach the prosecutor to persuade him to arrange an exchange. The prosecutor said that he would exchange anyone for a Russian soldier. We came to an agreement. I passed along a message to Basayev to release my son only to me and no one else. Being familiar with our country and our system, I understood that I had to take my child myself.

Our soldiers are trading cards

I never thought I would see the war. Being in Grozny was terrifying. It was terrifying to see how we were treating these people. At the first exchange — our marines for Chechens — the Chechens brought our boys in a bus. They were all wearing their regular uniforms; they looked normal. When our side brought the Chechens, not a single one had a jacket or a coat — all were wearing sweaters or shirts. And this was in January.

I was a tiny bit late reaching Grozny. They had taken him to the exchange an hour and a half before I got there. That day, I did not manage to catch up to him. During that trip, I was passed from resident to resident like a relay race baton. The man who had taken me to Basayev said that it was already late, that it would get dark soon and he couldn't turn on the headlights for fear of being attacked, so he took me home to his village in the mountains to spend the night. I was astonished when the owner of the house I was staying in stoked the furnace for me at three in the morning. I couldn't sleep because I kept thinking about my son. Then, the owner said, let me tell your fortune. At first I refused, I don't believe in that. He insisted, saying that all of Chechnya comes to him to have their fortunes told. In the end, he spread a sheepskin and set out the cards. He said, "You will see your son today, but your life will change drastically." I couldn't understand what he was talking about. It turned out that I was about to change my profession.

And really — that same day I saw my son. Until I reached the prosecutor's office and saw him, they wouldn't leave me alone and passed me on from person to person.

When the prosecutor was about to hand my son over, I felt a sudden chill. I looked up and saw a young man sitting nearby — by the look of him he was a rural intellectual, a teacher or doctor. But his eyes were so cold. I instantly realized that he was FSK. The prosecutor tells me that this man needed to talk to my son. "No way," I replied. Until I had made sure that the building had no second exit, I wouldn't let him speak with my son.

It's such a shame how they treated our soldiers. Before Denis was conscripted, all our acquaintances, many of whom were in the military, would tell us to call if we encountered any problems. But as soon as he was captured, everyone just disappeared. In the end, I took Denis to the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers. Thanks to them I managed to place my son in a hospital both times he was wounded. The first time it was exactly as though the year was 1937. The attending physician at the Podolskian Hospital [Military clinical hospital of the Russian defense ministry — *Editor's note*] told my child, "You are an enemy of the people. You should be shot for having been captured." Later on, in May, everything was good, it was warm, and I went to the hospital to visit Denis. At the end of that visit, he went with me to see me off and I sent him back in time for the military hospital's headcount. The next day he called me: "Come pick me up. They're discharging me." I was surprised because the doctor had said that he would remain in the hospital until the end of the month. So I went there. The section chief told me that my son had arrived to the headcount drunk. I told him, "I don't believe you. I was with him. If he had been drinking, there wouldn't be anything left of your section." He would black out, so he didn't drink at all. The section head said that he had received a report and that he was obliged to act on it [by discharging him]. "But," I replied, "before acting on it, you have to investigate it." The head cited the attending physician. My son, who was sitting right there with his head down, said, "He's the one who was drunk."

I took him to the Committee [of Soldiers' Mothers] and called the Main Military-Medical Directorate. They returned him to the same hospital. My boy had a temper to him and he brought along some reporters from the BBC and Russia's Channel Two to the section with him and told them what was going on there. The hospital administration was furious and began to fear and hate him.

A little more about how we treat our soldiers: The Swedes, for example, would tell us how, though they didn't participate in combat operations much, their veterans would receive treatment from psychologists for five years after their service. In our country, no one wants anything to do with this. After all, no one even takes into account how many boys died after returning home — how many suicides we've had. It's horrible. We receive letters, we know what is going on — no one wants them. The country used them and that's it.

In Khasavyurt back then, the Chechens asked us to appeal for a ceasefire so that they could retrieve their dead. They were willing to give up several POWs for each body. But the command refused us in this. Our children, our soldiers, are mere trading cards. And now all of this is being repeated in Ukraine — the same exact things are happening. The soldiers and their parents are being deceived.

Back then, the Chechens — both the fighters and the civilians — held out the hope that the Russian mothers would rise up. But the women did not go. If the mothers had simply gone and collected their children, none of it would have happened. In those days we would tell the boys to refuse to go fight in Chechnya and none of them were ever prosecuted for refusing — they were given amnesty. But not everyone is up to it. Many are simply afraid. For many it is easier to lose their children than to do something about it.

These days, we receive calls from mothers saying that their children are about to be sent to Ukraine. So go, collect them. Not one has gone. The maternal instinct may as well be living on the moon. Russian women were always famous for their care of their children. Nowadays, you get the feeling that they simply did their duty to nature — gave birth — and that's all.

P.S. After his stay in the hospital, Maria Fedulova's son Denis received a medical discharge. According to psychologists, he passed away, unable to withstand the ten critical years following the war...

won't be able to keep them from taking the fighting into enemy territory."

March 22–23, 1995: A Russian helicopter strafes a GAZ-53 truck bound for Mesker-Yurt (which is blockaded by Russian tanks) between Mesker-Yurt and Tsotsin-Yurt. The truck driver and a passenger are killed. Another passenger, a woman traveling with her child, is wounded. According to reports, Russian soldiers loaded her in the helicopter and took her away.

March 23, 1995: Boris Yeltsin signs Presidential Decree "On provisional state authorities in the Chechen Republic." The decree supports the Provisional Council's resolution establishing the Committee of National Accord. The committee consists of 45 people and is headed by Umar Avturkhanov. It is tasked with "seeking ways of achieving reconciliation," drafting a new constitution and holding elections. In contravention to a possible compromise and peace treaty, advocates of independence are not invited to participate in the committee.

March 23, 1995: Russian troops occupy Argun after Chechen units make an orderly retreat out of the village.

March 23–25, 1995: During talks with Samashki officials, the Russian command demands that a military train be allowed to pass through the village. In the case of non-compliance, they threaten the use of force and further bloodshed.

March 25, 1995: Isani Khanoyev and his father Movli, 65, are detained in their home in Assinovskaya Stanitsa. Another two residents are taken from the village. All of them are blindfolded, beaten and taken to the base of one of the military units stationed nearby. There, they are imprisoned in prisoner-transports and subjected to nightly beatings. Isani Khanoyev is beaten and tortured with electric shocks. The guards humiliate the prisoners, asking, "Who among you is wealthy? Who will pay the most to get out of here?" On March 29, Isani Khanoyev is transported by helicopter to Mozdok.

March 26, 1995: Six helicopters conduct airstrikes against Samashki and the cannery district. There are wounded casualties among the residents. Two houses are burned and a lot of livestock is killed. This is the first shelling of the village following the signing of the agreement on March 8.

March 26, 1995: Participants of the Peace March, which was attended by members of various Russian social and religious organizations, are detained outside Samashki, at the checkpoint at the intersection of the Rostov-Baku highway. OMON troops take a part of them to Nazran and Assinovskaya Stanitsa and later send them to Moscow.

March 28, 1995: In response to Aslan Maskhadov's proposal to resume talks, Colonel-General Anatoly Kulikov says that the only thing he is prepared to discuss is "the unconditional surrender of arms and disbandment of illegal armed formations."

March 28, 1995: The colonel in charge of the Russian checkpoint at Samashki demands the surrender of firearms from village officials. The head of the village administration offers to surrender arms in exchange for livestock,

Galina STAROVOYTOVA (1946–1998):

The War in Chechnya revealed the frailty of Russian democracy

Below, DOSH reproduces excerpts from an interview between G.V. Starovoytova and Abdulla Duduev, recorded for Chechen television in June 1997.

Noted Russian politician Galina Starovoytova was killed on November 20, 1998, at the entrance to her apartment building.

The orchestrators of this high-profile political assassination have yet to be brought to justice.

On the events in Chechnya in 1991

A revolution took place in Chechnya without anyone noticing. World events during that time had a more global scale: The USSR was dissolving, Yugoslavia looked like it was about to — and later, so did Czechoslovakia — the struggle for independence was unfolding in Ukraine and the Baltic countries.

Neither the West nor the Soviet Union paid much attention to the fact that a similar process was under way in Chechnya. When officials finally started worrying about it, they made a belated attempt to solve the problem through force.

In early November, shortly after the election of President Dudayev, Sergei Shakhrai and some other officials from Moscow went to Chechnya. On the basis of Shakhrai's report, the Supreme Soviet of Russia declared the election in Chechnya invalid. After some intense pressure from Vice President Rutskoy and other influential people, troops were sent into the republic. Several military groups occupied the airport and an attempt was made to introduce a state of emergency.

During that time, Boris Yeltsin sent me to Sweden and Finland, where I met with the heads of these states to explain the Russian position after the collapse of the Soviet Union and following the August coup attempt. This was a very important mission. Hearing about what was happening in Chechnya, I immediately contacted Yeltsin over the direct line in the Russian Embassy in Helsinki and convinced him that this was a terrible mistake and that, as long as there were no hostilities, the troops had to be withdrawn immediately. I wrapped up my visit as quickly as I could and returned to Moscow. Fortunately, the Supreme Soviet of Russia had called off the operation and the troops were withdrawn in less than two days, without firing a single shot. Back then, the threat of war passed by through the efforts of the democratic forces. But the generals never forgot. Later, toward the end of 1992, they made a renewed attempt to start a war by deporting the Ingush from Prigorodny District. Again I intervened. The generals never forgave me. That was precisely the reason that I was dismissed from the presidential administration. Even back then, the hawks' position was very strong and this time unfortunately, Mr. Yeltsin succumbed to their arguments.

There were very many factors at play in those events. My opponents resorted to slander. North Ossetian President Galazov and some members of the Security Council — for instance, Georgiy Khizha, who was directly involved in the events in Prigorodny District (he was in charge of the emergency area) — announced that I had appeared in Vladikavkaz at a session of the Supreme Council of North Ossetia and, meeting with deputies there, had allegedly threatened them, saying, "You are all communists and Yeltsin will soon scatter the lot of you." In addition to this, according to their allegations, I then began to criticize Mr. Yeltsin himself, questioning his state of emergency decree. When he first heard this, the president did not believe it: "It is impossible that my adviser would behave that way. She understands what a delicate matter ethnic relations are." But when a second person, seemingly independently of the first, made the same claims (in fact, this was a conspiracy), Mr. Yeltsin said, "In that case, we must dismiss her. Whom can I believe, if I cannot rely on my own adviser?" Immediately, a draft decree for my dismissal (which had been prepared earlier) was brought to Mr. Yeltsin and he signed it. In actual fact, I was never in Vladikavkaz, and I never said any of the things these people attributed to me. In short, this was a multi-stage operation to eliminate me, which the hawks had carefully prepared long in advance.

I served as Mr. Yeltsin's adviser from 1991 to 1992. These were two difficult years. By the way, during this time in Russia, there was not a single fatal clash stemming from interethnic relations. Although there were difficulties with Tatarstan, Yakutia, Karachay-Cherkessia and other regions, these problems were solved through negotiations in my office. And when other forces began to put pressure on Mr. Yeltsin and misinform him, our government adopted a very different policy. At that time, I was on the phone with General Dudayev trying to arrange negotiations. In fact, we had already started talks with him, despite the fact that Prosecutor General Stepankov had already issued a warrant for his arrest.

As I recall, this was in February 1992.

We held a meeting between the Supreme Soviet and Mr. Yeltsin's advisers, at which we considered how to resolve the crisis situation in the North Caucasus. The meeting took place in Mr. Filatov's office. I took the floor and said, "Why are we trying to carry water in a sieve? Let's hold direct talks with the leaders, with the elected leadership. Whether we like Dudayev or not, the Chechen people have chosen him. He is

grain, construction materials or agricultural equipment. The villagers end up surrendering six or seven automatic rifles. These weapons are handed over to the Russian command.

March 29, 1995: Russian troops blockade Shali.

March 30, 1995: Gudermes is taken without a fight after Chechen forces leave at the request of local residents. According to other sources, clashes do take place and the village is shelled by Russian artillery.

March 31, 1995: Russian troops enter Shali. ChRI armed forces had abandoned the village, unwilling to expose civilians to fire from artillery and aviation.

Late March 1995: A refugee camp containing Shali residents in the village of Elistanzhi is bombed, leaving seven people dead, according to eyewitnesses. Rocket attacks are also carried out against the refugee camp near the village of Makhkety, killing a woman and her two children; two more children are seriously injured.

April 1995: Grachev claims that the war is almost over. The Russian military, however, cannot confirm his statement.

Early April 1995: A Russian helicopter fires on a car driven by Aslanbek Zakayev, as he is taking his father and two nephews out of Elistanzhi, where fighting is breaking out. The driver is killed and his nephews are wounded. Both are in serious condition. Zakayev's father is also wounded and loses a lot of blood. He dies too, though from a heart attack.

April 2 (approximately), 1995: Russian forces fire at a KAMAZ truck carrying civilians (father, daughter and son) from Bachi-Yurt village to the village of Oyskhara (Novogroznensky). Zulpa Badayeva, b. 1953, is wounded and taken to the hospital in Khasavyurt.

April 2, 1995: Under the supervision of a coroner, the bodies of A. Tretyakov and the brothers M.E. and S.E. Khamidov are exhumed at the former base of a Russian MVD unit on ulitsa Mayakovskogo in Grozny. The corpses bear evidence of torture. A woman living nearby testifies that she had seen the brothers Khamidov on January 28 in the unit's custody. As the two were being led somewhere under guard, one of the brothers shouted to her: "We are the Khamidovs. We live at [address]. Tell our father that they are taking us to be shot." It was this very account, related by the woman to the brothers' father, which allowed him to find the burial place of his dead sons.

April 2, 1995: After locals acquiesce to the passage of a Russian military train, repair work begins along the Sernovodsk-Samashki stretch of the railroad to Grozny. In order to avoid any possible provocations, about 300 villagers (mostly the elderly) took up positions along the railroad. However, to the villagers' surprise, the train pulled back to Sernovodsk instead of passing through Samashki, and Russian troops began to move in toward the village.

April 5, 1995: MVD reconnaissance units begin to reconnoiter the outskirts of Samashki, searching for approaches into the village and sweeping for mines. According to human rights sources, at the same time, the filtration point located near the town of Mozdok in North Ossetia, received orders from the Russian Joint Forces commander in Chechnya, General Anatoly Kulikov, to free up train cars for the expected arrival of new detainees.

April 6, 1995: At a meeting with village elders, imams and the head of the

a legitimate figure and without him, we'll solve nothing."

They replied, "But he is an extremist, a Muslim fundamentalist. He does not want to hold talks."

"Have you reached out to him?" I asked. They hemmed and hawed, and I went on, "Let's do it this instant. I will call him from this very phone."

"Are you kidding? He would never speak to a woman!"

"If he won't, he won't. My job is to make the call. But I will wager that he will speak to me because he is a reasonable person and a Soviet general to boot."

So I got in touch with Grozny on the special line and introduced myself, "This is deputy Starovoytova, adviser to President Yeltsin. I wish to speak with President Dudayev."

There followed a few minutes of slight confusion on the other end. Apparently, the assistants and secretaries held a brief consultation. And then, Gen. Dudayev got on the phone. My colleagues sitting around me listened to everything carefully. Of course, they had not expected such progress from the first call made by someone who was far from being the first person of Russia. It turned out that there was nothing difficult about it — just pick up the phone and make dial the number.

So we began to talk with the Chechen president. He and I had not met, but of course, we had heard of each other. Gen. Dudayev began by expressing his gratitude to the democratic forces: to Mr. Afanasyev, Mr. Bonner and me for standing up to chauvinism and recognizing the right of the ethnicities to self-determination. He said that it was very important to the peoples of the North Caucasus that there were such people in Russia. It was very nice and touching. Then I got down to business: "Let's begin negotiations, Gen. Dudayev. Let us form delegations and have them meet somewhere."

"Okay," he said, "but I am currently wanted in Russia. Let's meet in Estonian territory."

By that point, Estonia was already an independent state. Arranging negotiations on the territory of another country would imply that we recognized that Chechnya was an independent state and not a part of the Russian Federation.

"That is a very extreme solution, Gen. Dudayev," I said.

"Let's meet in any part of Russia, from Sochi to Vladivostok."

"There has been a warrant issued for my arrest," he repeated.

"Since I am inviting you, I will resolve this matter and guarantee your freedom."

Thus, I invited him and his constituency to St. Petersburg.

"Mr. Sobchak, the city's mayor, and I will ensure secure conditions. We will try to reverse that foolish decision [i.e. the arrest warrant]."

This proposition piqued his interest.

"If you like," I continued, "let us meet where you feel more comfortable. But we invite you to St. Petersburg, where we will host you as a president elected by his people."

He said he had to think about it and consult with his colleagues. We agreed to contact each other again. Everyone in the room was astonished: It turned out that not only was dialog possible, but also so simple to arrange! If, at the time, the people in that room — including Mr. Yeltsin himself — could have transcended their personal ambitions, I'm sure we would have avoided the war and the problem would have been solved.

But the next day, Mr. Khasbulatov involved himself in the matter. Speaking from the rostrum of the Supreme Soviet, he gave grave insult to both Gen. Dudayev and Chechen democracy; he spoke very contemptuously about the elections in Chechnya. [...] And the next time I requested to be connected with Grozny, I was told that they had disconnected the direct line to the Kremlin. I could not continue these negotiations. As for the delegations that went to the talks — they were either not effective enough, did not negotiate at the proper levels, or were simply not trusted enough. And this historic opportunity was missed. We were very close to a peaceful agreement. I do not know what we would have agreed to: whether a membership by association, or some specific economic relations, or about a special status for Chechnya. But we would not have allowed this terrible war to happen.

After that, my access to Mr. Yeltsin practically vanished. His entourage and generals did everything they could to prevent us from communicating one on one, as we used to earlier. And it bears remembering that I belonged to a group of his closest advisers, who among other things, could influence certain staff appointments. Obviously, this drew a lot of envy. However, beginning in this time period (and due not so much to Chechnya as to the military establishment) my capabilities were severely curtailed and as a result the president made no attempt to pick up the phone and call Grozny. On the other side, Gen. Dudayev too comported himself very proudly. Of course, I consider the disconnection of the line to the Kremlin to be his own error. One should not voluntarily deprive oneself of information, whatever it is: good or bad. Whoever remains informed remains prepared. I cannot say that the other leaders in Grozny behaved ideally either: They too failed to do everything they had to, to initiate negotiations.

On the causes of the 1994–1996 war and its consequences

If one looks closely, this war had several causes. I would ascribe its beginning, strangely enough, to the murder of Dima Kholodov, the MK correspondent who unearthed a lot of information about the corruption in the military, in particular, among the Western Group of Forces. And he was killed, blown up by someone undoubtedly involved with the military establishment: The explosives used were one of a kind — developed in secret labs and available only to the military. I think the prosecutor's office knows who the assassin is, but, apparently, this is a person of such high rank that they are afraid to disclose this information. It was then that the first calls for Grachev's resignation were made (I spoke about this at a rally during Mr. Kholodov's funeral). The military needed, first of all, to divert the people's attention from their crimes to something else, and second of all, to demonstrate that only the army could maintain the integrity of Russia, to prevent the country's disintegration. They needed a small victorious war, just like the ones that would occur under the tsars. The economic difficulties also played their part — that is, "Black Tuesday" and the plummet of the ruble.

During a period of instability, a totalitarian regime always prefers war as a means of diverting the negative sentiments in society to a different direction. Chechnya came in handy. It offered certain grounds to act, and they decided to use them. There was also an external impetus, which the West underestimated. I am referring to the summit in Budapest in late November 1994, at which NATO announced its eastward expansion. Mr. Yeltsin responded very

Samashki administration, Lieutenant-General Alexander Antonov (alias General Anatoly Romanov) issues the following ultimatum: Deliver 264 automatic rifles, 2 machine guns and one APC (supposedly identified during aerial reconnaissance of the village) and allow free passage of MVD troops into the village by the deadline of 7 a.m. on April 7. The ultimatum goes on to say that if these demands are not met, Russian troops will enter the village anyway and conduct "a complete search."

April 6, 1995: Ordnance from Grad rocket artillery demolishes the wall of a house in the village of Niki-Khit sometime between 8 and 9 p.m. Two children are killed; their mother is wounded in her side and her leg. The woman is taken to the Bachi-Yurt hospital and later transported to the Dagestani town of Khasavyurt. The woman's husband was not at home at the time, having gone to Grozny that afternoon.

There were other casualties in Niki-Khit too.

April 7–8, 1995: After artillery and mortar bombardment, Russian units (the MVD's Sofrinsky Brigade supported by SOBR and OMON detachments) conduct a zachistka in Samashki in western Chechnya. The day before, the local Chechen militia had left the village at the request of the local residents.

The authors of International Tribunal for Chechnya write the following: "The operation was planned in such a way as to terrorize the population of the nearby villages. [...] Peaceful civilians were killed. Houses were torched and looted. Altogether more than 120 people were killed. Several hundred detainees were taken to Mozdok and subjected to torture and beatings while being held in the filtration point for about a month. The 'operational experience' thus earned was applied by Russian units in many other places, albeit with fewer casualties. The Samashki tragedy had a very negative effect on Chechen military leadership, who had to that point conducted their operations generally in compliance with the norms of international humanitarian law."

Human Rights Watch points out that this is the most well-known case of the murder of civilians during the first Russo-Chechen war. The International Committee of the Red Cross estimates the number of dead at 250 civilians. Amnesty International estimates it to exceed 250 people. According to Samashki village elders, the victims of the attacks number more than 300 people. HRC *Memorial* gives its own assessment of the number of dead people, based on the list of named victims, at least 112–114 people.

Night of July 8, 1995: Soldiers in armored vehicles arrive in a Grozny suburb and shoot the entire Chapanov family — the parents and their five children. This massacre triggered a renewed wave of protests by Chechens. For a few days mass demonstrations are held in Grozny demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya.

April 10, 1995: On the road between Elistanzhi and Shali, bombs are dropped on the cars of refugees fleeing Argun, Shali and Belgatoy — foothill towns that were being shelled by Russian forces. The destroyed vehicles were a ZIL-131, a KAMAZ and a GAZ-53. A young woman and a man are killed. Several more people (5–6) are wounded.

April 12, 1995: The State Duma adopts Federal Law "On measures for the resolution of the Chechen crisis." Human rights defenders point out that it prohibits the use of armed force in violation of the Law "On Defense" as

angrily to his Western counterparts, with whom he had fraternized quite freely until then: "You are much too quick to bury democracy in Russia!"

I was in America at that time and could clearly see all these factors, which perhaps did not form such a complete picture in the minds of the Russian populace. They were so different after all: "Black Tuesday," the murder of Mr. Kholodov, NATO expansion, the feeling of insecurity, the feeling of national humiliation that Russians living abroad experienced following the Soviet collapse. And at the same time, all of this put together worked in the favor of chauvinist organizations like Zhirinovsky's party. That's how many factors there were. It seems that Mr. Yeltsin had subconsciously decided the following: "Since you're not paying any attention to us and seek to expand NATO eastward regardless of our opinion, then we too will not be held accountable to the Western media, human rights, and universal values; and we will put things in order in our own house using whichever methods I see fit." This was approximately the conception that matured in his mind — although perhaps it was not even so much a conception as an urge. And then the president gave the order to put an end to this hotbed of instability. In Russia, such orders are always issued ambiguously, without specifying what is meant or how it is to be done.

For their part, the generals — when they receive this kind of order — need no further clarifications (in this case, it was Mr. Grachev, who was already interested in starting the conflict). What is easier than to bomb everything to dust and then see what comes of it? Our army has always acted this way as it entered the capitals of union republics — be it Yerevan, Baku or Vilnius. Our generals always seek to kill a specific number of people and instill fear. They are not used to complicating the tasks before them, figuring out who is right and who is wrong. They simply smash anything that gets in their way — they do not know any other methods and do not want to. In addition to this, the expert assessment was poorly performed: There was no professional advisers, no one asked the opinion of ethnographers, and Mr. Yeltsin was truly misinformed and convinced that it was possible to solve all the issues in two hours and with two armor columns. [...] This level of self-deception was possible only without any knowledge of the history of the North Caucasus or Chechnya's struggle for independence. Such was the tapestry of circumstances that led to this tragic mistake. Perhaps many will disagree with me, but I see the connections between all of these factors.

This war was a tremendous moral defeat to Russian democracy. We, the democrats, were unable to prevent it, and the voice of the people was not heard.

The people did not want war in Chechnya; that is doubtless. I remember one instance in the last seven or eight years, when people assembled in one place under both the red banner and the tricolor. We protested against this war together: Mr. Yavlinsky's party, Mr. Gaidar's party, Democratic Russia and the Communists — everyone was there. In this regard, the people were united. Of course, there will always be the rabid chauvinists or the venal individuals, who are willing to accommodate the powers that be. But most people, like most journalists, were against the war. Nevertheless, we did not have the strength to get through to the leadership. This is our tragedy. Because, from that moment on we realized the frailty of Russian democracy. The last push for freedom in Russia happened during the February Revolution of 1917 — only to slide into Bolshevism, into totalitarianism. As for today, if freedom in Russia chokes on the blood and mud of the Chechen war, the military establishment will be to blame.

well as the establishment of an emergency government without first declaring a state of emergency. The Duma instructs the government to begin negotiations for the unconditional cessation of hostilities with Dzhokhar Dudayev.

Night of April 13, 1995: Russian Special Forces occupy the heights over Bamut and storm the village on the morning of April 15. The Russian units are however unable to break the resistance of the defenders and are forced to retreat to their original positions on April 17.

April 16, 1995: Chechen militants shoot down another Russian helicopter (a Mi-24). The crew is killed.

April 18, 1995: Russian troops make another attempt to take Bamut — again unsuccessfully. Chechen militia drive them from the village, inflicting casualties. During the storming of the heights overlooking Bamut, the MVD's 7th *Rosich* Special Forces group is ambushed and partially destroyed. According to Russian sources, the squad suffers casualties of 10 men killed and 17 wounded.

Afternoon of April 19 (or 20), 1995: The village of Batti-Mokhk is subjected to shelling by Grad rocket artillery. There are only 150 homesteads in the village. No ChRI units are based on its territory. Nevertheless, for a long time the village is subjected to airstrikes and artillery shelling, causing casualties and damage to residential buildings. The final round of shelling destroys 23 houses.

April 23, 1995: Shooting breaks out in Gudermes. According to the prosecutor's office of the (pro-Russian) Chechen Republic, the shooting, which began around 12:30 p.m., started when

Andrey ILLARIONOV, Boris LVIN

Russia must recognize Chechen independence

The present article was first published in the Moscow News newspaper on February 22, 1995.

Russia has no other reasonable alternative but to recognize the independence of the Chechen Republic. The following are all the possible arguments in favor of this.

History

1. Chechnya has never been a part of Russia of its own volition. No Chechen leader has ever signed an agreement about the republic's voluntary entry into Russia. The Chechens fought for their freedom under Sheikh Mansur in the 18th century. They fought the nearly 40-years-long Caucasian War in the 19th century. The entire history of the Chechen people during "the Russian era" is a series of anti-Russian uprisings — in 1877, in 1918–1920, in 1920–1930, during the Second World War and in 1991. This is nothing less than an endless list of punitive expeditions, colonial pacification, executions, deportations and new waves of ethnic independence movements.

2. Formally, "pacified" Chechnya was a part of Russia for 132 years — exactly as long as Poland, which also refused to resign itself to its loss of independence. This number is much smaller than the time that other states of the former Soviet Union — which already enjoy internationally recognized independence — were under Russian control.

intoxicated Russian soldiers opened fire on car near the *Rassvet* store in the city center. Hearing the gunfire, soldiers manning the checkpoint near the commandant's office returned fire. A Ural truck carrying soldiers down the Rostov-Baku highway passed under the fire and the soldiers in the truck also began to return fire. Assuming that an attack on the commandant's office was underway, other Russian units joined the shooting. The firefight lasted about 3–4 hours and stopped only upon direct orders from the chief of staff of Army Group East. Ten civilians died as a result of the incident and another eight were wounded. Several homes and apartments were destroyed. According to others sources, the casualties were 11 civilians killed and 14 wounded.

April 25–27, 1995: The outskirts and housing complexes of Isti-Su and Alleroy are subjected to month-long shelling. At least 20 percent of all residential housing in Alleroy, a town of about 4,500 residents, is destroyed. Some of the houses are completely destroyed from direct hits by shells and missiles. There are many casualties, both dead and wounded. In the center of Alleroy, one shell strikes a family home. The entire family become casualties; the dead and wounded, including children.

April 27, 1995: Boris Yeltsin issues Presidential Decree "On additional measures to normalize the situation in the Chechen Republic," declaring a moratorium on hostilities in Chechnya from midnight April 28 until midnight May 12 (the weeks bracketing the 50th anniversary of V-E Day). At the same time, General Gennady Troshev holds armistice talks with Aslan Maskhadov in the village of Noviye Atagi. However, skirmishes take place even during the truce.

April 30, 1995: A Mi-24 helicopter is shot at and damaged during a mission near the village of Gilan (even as the

3. The current "winter war" in the Caucasus is painfully reminiscent of another "Winter War." In December 1939, in the ruins of Terijoki, which had been leveled by Soviet artillery, Otto Kuusinen, one of the leaders of the CPSU (B), who was working on the formation of a "worker-peasant government of the Democratic Republic of Finland," called on the Red Army "to cleanse Finland of the White Finnish gangs." As in Grozny today, "Stalin's falcons" [Soviet pilots — *Translator's note*] bombed residential neighborhoods in Helsinki, hunting for "militants" with baby carriages in 1939. Like today, the then generals complained about the "wrong" methods of resistance employed by the Finnish side. And if back then the Soviet Union was expelled from the League of Nations for its overt act of aggression (the only such case in the history of that organization), so today Russia is barred from acceding to the Council of Europe.

4. No people can be weaned from their desire to be independent from an aggressor or colonizer: neither the Americans and Indians from the UK, nor the Algerians and Vietnamese from France, nor the Angolans and Mozambicans from Portugal.

Economics

1. Along with Dagestan, Chechnya has always been the most subsidized republic within the Russian Federation. The reserves of the Grozny oilfield are practically exhausted. Even from the most cynical point of view, the Chechen mountain ranges are worth neither the effort nor the lives it would take to control them.

2. The Russian people will have to pay for the damage caused to Chechnya. Continuing the war only increases this cost. Only ending the war will offer the chance to reduce inflation and theoretically allow for Russia's economic recovery.

3. Even having de jure independence, Chechnya is bound by its geographic location to close economic ties with Russia.

Geography

1. Russia has never been interested in Chechnya per se. In the 19th century, Russia's strategic goal was the Persian possessions. Russia went to the Caucasus to capture the Persian Caucasus — Georgia and the khanates of present-day Armenia and Azerbaijan — the khanates of Baku, Shaki, Talshin, Karabakh, and Erivan. But to get there, Russia had to pass either via Sochi — this is why Russia almost totally destroyed Adyghe peoples of the Caucasus and deported over a million Circassians to Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries — or via Derbent — this is why Dagestan was conquered.

Since Dagestan was economically dependent on Chechnya, the latter had to be controlled too. And crushed.

Today, all those geopolitics are utterly meaningless.

The strategic importance of Chechnya to Russia has dropped to zero.

2. Arguments about the need to protect Russian communications through Chechnya by means of military action have as much legal force as the idea of protecting Russian communications to Kaliningrad by occupying Lithuania, or its communications to Germany by occupying Poland. The same excuse — the protection of German communications through the "Polish Corridor" — was employed by Hitler to unleash World War II.

3. Chechnya has access to Russia's international border. Thus, its independence looks much more viable than the independence of Tatarstan or any other enclave.

Ethnic relations

1. There are over a million Chechens, including over 800,000 in Chechnya itself. There are more Chechens in Chechnya than there are Estonians in Estonia.

2. The population of Chechnya is already highly uniform ethnically. According to the 1989 census, Chechens comprised 69% of the current population of the Chechen Republic; by 1994, this percentage had grown to exceed 76%; currently, it stands at at least 80%. This is the largest Russian minority group by population as well as population density.

The present war will only strengthen this uniformity. But the percentage of Chechens in Chechnya would increase without the war too. Unlike the majority of the Russian and other ethnicities, the Chechens' birthrate is the highest in the former Soviet Union.

3. Chechens vigorously resisted Russification and preserved a high degree of national identity. Over 98% of Chechens consider Chechen to be their mother tongue. Along with Russians and Tuvinians this is the highest such percentage in Russia.

Law

1. On October 27, 1991, Chechnya held elections for its national parliament and president. Voter turnout was 458,144 persons, or 72% of the total electorate. Dzhokhar Dudayev received 412,671 (90.1%) votes — or 63.1% of the total electorate. Thirty-three out of 41 deputies were elected to the Parliament of the Chechen Republic. Thus, the legitimacy of the Chechen authorities is in any case not less than the legitimacy of their Russian counterparts. Although Dudayev later dissolved the Chechen parliament, doing so was by no means exceptional for post-Soviet territories.

2. Based on the Law on State Sovereignty and the Will of the Citizens of the Republic, Dudayev declared the sovereignty of the Chechen Republic on November 1, 1991. From that moment on, for over three years, Chechnya actually existed as an independent state. Chechnya has never participated in any Russian election or referendum. Chechnya did not send its officials to take part in Russian state agencies.

The sovereignty of the Chechen Republic has been tacitly acknowledged by Moscow. For over three years, there has been no Russian administration in Chechnya. The Russian government has neither taxed Chechen enterprises nor funded the Chechen budget. Chechnya became the first territory of the former Soviet Union to see a withdrawal of Russian troops. The withdrawals from Azerbaijan, Lithuania and Estonia followed later.

3. The lack of Chechnya's international recognition is not an argument. Although Stalin's annexation of the Baltic States was always condemned in the West, the formal recognition of the independence of the Baltic States came only after the August 1991 decision of the federal authorities. History

Russian leadership announces a truce to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the victory over Germany). The crew makes a forced landing in Dagestan. According to Russian sources, no crew members are injured.

May 5, 1995: During the day, Russian servicemembers in an APC open fire on an administrative building on 115 ul. Mayakovskogo. The building is damaged and two ZIL-130 cars are burned.

May 5, 1995: Near the village of Benoy, a Su-25 from the 368th Independent Assault Aviation Regiment is shot down with a DShK heavy machine gun while on a combat mission (during the truce announced by the Russian government). The pilot is killed.

May 5, 1995: Workers cleaning a shaft of the heat distribution network in the vicinity of the Grozny filtration point find the bodies of missing police officers from the Leninski district police department — E.D. Musayev, M.A. Akhmadov, M.G. Dzhambulatov. The men have been missing since May 2. The bodies bear signs of a violent death. The ensuing investigation finds that at least one of them — Musayev — was arrested on May 2 and taken to the filtration point. However, according to the official documentation, he was released the next day. Because all three policemen disappeared at the same time, one of them is mentioned in the filtration point records, no one saw them after their "release," and the bodies of all three were found in one place, the involvement of filtration point personnel in the killing of these people is self-evident.

Evening of May 7, 1995: Near Grozny's district commandant's office No. 2 on ul. Zavety Ilicha, Russian soldiers open fire on a vehicle carrying agents from the pro-Russian Chechen MVD. One police officer is wounded in his leg.

May 9, 1995: Shamil Basayev, then a little-known figure, expresses the need to conduct operations on Russian territory that are as ruthless as the ones Russian forces conducted in Samashki. He also stresses that he will henceforth focus on sabotage and subversion. This, he believes, will force the Russian leadership to the negotiating table.

May 9, 1995: Shali residents Ayub M. Domayev, Aslambek S. Suleymanov and Shamhkan L. Tashukhadzhiyev disappear without a trace. It is later established that the missing men were detained at checkpoint No. 2 of the MoD's 503rd Motor Rifle Regiment. A month later, on June 3, the bodies of Domayev and Suleymanov will be discovered on the Dzhalka farm in Shali District, where the 503rd was previously stationed. They had been buried at a depth of two meters at the reconnaissance company's former base. Several other graves and a car belonging to the disappeared men (crushed by tank treads) will be discovered in the same place.

Tashukhadzhiyev's body will be discovered on June 6, in a cemetery on the outskirts of Shali. All of the bodies bear evidence of torture. All of these men died a violent death.

May 9, 1995: Russian soldiers stationed at a checkpoint on ul. Zhigulevskaya fire a flare at the home of Kh. Akayev, residing at 25 ul. Norilskaya. The house

is rife with such parastates: from East Germany and Taiwan to North Korea, Northern Cyprus and Serbian Krajina. The post-Soviet conflicts in Karabakh, Abkhazia, Transnistria and Chechnya are only a small part of this story.

4. In the former USSR, the legal boundary between the status of "Union Republic" which had a right to secede and "Autonomous Republic" which had no such right, was never fixed or non-negotiable. Kazakhstan was the first autonomy within the Russian Federation; Moldova was the first autonomy within Ukraine. Karelia was once a Union Republic, while the Baltic republics and Tuva were independent states.

5. Russian officials deliberately substitute the question of Chechen independence with the issue of the republic's political system, seeking to shift focus to the nature of the regime in power and its compliance with the principles of democracy and law. Neither the Viet Cong regime in Vietnam, nor the Bendjedid regime in Algeria in the '50s, nor the Bolshevik regime in Russia during and following the Civil War had anything to do with

democracy. Nonetheless, the crimes committed by all of these regimes did not constitute grounds for denying the people of those countries their right to independence.

Crime

1. Chechen authorities are routinely blamed for crimes against the civilian population, especially its Russian-speaking contingent. Until the current war, however, the emigration rate of the Russian-speaking population from Chechnya was no higher than from Kalmykia, Tuva or Sakha-Yakutia. Grozny itself had 200,000 Russian speakers who were in no hurry to leave the city.

2. The participation of Chechens in criminal activities on the territory of Russia proper is as undeniable as the participation of other ethnicities from Russia and neighboring countries. But the main reason for the unprecedented scale of Chechen crime is the fault not of Chechen, but of Russian authorities, who have instated an economic blockade of Chechnya.

As a result of the sanctions, the republic's population was deprived of legal wages and driven to undertake illegal activities.

There is no doubt, however, that the various machinations involving oil, arms, smuggling and securities could not, as a matter of principle, be conducted without collaboration from Moscow's "partners" (Stavropol, Krasnodar etc.).

Russia's economic sanctions spawned the Chechen Mafia, just as the UN's sanctions against Yugoslavia gave rise to the Romanian and Bulgarian mafias in that country. The vast majority of Chechens have about as much to do with the Chechen Mafia as the majority of Italians with the Cosa Nostra.

3. Even the most incredible crimes committed by Chechens, be they real or imaginary, pale in comparison to those being committed by the federal authorities in Chechnya. The extermination of thousands of utterly innocent civilians in Chechnya is treated unambiguously under both intentional and domestic law — it is nothing short of genocide.

4. When it comes to Dudayev's "gangster" regime, it is worth highlighting a very important fact which has somehow completely eluded the public eye: It was the Dudayev government which recognized the self-determination of the Ingush people and agreed to the Ingush Republic's secession from the former Chechen-Ingush ASSR, thereby allowing it to remain a part of Russia. No doubt there were plenty of political reasons for this move on the part of Dudayev; and yet, what other government is there that has voluntarily released its national minority? Only that of Havel-Klaus in former Czechoslovakia.

Russian territorial integrity and security

1. The current dirty war in Chechnya is a smoldering fuse for the territorial integrity and security of Russia as a whole.

Anyone who wishes to see terrorism up close should indeed advocate for the Russian authorities' attempts to preserve a country engulfed in the fires of insurrection.

As long as the war continues, there will be no real terrorism.

Terrorism is the weapon of the desperate — the last resort of those defeated on the field of battle but unwilling to recognize defeat. Russia will have its own Ulster, Bosnia, Corsica, Basque Country, Palestine, Kashmir, Eritrea, Biafra — all tied up in one parcel.

If Chechnya remains a part of Russia, the spark ignited by the Chechen liberation will ignite the fuse in other ethnic areas of the world's last crumbling empire. Peter Milyukov once remarked that in October 1917, Russia perished due to its adherence to the slogan "one and undivided."

Politics

1. The continuation of the punitive expedition in Chechnya provides the best possible environment for the suppression of democracy in Russia — to the strengthening of the state's punitive apparatus, aimed as is often the case, not against crime but against its own citizens. Indeed, the infamy of the filtration camp in the small North Caucasian town of Mozdok is already on par with that of Majdanek, Auschwitz, Katyn and KarLag.

2. As the war goes on, it unchains the basest vices. Already today, the ethnically-targeted raids that are being conducted across the country cause hardly any uproar or protest. Russia is plunging into racism and apartheid at a time when South Africa has turned its back on these social ills.

The moral

1. A punitive expedition cannot attain conciliation.

It can elicit but one response. Just as the German people shouldered the responsibility for Nazi crimes after World War II, so the responsibility for the punitive expedition in Chechnya inevitably rests on and extends to the whole of Russia and the Russian people.

2. The Chechen venture is Russia's shame. It is said that when the US Supreme Court rendered its decision

burns down along with all the property inside.

May 9, 1995: Russian soldiers from the Staropromyslovskiy district commandant's office shell a vehicle with license plate number D-82-25 ChI. The Aushev family is inside. The driver, A.A. Aushev, 65, is hospitalized with injuries.

Night of May 10, 1995: Soldiers at the commandant's office No. 3, located in school No. 38, open fire on the home of Ya.S. Vachalov, setting it ablaze.

May 10, 1995: Following a meeting of the ChRI General Staff, Dzhokhar Dudayev states that he is willing to consider the proposals of the Russian government and submit his conditions to ending the armed conflict.

May 10, 1995: In the evening, soldiers from the Staropromyslovskiy district commandant's office open fire on a vehicle with license plate number K-50-93 ChI. Sh.S. Chantiyev, the car's driver, dies from his wounds.

Evening of May 10, 1995: Shots are fired in the direction of the Maas neighborhood from the Russian post located on the ul. Zhigulevskaya bridge. R.G. Mezhidov, who at the time is in the courtyard of his house at address 51 ul. Rechnaya, is wounded.

May 12, 1995: The moratorium on combat operations expires. Russian troops resume their offensive to seize Bamut, Orekhovo, Serzhen-Yurt and Chiri-Yurt. Massive artillery strikes and air bombardment of the mountain villages begin, leading to numerous civilian casualties.

May 12, 1995: Russian soldiers at the ul. Zhukovskogo checkpoint in Grozny, open fire on a police car belonging to the Chechen MVD. Riding in the car is ChR MVD Senior Inspector I.A. Shovhalov.

May 13, 1995: Pavel Grachev states that the aim of the military operation in Chechnya is "the elimination of the remaining armed formations."

May 17, 1995: Aslan Maskhadov calls on Russia to stop the fighting, calling the operations a "senseless slaughter." He also voices his willingness to meet with Pavel Grachev.

May 18, 1995: Pavel Grachev announces the Russians' conditions for a meeting with Aslan Maskhadov — a complete ceasefire, the surrender of Chechen forces and the surrender of weapons.

May 19, 1995: In the evening near checkpoint No. 19 on ul. Zhukovsky, Russian servicemembers shell a vehicle with license plates 55-92 ChIL. The driver, Kh. Magomedov, suffers a gunshot wound.

May 20, 1995: Russian troops occupy positions abandoned by ChRI units in the cement plant near the village of Chiri-Yurt. The plant had been destroyed earlier by week-long artillery and air strikes. The village itself was left untouched. The shelling

and battles all took place near the villages of Agishty and Serzhen-Yurt in the east and Bamut in the west of Chechnya.

Evening of May 21, 1995: Russian soldiers near the Leninsky district commandant's office No. 1 fire on a

in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, compelling the northern states to return runaway slaves to their former owners, a meeting of residents in an American city passed the following resolution: "We despise this decision, we hate it, we spit on it and trample it underfoot."

The dirty war in Chechnya — accompanied as it is by a monstrous and vile lie — deserves no less than this.

• • •

What can be achieved through a military victory and occupation, through the installation of a Semenov-Khadzhiyev-Avturkhanov puppet regime? Chechen submission? No.

Loyalty? No. Constitutional order? Again, no. Security in Chechnya and the North Caucasus? Economic recovery? The Chechens' renunciation of national independence? No, no and no. Military victory does not secure anything.

What can be achieved through the immediate cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya and the unconditional recognition of the independence of the Chechen Republic? First of all — and this alone should suffice — the salvation of tens of thousands of lives, both Russian and Chechen, both today and tomorrow. The establishment of normal diplomatic and business relations between Russia and Chechnya. The preservation of immense material resources and the chance of success for Russian economic reforms. A tremendous moral victory that would furnish Russia with strong bargaining chips in any future negotiations with its neighbors on the issue of ethnic minorities.

The preservation of the foundations of democracy in Russia. The prevention of Russia's collapse. The redemption of national shame. The preservation of national honor.

Will there be a Russian Mendes France, who found the courage to recognize the independence of Vietnam? Will there be a Russian de Gaulle, who after eight years of bloody war and the death of over a million people, agreed to recognize the independence of Algeria? Will there be a Russian Lord Mountbatten, who managed the British exit from India so well, that he is still remembered as a benefactor in both India and Pakistan?

car with license plates B-18-60 ChI. The driver, N.A. Nikayeva is hospitalized with gunshot wounds.

May 21, 1995: Samashki resident Ruslan Parshoyev is detained without any explanation at checkpoint No. 13, while en route to Sernovodsk. Relatives later learn that, on the same day, Major A.L. Morozov took him from the checkpoint to the MVD base near Assinovskaya Stanitsa ("Kulikovo Field"). The next day, on the orders of General Yagodina (alias General Mikhail Labunts), Parshoyev was sent to Khankala and handed over to the MVD's 8th Rus Special Forces Detachment. Ruslan Parshoyev disappeared without a trace.

May 22, 1995: Russian troops enter Dacha-Borzoy and Duba-Yurt.

M**ay 24, 1995:** A Mi-24 helicopter from the 55th Independent Combat Helicopter Regiment is shot down near Chechen-Aul. Three crew members die.

May 24, 1995: Russian troops advance in the direction of Vedenskoye and Shatoy. The shelling of the mountain villages intensifies, causing civilian casualties.

May 25, 1995: Talks begin between the Russian and Chechen delegations in the Chechen capital. Hungarian diplomat Shandor Messarosh, the head of the OSCE Assistance Group in Chechnya, acts as mediator. According to *Kommersant*, Messarosh states that "the discussion dealt with the relocation of the Chechen delegation's office outside of Grozny to one of the nearby villages (this was the proposal submitted by the Russian command to the Chechen side). In addition, issues related to the bombing of the village of Roshni-Chu — as a result of which, according to Sandor Messarosh, 28 people were killed — were discussed at the meeting.

Elena SANNIKOVA:

Chechnya became dear to us — almost native

Twenty years ago, the war broke out with such immense scope and consequences that it is difficult to understand to this day. From its first day, the so-called campaign to restore the constitutional order in the Chechen Republic turned into the utter demolition of whatever remained of the constitutional order — it was accompanied by chaos, the total destruction of the region's legal framework, and a torrent of massive crimes against society and individuals.

The number of people killed by the shelling and bombing of Grozny from December 1994 to February 1995 is incalculable. And that was just the beginning of a tragedy that has dragged on for many years.

Apathetic people who cannot entertain others' pain in their hearts, who cannot exercise compassion, unearth a variety of excuses for the actions of the federal forces in Chechnya. One of the most ubiquitous arguments is that there was a genocide of Russians in Chechnya and that it had to be stopped. And why, they ask, would you sympathize with the Chechens who were bombed, instead of with the Russians whom the Chechens slaughtered? Such questions and arguments betray moral ignorance, which in addition to aggression or indifference is yoked to an ignorance of the truth — or an unwillingness to know it. Grozny was inhabited by people of diverse ethnicities, but chiefly — Russians. The bombing, shelling and chaos that followed the beginning of military operations in Grozny killed incomparably more Russians than the crime that plagued Chechnya in the early 1990s.

By moral ignorance I am referring to any mention of "national" or any other "collective" guilt when it comes to the mass death of children, the elderly, or the larger population through the disproportionate use of military force in the bombing of the city or the densely populated villages, as well as in the resorting to armed hostilities in an inhabited area in general.

What difference does it make what a child's ethnicity is? The terrifying fact is the death of a child. The violent death of any innocent person is a great evil. And if a person places importance on the race, ethnicity or social class of a victim killed by a shell fragment, if a

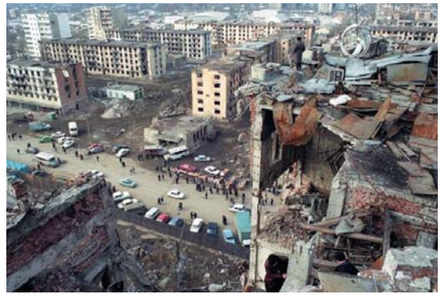
Vladimir Zorin, the acting head of executive agencies in Chechnya, said that Oleg Lobov, the president's representative in Chechnya, instructed the military prosecutor's office to investigate the bombing of the village of Roshni-Chu." HRC *Memorial* points out that the Chechen side was represented by Usman Imayev. At the time, Imayev says that "the main objective of the political and military settlement of the Chechen conflict is the unconditional and immediate withdrawal of federal troops from Chechen territory." He also emphasizes the need to observe humanitarian norms: "Please, bomb front line positions, munitions dumps, bases and so on — just not peaceful villages."

May 27, 1995: Ruslan Gelayev, one of the Chechen commanders, announces that if Russian aircraft don't stop bombing villages by the end of the day, he will execute five Russian POWs. Despite the fact that Aslan Maskhadov denies this claim, that same day in the village of Kharsenoy, where Galeyev's units are located, two captured officers — Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Zryadniy and Senior Lieutenant Yuri Galkin — are shot.

Evening of May 27, 1995: At the checkpoint on Khrushchev Square in Grozny, Russian soldiers fire on a car being driven by O.I. Shaipov. The driver's wife, who is sitting beside him in the car, suffers a gunshot wound.

May 28, 1995: Russian troops engage ChRI units in Shatoysky Gorge and near the villages of Bachi-Yurt, Agishty, Serzhen-Yurt, Makhkety, Orekhovo and Bamut. Shatoy and Vedeno are bombed the next day.

May 30, 1995: Anatoly Kulikov stresses that the only possible issues subject to negotiation are the disarmament and dissolution of ChRI troops. In the meantime, according to human rights



person justifies the death of children through some ethnic preference or calculus — one may indeed question one's own belongingness to the same national identity of such a person, as well as that person's cultural and moral level. Because it is impossible to love one's own child without loving another person's or to love one's own ethnicity without loving other people.

In Grozny the beginning of the war doomed hundreds of thousands of children, women and the elderly to a life of hunger, a life in cold basements, a life without their homes and finally death itself. From the very outset, the Russian leadership's decision to send tanks into Grozny and conduct airstrikes against the city opened the leadership to summary condemnation from anyone who considers himself human.

It is true that the crime wave that overtook the Chechen Republic a few years before the war did in fact happen. And its victims included not only the Russians but people of all ethnicities, including Chechens. The people did need order to be restored and wanted and were waiting for the authorities to offer them protection. But instead of help, there was war, and by comparison, the prior troubles were child's play.

And after all, we must also recall the fates of the conscripts who were issued a criminal order to enter a city defended by militia forces. Most of them were young men who had just been called up. These were basically children who had been taken into the army under duress and had not at all planned on becoming soldiers nor killing anyone. That winter Grozny was littered with the corpses of these boys and there was no one to bury them — nor would it have been possible as long as the shelling continued unabated. Yet every one of their deaths meant more than only a mother's tears: It meant a family that never took root and children that were never born. And this was why they were right, those who said that the war in Chechnya was not just a Chechen genocide but also a Russian one.

It was all easy from afar, discussing the unsettled scores between the Chechens and the Russians from the comfort of a distant and cozy well-being. While there, in the cold, wet basements of wintry Grozny, shaking from airstrikes and mortar fire, Chechen and Russian families huddled alongside each other, sharing the last crust of bread and experiencing their neighbors' sorrow and misery as if they were their own.

And, fortunately, the hearts of many Russians responded sympathetically to the Chechen tragedy and suffering. For many of us, Chechnya became dear to us — almost native. We went there so that we could convey the truth about this war to the Russian majority. We collected humanitarian aid and aimed to help Chechen refugees. We went to rallies and pickets to protest against the war and we found ways of uniting in order to overcome that nightmare. As a result of that war, many of us made new acceptances and even close friends from among the Chechens — and these included both those who worked for peace and human rights and those who, finding themselves in severe hardships, sought our help. How much did we know about Chechnya before the war? Through this war — through this misfortune — many of us got to know Chechnya as well as their own native land.

There were many people who evinced the best human qualities through their empathy for the Chechen people. There were journalists, human rights activists and the mothers of soldiers, who showed tremendous bravery and solidarity. The losses we suffered were irreplaceable. In the spring of 1996, we lost journalist Nadya Chaikova, who was literally infected with the Chechen disaster. During the Second War, we lost the peacemaker and human rights activist Viktor Popkov. Anna Politkovskaya's passionate and active empathy for Chechnya led her to her demise.

One can only hope that the sacrifices were not in vain, that someday society will be imbued with such humanity and such compassion, and a true and not merely ostensible peace will return to Chechnya.

In the meantime, we can only say that the beginning of the war in Chechnya 20 years ago put an end to the hope of seeing the development of a free, enlightened and open Russia. When Yeltsin denied Sergei Kovalev's request to suspend hostilities in order to bury the dead, we lost our faith in both Russia's path to democracy and Yeltsin himself as the guarantor of the constitution and human rights. The war in Chechnya turned the country back — to the construction of a police state, to violence, to the lack of freedoms, to renewed political repression.

Time has shown the inefficacy of the military solution applied by the federal leadership in late 1994 to the problems that had arisen in the Chechen Republic. The results of the so-called operation to restore constitutional order were destruction, rampant crime, and the escalation of injustice and cruelty. The spread of Wahhabism in Chechnya during '97–98 was also a consequence of that mad campaign. All the horrors of the Second Chechen War — the filtration camps, the torture, the severe *zachistkas*, the thousands missing, the hundreds of thousands of victims — were also a consequence of the deeply criminal political decision taken by the Russian leadership in December 1994.

War cannot be rolled flat under a layer asphalt or concealed with flowerbeds and fountains. You cannot pretend it does not exist or act like it never happened. If you do, it will never end.

A sincere apology to the Chechen people on the part of the Russian leadership, targeted federal aid and compensation for families affected by the war (instead of for the leadership), and the disclosure of the full truth about this tragedy in the mainstream media could lay the foundations for peace and revival. Unfortunately, this is not to be awaited from the current Russian leadership.

activists, federal troops advance 12–15 km into the mountains (in the direction of Agishtinsk and Shatoy), where they take the villages of Duba-Yurt, Chishki, Bolshiye Varandy and Maliye Varandy. Though the commanders of the advancing troops have been notified that there are no ChRI units in the village of Chishki, the village is still surrounded and shelled. Many village buildings are severely damaged, while residents take shelter in their basements. In the direction of Vedeno, the fighting takes place near Serzhen-Yurt.

May 30, 1995: President Dzhokhar Dudayev meets with and tries to convince Chechen commanders, who had earlier demanded he make a decision about conducting operations in Russian territory (doing so with the same methods that the Russians had employed in Chechnya), to observe international law.

Evening of May 30, 1995: Russian soldiers at a checkpoint on Petropavlovsk highway open fire on a car being driven by M.V. Dobroschikov, a resident of Saratov Oblast. Dobroschikov is hospitalized with multiple gunshot wounds.

The peak of the violence. Budyonnovsk. Summer 1995.

Late May 1995: The OSCE Assistance Group in Chechnya holds talks with the Russian command, seeking the creation of a "corridor" in Shatoysky District, which would allow civilians to flee the conflict areas safely and freely. The following conditions are agreed on: "The corridor" is created for a period of two days — June 1 and 2 — and is open only during the day, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. The OSCE Assistance Group representative travels to the district center of Shatoy on June 1 and on the same day leads a convoy of Shatoy residents out of the village. However, the system of notifying Shatoysky District residents of the "corridor" has not been thought through, in part because a final agreement with the military command comes on the same day that the corridor goes into effect.

June 1, 1995: At a meeting with members of the OSCE mission in Shatoy, the Chechen delegation announces that negotiations with Russia will be possible only after the suspension of hostilities.

June 1, 1995: Russian aircraft bomb the village of Kharsenoy, virtually wiping it from the face of the Earth.

June 2, 1995: Russian troops cease fire in several areas. Anatoly Kulikov prohibits Doctors Without Borders from operating in Chechnya's southern regions: "No charity is allowed to appear in the south of Chechnya during the next two months."

June 2 (presumably), 1995: Between the villages of Varanda and Saadi-Kotar (Goy-Chu, Komsomolskoye), Russian troops open fire with tanks and artillery on a convoy of refugees from Shatoysky District as it makes its way along the agreed-upon safe corridor under the supervision of the OSCE mission. At least four people are killed. Many others are wounded.

June 3, 1995: Russian troops enter the district center of Vedeno which has been abandoned by Chechen units; the brunt of the fighting takes place near the villages Alleroy, Makhkety and Agishty.

June 4, 1995: Boris Yeltsin issues a presidential decree, creating the 58th Field Army is created. It is to be permanently stationed in Chechnya. Chechen troops and populated areas come under shelling in the Argun Gorge.

June 5, 1995: Fighting breaks out in the vicinity of Shatoy, Nozhay-Yurt and Bamut.

Irena BREZHNA:

THE WOMEN OF CHECHNYA

Irena Brezhna was born in Czechoslovakia. Following the occupation of her country in 1968, she emigrated with her parents to Switzerland, where she became a German-speaking journalist and writer.

She first traveled to Chechnya in March 1996, as a war correspondent for the Swiss press. She made several more visits to the war-torn country and wrote more than 80 pieces of nonfiction about Chechnya, winning multiple awards in Germany and Switzerland.

In addition to this, Ms. Brezhna aided Chechen human rights activists in their projects, invited them to speak in Western countries, and to this day, works as an interpreter for Chechen refugees in Basel, where she resides with her family. Irena Brezhnev has authored nine books. Recently, the Moscow publishing house Eksmo published a Russian translation of her novel about immigration, The Ungrateful Stranger*; in 2012, this novel was awarded the prestigious Confederate Literary prize.*

With the author's consent, DOSH *here reproduces Ms. Brezhna's correspondence, which first appeared in Moscow's* Literary Gazette *in May 1996.*

Slovakia-born Swiss journalist Irena Brezhna visited Chechnya in early March as the war was intensifying. Irena describes in detail her stay in bombed-out Sernovodsk, which she sneaked into with the help of Chechen women.

"Remember: You are a Russian teacher from Sernovodsk"

That Monday in March I was wearing a long black skirt, a brown leather jacket and mountain boots. Dressed this way I looked like the other Chechen women; the only difference was that my head was uncovered. For several days we had been going to the main street of the Ingush village of Sleptsovskaya, speaking with refugees from the neighboring Chechen village of Sernovodsk, who listened stoically even as, in the distance, their village was being shelled and bombed. Our conversation continued uninterrupted, neither by the bombs falling from the helicopters nor the roar of rockets from Uragan and Grad rocket artillery. In the evenings we watched broadcasts of Channel One Russia, which in their customary militarized argot characterized this punitive operation as a cleansing campaign aimed at "bandits" or "terrorists." The weeklong bombardment of Sernovodsk ceased on Sunday, March 10. The next day, female village residents were granted a few hours to visit their homes.

That Monday morning the normally empty highway was bustling with activity. After watching several buses depart full of refugee women, I gestured to the driver, got on the bus and asked, "Women, will you give me a handkerchief?"

Several women gathered around me and one of the younger ones tied a headscarf around my head. A large, beige one with a prominent wool fringe.

"This is my grandmother's headscarf," she told me. "She stayed back in Sernovodsk."

"Take off your rings," cried the others. "Otherwise, they'll take them off for you."

The women never called them "soldiers" or "Russians," simply "they." As if they were a different breed of people.

I slipped off the two rings and placed them in my jacket pocket. I kept on a third ring. My Swiss passport and the press ID issued to me in Moscow I secreted under an elastic stocking tied around my stomach.

"You are a Russian teacher from Sernovodsk named Irina Mikhailova Kuznetsova."

"But I have an accent when I speak Russian."

"Just start crying and they won't notice."

"Irina Mikhailova Kuznetsova," I repeated to the women's delight.

We were already approaching the checkpoint and the women hurried to instill further advice: "Don't make a single move without us. Don't open any doors. Don't enter any houses. There could be grenades attached to any door. If you open it, it will explode. Stay beside us. They may have left snipers behind, who'll be watching us through binoculars."

We got off the bus and I saw two puny soldiers. They were pacing unsteadily with huge Kalashnikovs. Their faces were covered by black woolen balaclavas.

"Look at the ground, or they'll pick you out by the way you look at them."

"I'm afraid," I said softly.

"We are all afraid. Come with us. Someone must write about this."

About two hundred women had already gathered at the barrier. An armored personnel carrier crept through, the crowd parting before it. I was pushed to the side of the road but the women held onto me: "Don't leave the highway. Last week three women chased after a cow and stepped on a mine." Four soldiers with uncovered faces were checking documents. I was pushed toward the middle-aged soldier with a gloomy face but I maneuvered myself to his younger blue-eyed comrade. When it was my turn, the tears came on their own, running down my cheeks as my cold fingers intertwined beneath:

"My house has burned down. I lost everything."

The soldier tried to hide what seemed like compassion beneath a forced severity: "Do you have a Sernovodsk residency permit?"

I sobbed, while some women cried out, "This is our teacher. Do you have no conscience whatsoever?"

The soldier looked at me searchingly and let me pass and the women instantly closed around me and whispered, "Well done."

We walked along the main road for about twenty minutes. I was thinking

June 6, 1995: Negotiations are underway. Russian conditions include the complete disarmament of all Chechen units.

June 7, 1995: Grozny resident Asya Gisayeva (residing at 54 ul. Obukhova) is gravely wounded near her house as she takes her cow to the pasture. She is fired upon with a barrel-mounted grenade launcher from an MVD base near her house.

June 7, 1995: Russian troops fire on a car in Nesterovskaya District in Ingushetia. Its passengers, Yevloyev, Magomedgaziev, Ukhmanov and Khadisov, are killed. Following this, a tractor on its way to work in the fields also comes under fire from an APC. Inside are a father and his son from the Khashiyev family. Both men are killed.

June 8, 1995: A Russian military convoy, passing near the village Gikalovsky, opens fire on a car with license plate number Zh-56-08 ChI. The car's passengers are wounded.

June 10, 1995: Russian troops regroup and resume their offensive in the direction of Shatoy and Nozhai-Yurt.

Night of June 10, 1995: As a result of shooting by Russian troops in Grozny, R.M. Batuyev is fatally wounded while standing on the balcony of his apartment at address 18 ul. Tukhachevskogo.

June 10, 1995: At the talks taking place in Nazran, the parties agree to close all filtration points located in Chechen territory. Over the next month or two (the filtration point in Mozdok was allegedly closed on June 6, 1995) these points officially cease to exist, though in reality they continue operating for a long time — almost up to the end of the war. According to information furnished to the RF MVD minister by Deputy Chief of GUIN V. Zlydenko, between December 11, 1994 and July 22, 1995, altogether 1,325 people from Grozny had passed through the Mozdok filtration point. Of them, only 100 were handed over to the investigating authorities and 141 to "the appropriate authorities for subsequent exchange for military personnel" (it is understood that in most cases, the people exchanged for Russian soldiers had nothing to do with the fighting). This ratio remained fairly stable throughout the war. Thus, according to official data, from the 1,257 people who passed through the filtration point in Grozny between January 28, 1995 and July 1996, a total of 1,024 were released, 51 were detained and charged with a crime, and 109 people were exchanged for captured Russian soldiers. Of course, these are official and therefore most likely heavily edited figures.

June 12, 1995: Russian troops occupy Shatoy and Nozhay-Yurt. The shelling and firing on populated areas goes on.

June 13, 1995: Ruslan Gelayev announces that if the bombing of villages does not cease, he will begin shooting five Russian POWs each day. Five are shot the same day. The next day, three more.

HRC *Memorial* writes, "Six months after its beginning, the war reached the peak of its violence. Federal forces, having first occupied Grozny and the Chechen lowlands, over the next month took the main mountain areas and split the Chechen forces, driving them to the Georgian border. They seemed to be close to complete victory and were not going to stop there. The Russian side had no domestic or foreign policy reasons (such as there were in February and May) for doing so, nor were they concerned by the mounting casualties.

June 14, 1995: An armed detachment of 150 men under the command of

about how the occupying army had surrounded the village and mined the fields. I thought about how narrow this safe strip of asphalt was under our feet. The war, I thought, compresses space. Some saplings had been shredded by the shelling and their branches slumped down to the ground.

"Why did they shoot the trees?" I asked.

"Because they felt like it," replied one of the women.

Foxholes had been dug along the road. A young soldier was lying face down on a dirty mattress. "Staying warm?" a woman asked him sarcastically.

At the entrance to the village, I saw the first burned-out car and the holes that the bombs had made in the slate roofs of the low oblong houses. "There were many refugees from Grozny and from all over Chechnya living here," explained a solemn woman with a very white face and dark eyes. She was wearing the same thick headscarf as mine and a black leather jacket. We turned onto a side street together. We walked in silence, quickly and elastically, like cats. The woman was looking at the ground before her: "Watch out."

Torn wires dangled from above; the clay soil was littered with broken bricks, broken glass, pieces of boards. I saw my first dead cow; she lay curled up against the wall of a house. On the big green gate, someone had written in chalk in Russian: "Children and the elderly live here." We crossed over a suspension bridge and a gaunt dog ran ahead of us, carrying a clucking chicken in its jaws. My companion shouted at the dog and the dog opened its jaws and the chicken fled. The upper part of a cow's carcass was sticking out of the water, swollen; I began to count the dead cows and I counted 40 before I gave up. Some of them had been shot in the head. We passed a small and tranquil flock of sheep. This peaceful scene was disrupted only by a dead sheep with two lambs that had nestled up to its swollen stomach.

Roosters were crowing; cows were chewing the cud, indifferent to the carrion at their hooves; chickens were diligently pecking at some blood-soaked straw; sheep were bleating, while at an elegant gallop, a horse raced the length of the village. The animals' chorus rose above the smell of rot. A white newborn kitten was licking the blood from a wound on the leg of a dead cow. He looked at me with his blue, half-blind eyes and mewled. We passed a woman casting a dead lamb into the trash heap. Dogs, huddled in small packs, ran up to us but stopped at a respectful distance. Spying them, my companion said, "They are hungry."

When a light-brown calf approached us, the woman laughed: "You're alive!"

Some kind of pink bubble seeped from the hindquarters of a dead cow. I stopped: "What is that, the stomach?"

"No, it's her calf."

We hurried on. It was half past noon.

The woman said, "By three, we need to go back to the highway or they might not let us out again."

We met a pensive woman who told us, "When we start heading back, let's not show them a tear."

We met another woman who was walking through the village and lamenting loudly.

A skinny and hunched old woman emerged from a little hut and led me into her bedroom. The ceiling and the walls, whitewashed with a touch of indigo, were speckled with about forty holes from direct hits.

"They shot from the street, through the window," explained the old woman.

"We were in the basement the entire time," added her husband in a brown sheepskin coat and a high sheepskin hat. His face, furrowed with wrinkles and bearing a curved nose, assumed a dignified expression. The floor was cluttered with crumbled brick and the only piece of furniture was a mirror that stood in the corner perforated with multiple bullet holes. I could not imagine strangers' hands committing atrocities here; my mind's eye conjured a tempestuous chaos.

A middle-aged man with a set face stood in front of a house that had burned to ashes. He did not know what to do. As we passed, he pointed to a pile of metal: "My car." Most of the houses were destroyed in whole or in part. Past wavering curtains an early spring breeze blew through the broken windows. There was something ghastly and captivating about it. I came right up to a window and from the shadows of the room a frightened Chechen woman in a headscarf peeked out at me.

"Be careful!" cried my companion.

I started back and realized that the Chechen woman was me. The room

was completely empty, but in its depths stood a large mirror that had somehow survived in one piece.

"May what befell our mothers — befall yours"

We met an elderly man and he warned us, "Do not step on any fragment or splinter — there may be mines under them."

My forgotten fear came back to life and I let my companion walk ahead of me and trod carefully behind her, as if expecting her to blow up. Realizing this, I caught up with her and we walked on side by side. Suddenly we heard the roar of an aircraft and distant burst. I glanced at my companion, but she reassured me, "They're bombing Bamut again. But the people there are long gone. Only some militants are left there, down in the abandoned missile silos."

We entered a courtyard. The woman quickly scanned its walls and smiled. The house was in one piece. She approached her metal door and showed me a sooty black hole next to the keyhole: "They tried to blow up the lock." She stuck her head in the broken window: "They pulled all the upholstered furniture out through this window. I just bought it all last fall." In the middle of the yard stood a stool bearing a TV that had had its screen shot through; pieces of dishware littered the earth around it. "They were in a rush it seems." Her tone was businesslike, calm, as if none of this surprised her.

"Why did they shoot the TV?" I asked.

"Because they couldn't bring it with them."

"What's your name?"

"Zula."

The women had addressed me using the informal "you" from the beginning. Entering their village, I too switched to

Chechen field commander Shamil Basayev crosses the Chechen border in KAMAZ and VAZ 2106 trucks and, disguised as police, enter the city of Budyonnovsk in Stavropol Region where they attack the city's MVD. Both sides suffer casualties as a result of the ensuing battle. The Chechens seize the Budyonnovsk city hall, hoist the flag of Ichkeria on its roof and hold onto it for some time.

Then, retreating under the pressure from regrouped Russian Special Forces, Basayev's men seize hostages from among the city's residents and head for the city hospital, which has admitted several wounded Chechen fighters.

As a result, more than a thousand hostages, including hospital patients and medical staff, end up in the city hospital.

http://ria.ru/history_spravki/20110610/386717117.html

Basayev calls a press conference at which he tells reporters that he considers this to be not a terrorist attack, but a sabotage operation.

"If the fact that Russia has been bombing Chechnya for six months, destroying cities and villages, killing tens of thousands of civilians, is not called terrorism, why are our actions considered terrorism?"

The Chechen commander explains that the purpose of attacking the city and seizing hostages is to compel the Russians to withdraw their troops from Chechnya and start peace talks.

June 15, 1995: At 1 p.m. the residential district in the village of Gekhi-Chu suffers massive bombing, destroying several dozen houses. Three civilians (Aziz A. Ahmethanov, b. 1971, Zaynab Ibragimova, b. 1955, Sultan F. Khatayev, b. 1951) are killed and five others (Ali M. Ibragimov, b. 1970, Eli M. Ibragimov, b. 1973, Aminat M. Ibragimova, b. 1979, Birlant M. Ibragimova, b. 1973, Malkh-Azni M. Ibragimova, b. 1994) suffer injuries of varying severity.

June 17, 1995: MVD and FSB special units attempt to storm the Budyonnovsk hospital where Basayev's detachment is holed up with hostages. Sixty-one hostages are released. However, the assault is a failure, as some of the hostages are killed. Several terrorists are killed and the federal forces suffer casualties as well.

June 18, 1995: Chernomyrdin and Basayev hold negotiations over the phone. As a result, most of the hostages are freed. The two leaders reach an agreement about a temporary peace and the beginning of Russo-Chechen negotiations. Russian forces are ordered to cease combat operations as of 8 p.m.

June 19, 1995: Basayev's detachment leaves the hospital on buses provided to them by the Russians. They take with them some of the hostages as human shields (123 hostages, including some who volunteered to accompany them: 20 journalists, three deputies of the State Duma, and city officials from Budyonnovsk and Stavropol).

Evening of June 20, 1995: A firefight breaks out between Russian soldiers and a Chechen MVD unit on ul.

addressing them informally. We spoke in short sentences.

"The carpets," said Zula suddenly and pushed aside some board on the porch, revealing a stairwell. Zula tossed a stone into the opening and took a step back to listen; then, she took a long stick and gently pushed the door leading to the cellar. "Still there."

Another woman entered the courtyard, and Zula said, "Hurry, we have to check on the livestock..."

On the way to the barn, we came upon an overturned cabinet lying in the road. Working together, we set it upright. In the barn we found a few sheep, a lamb, a calf, three cows and the graceful profile of a piebald mare. Zula was taken overjoyed. She spoke to her animals and her Chechen speech, rich in consonants, was gentle. The first thing she did was untie the cows lying on the straw. One cow became stuck behind a wooden fence next to the wall so Zula took an ax, while the other woman picked up a crowbar. The cow jerked and Zula told her in Russian, "Be patient, you've already seen the worst." The women began to deliver strong blows onto the wood, the fence soon gave way, and the cow, stumbling, clambered out into the sun. Her stagger left her after a few steps and the sheep ran after her bleating. I hurried after the other women, and, looking back, saw Zula running after her cattle to the watering hole. She carried the lamb in her arms. All around the village, the animals were coming up to the women and looking to them, just like you see in paintings of biblical scenes.

The woman who led me now showed me a room in her house, where, as it turned out, she had locked her cow.

"Why?" I asked.

"Why they torture the animals, I don't know myself," she said.

The floor of the room was covered with scattered clothes, shivers of white porcelain, plaster and yellow cow dung. With two fingers, the woman picked up a leather jacket soiled with manure and let it fall again. The table was covered with dirty dishes and glasses and I sniffed an unfinished glass. It smelled of vodka. There were two empty bottles under the table, one of Stolichnaya and one of Metaxa.

"Did you leave it like this?" I asked.

"No, it wasn't us."

I picked a few disposable syringes from the floor; some were still in their sterile packaging, while others had already been used.

"Are these yours?"

"No."

In the next room, among some drawers that had been dumped onto the floor, I found three large white bags stuffed full of linens and curtains.

"Did you pack these bags?"

"No, it wasn't us. They did this. I guess they'll come back for them tonight." The woman pointed at some nails in the walls. "There were carpets hanging there."

The room's floor and one of its walls were charred. I found traces of arson inside some of the other homes too.

There was some furniture lying in the front yard of a large ornate house. It was as if the owners had decided to move, but the couch had broken from having the wardrobe piled onto it; the table and chairs were scattered around. The women showed me fresh tracks from where the vehicles had entered the yards.

"They took out the furniture and carpets on their armored personnel carriers."

"Where did they take it all?" I asked.

"They sell them in the market."

One woman, who had remained in the village during the bombings, said that she came across two soldiers dragging a big windup doll and a stuffed animal.

"What do you need those for?" she asked.

"Shut up, bitch," one of the soldiers replied.

Thereupon, the woman cursed them, "May what befell our mothers — befall yours!"

The women moved cautiously among the mutilated things without touching them, as if these things no longer belonged to them. Yet we never did see those who robbed these peasants of their homes. I tried to imagine their drunken laughter as they shot at the lamps, as they staggered through the houses, threw open the refrigerators, bit into pickles, spat them to the floor and spat foul words as they riffled through the women's tights and underwear, as they relieved themselves beside the mattresses. From all over Russia they had come to the North Caucasus, where each guest is holy. As long as he sits at the table, the women show each guest respect, and he sits there as on a throne — even so the women never take a seat beside him. They clean his shoes before, satiated, he takes his leave. And even if he has killed a member of their family — as long as he remains under their roof — they do not touch him.

"Our dead are the most precious thing we have"

In Sernovodsk, it was not Chechnya I saw — it was the inner world of the Russian army, which had come crashing down on this land. The objects and events, displaced in the most unusual combinations, the scale of the destruction — they exceeded the limits of my apprehension. And, despite all my efforts to concentrate, I was able to save only isolated episodes from that amalgam of fragments, colors and shapes. Among the pile of debris in one of the courtyards there was a large jar, half filled with homemade jam. In its lid, two gaping holes had been punched with a knife. In a kitchen strewn with shrapnel, three unbaked cakes lingered in an open refrigerator. On the floor beside an overturned baby carriage lay black and white photos of a large family. In a bedroom, one of the women discovered a half-empty chest: "This is where I was keeping my savings for my daughter's dowry." Stuck in one of the window frames, I found a homemade knife approximately 30 cm in length with a plain carved handle. I pulled it from the frame and gave it to the woman who owned the house. She held the knife at arm's length. She had a delicate body and the knife looked enormous. A brown boxing glove, large enough to fit two hands, lay in the middle of the street. "They must have dropped that," said a woman. We saw a tall black boot standing in the road. Its companion lay in the dirt nearby. One of the women said, "They left their boots and took my husband's instead." She picked up the boot, showed me the half-faded Russian inscription within and placed it back down, gently and carefully. It was as though this caring, domestic gesture brought dignity back to the village.

In many places the ground was littered with pieces of metal and cartridges, both spent and unspent. I picked up a greenish cartridge case, about 20 cm long, for myself. Seeing this, one of the women showed me a similar unexploded one protruding from the roof of her barn.

Koltsova in Grozny. As a result, Detective Yu.A. Satuyev is fatally wounded.

June 20, 1995: The Budyonnovsk hostages are released in the Chechen village of Zandak. By the end of June, combat operations in Chechnya have practically ceased.

June 25, 1995: According to mass media sources, Russian forces open fire in Vedensky District in order to "detain terrorists."

Evening of June 26, 1995: Russian soldiers manning the checkpoint at the intersection of ul. Fontanaya and ul. Razdelnaya in Grozny's Oktyabrsky district, open fire on a car (state license plate number N-45-28 ChI). The driver — M.A. Gaytamirov, 56 — is killed. The passenger — P.Ya. Popkov — manages to flee the car and run into the open gate of a neighboring house while under fire.

June 27–30, 1995: The second round of talks between the Russian and Chechen delegation is held with the mediation of the OSCE. The parties agree to exchange all prisoners as well as to the disarmament of Chechen forces, the withdrawal of federal forces, and the holding of elections in Chechnya.

June 3, 1995: Boris Yeltsin dismisses Minister for Ethnic Affairs Yegorov, Minister of the Interior Yerin, FSK Director Stepashin and head of the Stavropol Krai administration Kuznetsov.

June 30, 1995: Federal forces manning a checkpoint between Vedeno and Dargo open small arms fire on a car carrying a camera crew from the Russian Public TV show *Vremya*. Aside from the driver, the car contains the correspondent S. Zenin, cameraman D. Akinfeyev and a reporter for the newspaper *Segodnya*, M. Eysmont. Fortunately, no one is injured.

Evening of June 30, 1995: Russian soldiers at the commandant's office No. 1 open fire on car with state license plates B-03-89 ChI, driven by A.M. Gisayev. The passenger, S.A. Khadzhimuradova, suffers a serious gunshot wound.

July 1, 1995: During negotiations, the date for Chechen elections is set for November 5, 1995.

Night of July 2, 1995: Krasnoyarsk OMON personnel stationed at checkpoint No. 12 fire on two vehicles (state license plate numbers 55-67 ChI and 3-28-73 ChI, setting both cars ablaze. Two burned corpses are discovered in one of the vehicles. One of the bodies is identified as a police officer from the Staropromyslovsky department of the MVD, V.Sh. Musurkayev.

Evening of July 2, 1995: Russian soldiers near the village of Gikalovsky fire on a vehicle with state license plates number V-78-28 MI, which is being driven by L.S. Zaurbekov. Both the driver and a passenger — B.V. Yunusov — are killed. Two other passengers in the vehicle — A.Kh. Shaputkayeva and R.S. Shaputkayeva — suffer gunshot wounds.

July 5, 1995: Russian soldiers in Grozny's Staropromyslovsky district fire on a vehicle with license plates number 76-02 AS, belonging to Grozny's First Maternity Hospital. The vehicle burns down. Its driver, S.S. Baksheyev is unharmed.

July 7, 1995: Mikael Ivgiyev, a journalist from the republican magazine *Orga*, is detained by Russian soldiers on the road from the village of Borzoi in Shatoysky District and taken to

"I could pull it out for you," she said.

"Not now," said my companion and turned to me: "We are going to the mosque. The dead are there."

We hurried on but on the way stopped by a small courtyard. There was a thin woman there. She was sitting on the porch in a yellow dress with black stains. A fur hat lay on the floor before her. The woman explained that the hat was her husband's and that she had found his coat in the bedroom along with quilt with a pool of blood on it. My companion told her in Russian, "Maybe they tortured him, and then he ran away." And as we were already leaving, she added, "Maybe he's in the hospital. Go there."

Suddenly, we heard the roar of an approaching engine.

"Armored personnel carriers!" cried the women and rushed to a nearby courtyard. Running after then, the first thing I heard was wailing and then saw a man's body lying face down. There was dried blood on the back of his head. He was dressed only in a gray sweater and black pants. More and more women came running into the yard; they would approach the dead man and, recoiling, shift from one foot to another, turn away and cover their faces. They wailed at a high pitch. Their wail consisted of a single sound: ah-ah. "Like she-wolves," I thought. Their wails burst from their throats of their own volition. They enthralled us all. One woman brought a pink woolen blanket with an oriental pattern from her home, and the women rolled the dead man onto it. As we did so, we saw a gaping black hole where his face had been. The rats had spared only half of his forehead. One woman doubled over with her hand to her stomach as if about to vomit but could only spit. Six women picked up the blanket — three on each side — and almost running carried him to the road. As the blanket passed me, I stared at the dirty shoes that stuck out from the blanket and then at the indigo circle tattooed on the back of his left hand.

When I remember these Chechen women, strong women take shape before me. They set in motion beneath the noonday sun; they carry death from the courtyard in their hands. The stench of decay follows in their wake. And I hear a female choir, a high-pitched dirge...

Then the woman in the yellow dress emerged from her house and took a few hesitant steps toward this procession. I looked into her face and saw it flatten and her hazel eyes wander unfocused until at last they shut and, leaning against another, older woman, she sank slowly to the earth. And the older woman, too, slumped beside her in the mud and yet a third fell to her knees beside these two. They patted the cheeks of the woman in the yellow dress who had lost consciousness and then raised her up and dragged her into the courtyard, her feet dragging on the ground. Her husband's body was already there, resting on the cement floor under an awning. Once the dead man had been covered with the bloodstained quilt, she came to her senses.

"What was his name?" I asked someone.

"Mukhamedov."

The woman in the yellow dress wailed loudly and the others echoed her. Her torso swayed rhythmically.

"What does she say?"

"She speaks of how she will now be alone with four children."

One of the women broke away from the group and led me away. We moved silently and I noticed with surprise that we were no longer weeping.

"What will happen with the body now?" I asked.

"The women will dig a grave in the garden. Later they will dig him up and give him a proper burial. Our religion commands us not to leave the dead unburied. Our dead are the most precious thing we have."

The women passed me like a baton, from hand to hand. I no longer recall their faces, but I can still hear their light steps beside me as we hurried through the village. At the time, I felt like I had gone with them to the ends of the Earth. We passed a half-destroyed house and saw a fragile, solitary woman in the courtyard. The woman was silently crying and I hugged her briefly and felt how she trembled. We passed by another house with a woman standing before it who told us, "We will build everything anew." A boy of about ten in a yellow taqiyah and with a stick in his hand hurriedly passed us with his modest flock. We were walking along a narrow, concrete ditch in which some cows and sheep had gotten stuck. I loosened the knot of my headscarf; it was making my neck itch and made it hard to turn my head. But two women tightened it again: "That's not how you wear a scarf. You could be found out." My companion would tell the women and elders whom we met along our way about the death of Mukhamedov. I surmised this from the way she would bring her right hand up to her face, at which the stunned people would look down at the ground.

Zula

All of a sudden Zula appeared before me.

"Where are you going?"

"To the mosque."

She took me with her. As we approached the center of the village, we were coming across more and more burnt houses. Several still had thin wisps of smoke rising from them and the road was now littered with so many broken bricks and pieces of metal that, like windup toys, we kept calling out, "Careful!" Zula became frightened when we came upon a cassette with unspooled tape lying in the middle of the road.

"Sometimes they tie a grenade to a string," she said and stopped in front of a wicket gate. Charred walls stood beyond it.

"There's the mosque."

This was the epicenter of the destruction. Everything was black. I thought to myself in Russian: Had they really thought they could use their bombs to kill the local god? Zula stepped tentatively onto a freshly-filled pit and then jumped over it. I did the same. For a few seconds we froze at the breach in the wall.

"Do you see anything?" I asked.

"White bone."

But I saw only black ashes. Later we learned that seven charred bodies were discovered there. We heard a scream and turned around. Several women and older men were violently gesticulating, warning us of something. Zula made to rush back but froze in indecision before that strange spot of fresh earth at the gate. "Wait a minute!" I said and this time went first, as if this desecrated sanctuary had granted me strength and contempt of death. And here I felt a great ease. Zula followed behind.

The road went downhill and Zula asked, "What time is it now?"

"Half past two."

"My feet are so sore," she said suddenly. I was surprised that she could think of

Khankala. Two weeks later, he is transferred from there to Grozny's filtration point. While detained in Khankala, M. Ivgiyev was held in a cistern that was buried in the ground. The federal forces wanted him to confess that he was "Dudayev's scout" and demanded that he divulge all militant bases, radio call signs, etc. The man was tortured with electric shocks, suspension and the *lastochka* (a torture method in which the victim's arms and legs are cuffed to each other, and the victim is hoisted in the air by these appendages).

July 10, 1995: Buddhist monks from the Nippondzan-Mekhodzi order are detained at a checkpoint between Grozny and Urus-Martan. Without asking for papers or explaining anything, the soldiers shove them into a car, blindfold them and take them to a military base. There, the monks are beaten and forced to lie flat on their stomachs while their arms were twisted and cuffed. Blindfolded, cuffed and offering absolutely no resistance, the men are thrown into a dirty pit.

Night of July 29, 1995: The Russian and Chechen delegations sign an agreement on military issues. The agreement's provisions include the following: the immediate cessation of combat actions; the creation of the Special Oversight Commission (co-chaired by Lieutenant General Anatoly Romanov, the Joint Force commander of federal troops, and Aslan Maskhadov, the ChRI chief of staff); an "all for all" exchange of POWs and other individuals who have been forcibly detained; the disarmament of "illegal armed formations"; a phased withdrawal of Russian troops; and the cessation of all acts of terrorism or sabotage.

HRC *Memorial* remarks, "Chechen fighters got the opportunity to return to their villages, where, having surrendered most of their weapons, they began forming self-defense squads."

Night of July 30, 1995: Dzhokhar Dudayev announces that the agreement signed the day before is illegitimate.

Human rights sources write, "Instead of withdrawing its troops, the Russian side merely moved them away from populated areas — and even then, not everywhere. In a number of cases, troop formations that had been deployed to strategically vital areas were reinforced with fresh detachments."

August 1, 1995: Aslan Maskhadov issues an order "regarding the voluntary surrender of arms and armored vehicles by armed formations of the ChRI Armed Forces as well as the phased withdrawal of federal forces from ChRI territory." The order calls for "a ceasefire and the termination of combat operations as of midnight of August 2."

August 2, 1995: The ChRI leadership approves the agreement on military issues. Dzhokhar Dudayev, however, removes Usman Imayev from his leadership position of the Chechen delegation and appoints Khozh-Akhmed Yarikhanov in his stead.

August 10, 1995: Aslan Maskhadov

claims that he is ready to perform the provisions of the agreement regardless of whatever happens.

August 12, 1995: Ramzan Isayev, b. 1962, is released from the Russian filtra-

that and immediately felt my own hunger. We walked along some lengthy ruins bearing the inscription "Department Store" and soon stepped onto an asphalt bridge with a big hole. Two young soldiers were standing on the opposing bank of the river. One was sitting on an iron bedstead, warming himself at the campfire. Approaching them along the bridge, we held each other's hand firmly. Zula murmured a prayer, but after we had passed the soldiers, she hissed a curse in Russian. Later Zula apologized: "There was a time I would not dare raise my voice at a man. It is the war that has changed us."

We joined the other women. They were laughing.

"Well, Irina Mikhailova, did you see it all?" they asked and once more adjusted my scarf to cover my hair completely. The women carried plastic bags full of all kinds of little things that they had recovered from their homes. Zula had grabbed two packets of tea and a small Russian chocolate bar, which she gave to me as a present: "Take it with you back to Europe."

"Chechnya is in Europe too, Zola."

"Zula," she corrected me and wrote on my left hand in large Russian letters: *Zula*.

We walked side by side, three ranks deeps. I was carrying the suitcase for one of the women. We returned to the checkpoint. On the other side, the white jeeps of international press agencies and human rights organizations waited in vain for permission to pass. I did not say anything as I went through. I was crying. A conscript of about 19 whispered in my ear, "Act like you're showing me your documents. Those two up ahead, they're OMON." I saw two huge men in beige bulletproof vests — they stood motionless with their backs to us. A little girl tripped and fell as she was emerging from a bus beside them. I recalled the words of a woman who called these riot police, "the denizens of hell." I never saw their faces. And because I did not, the destruction of Sernovodsk has remained faceless to me.

When we got off the bus in Ingushetia, one woman said, "They were looking for fighters in Sernovodsk. Now we are all fighters."

I untied the headscarf from my head and hugged Zula.

The next day I went to Grozny. It was like a journey through the black-and-white pictures of Dresden after World War II, a trip with its own soundtrack of exploding ordnance, particularly at night. On the way back, we passed some uncovered trucks. Women and children huddled together in the truck beds in the rain, and as we neared the village of Sleptsovskaya, we came across a long column of refugees walking on foot, many in nothing but galoshes. They turned out to be refugees from the Chechen village of Samashki. Dazed mothers recounted how, at the checkpoint, their sons had been snatched right from their arms and taken away to some unknown destination. And again — day and night — the bombs went on exploding, right up to the Ingush border, the bursts growing only ever more intense, the respites growing only ever more brief. Each household in Sleptsovskaya accepted at least a dozen refugees; some took as many as thirty. But thousands of them still remained, stuck in Samashki under the shelling. It took Russian television three days to mention the attack.

When we took off from the airfield in Sleptsovskaya, as we banked toward Moscow, the last thing we heard was the roar of a plane dropping a bomb. That roar lingers in my mind.

Anne NIVAT:

I was there, among the civilians, under the falling bombs

The French journalist remembers her time as a war correspondent in Chechnya

I first came to Chechnya a very long time ago: in January 1997, during the presidential elections in which Maskhadov was elected. I'm not an expert on these matters, so I don't feel comfortable judging the fairness of those elections. All I can say is that they were in fact held, that they were held under peaceful conditions and that they were well organized. I toured the entire country, visiting not only Grozny, but Vedeno and many other places. There was no violence. And these elections were recognized by the entire world, even Moscow. That, however, did not prevent a new war from breaking out in 1999 against Maskhadov, the lawfully elected president.

But in 1997, I was living in Prague and writing in English for the magazine *Transitions*. This periodical published "Radio Liberty" and that is what I worked on. So on the whole, I was a Frenchwoman who was living in the Czech Republic and writing in English about Russia. And that is when my edi-

tion point in Assinovskaya Stanitsa and brought home to the village of Alkhan-Yurt. The local doctor who examined him, remarked that he was in a very serious condition with a concussion, nasal fracture, evidence of compression to his head, two hematomas on his temples, his body covered in bruises and scars and his arms, legs and back covered with large burns. According to the doctor, Isayev was also suffering from a kidney infection and a swollen liver as a result of the beatings. Ramzan Isayev could not speak due to motor aphasia. He began to speak gradually over the next month, though with various speech impediments and stuttering. The bodily traumas he suffered were recorded on video. Ramzan Isayev had been suspended by his handcuffs and had a blow torch pressed to his heels. His head had been compressed in a special metal hoop, and he had been tortured with electric shocks on a table specifically designed for this purpose. He was finally exchanged for a Russian POW.

August 18–19, 1995: Russian troops besiege Achkhoy-Martan. The conflict is mediated at the negotiations underway in Grozny.

August 19, 1995: An unmarked APC fires on a car in an area of Ingushetia known as "Mokraya Balka," which is located 6 km from Nesterovskaya Stanitsa. The car's occupants, M.A. Buzurkiyev, his wife S.N. Buzurkiyeva and their four-year-old son Kh.B.M. Buzurkiev, are all killed.

August 21, 1995: ChRI units under the command of Alaudi Khamzatov capture a police department building in Argun. Russian soldiers begin to fire rockets at the building but miss and destroy several private homes and kill several dozen heads of livestock. Khamzatov's unit leaves the city in the face of a Russian armored advance.

September 6, 1995: Anniversary of the independence of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. Thousands attend a rally in Grozny. Human rights sources point out that "these events, as well as all the socio-political situation in the summer and autumn of 1995, clearly demonstrated that the government of Salambek Khadzhiev enjoyed no authority among the population. As soon as military pressure subsided, his influence became relegated to Nadterechny District. In most regions, effective power returned to the separatists."

September 20, 1995: An assassination attempt is made against Russian presidential envoy, Security Council Secretary Oleg Lobov. He is left unharmed. Aslan Maskhadov states that the forces under the control of President Dudayev were not involved in the attack.

September 30, 1995: Russian troops blockade Sernovodsk, located in western Chechnya. The blockade is to drag on for five months.

Late September 1995: Achkhoy-Martan is also blockaded by Russian troops on the pretext that there are militants based in this regional center. The Chechen side claims that there are only self-defense militia units based in the villages.

October 6, 1995: An assassination attempt is made against the commander of the Joint Group of Russian troops in Chechnya, Lieutenant-General Anatoly Romanov. Romanov suffers a debilitating head trauma when a bomb explodes under his car as it is driving through the tunnel on prospekt A. Avtorkhanova in the vicinity of Minutka Square in Grozny. Peace talks have basically broken off. Lieutenant-General Anatoly Shkirko is named as the new commander of federal forces in Chechnya.

tor-in-chief sent me on a trip to Chechnya. It was my first time. I was still very young back then. And in the following years, I went back there repeatedly. I wrote many things about that very first trip and about Chechnya for *Transitions*.

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A year later, in 1999, I moved to Moscow. I lived there for 10 years, working as a freelancer. And in autumn of 1999, when the so-called counter-terrorist operation began, on September 30, I was already on site, just in time for the operation's very beginning. After all, during the whole of the summer of 1999, you could already smell the war brewing. You could already assume that the war would break out. Basayev and his militants had invaded Dagestan and seized two villages. That was when I said to myself, "It's time to go." And by September I was already there. First, I traveled to Dagestan, to the two captured villages and then, from Dagestan to Chechnya, traveling by bus and car. I did not go through Moscow. And so I found myself in Chechnya just before the outbreak of the war. And when the rest of the journalists decided to go there, it was no longer possible. It was too late — the Russians had already closed the border with Chechnya.

Then my problem became how to get out. I was blocked inside, trapped. And this lasted until late January 2000, when I was discovered in the village of Noviye Atagi, living among the local residents, with the family of a Chechen named Rizvan Lorsanov.

One day (I think it was January 30 or 31, 2000), some agents from the FSB showed up at his home very early, around six in the morning. I lived and slept on the women's side of the house; the men lived on the other side. I thought that the FSB had come for me, but it was not so. I remember very well going up to the senior officer. I gave him my French passport — that is, I gave myself up and explained who I was. There was a satellite phone lying on the table. I explained that it was mine. They took it. But they did not pay any attention to me. They were surprised of course, but they simply returned my passport, took my phone and the owner of the house and left.

When they left, I started thinking about what I would do. Should I leave or stay? And then I said to myself: They will return. They will return after questioning the owner for several hours. Such is the logic. And if I leave, then when they do return and discover I've gone, they will think that I have something to hide. And I had absolutely nothing to hide. I was in Chechnya completely legally. Therefore, I decided to stay and wait for their return.

But I no longer had my phone, which was my only means of communicating with the world — with my editors and my friends and family. And indeed, when I failed to contact anyone, everyone panicked. My newspaper (at the time I was working for the daily *Liberation*) wrote to the Kremlin and wrote to the French president (at the time, Jacques Chirac) asking Mr. Chirac to inquire with the Kremlin about what had happened to Anne Nivat.

But in the end, I had made the right decision: The same people came back after 48 hours. And then they said, "So you are Anne Nivat? We have questions for you. Please come with us." I had no choice. We went to Mozdok, the headquarters of the security forces outside of Chechnya. Naturally, on our way from Noviye Atagi to Mozdok, they accused me of espionage. They began to intimidate me while we were still in Chechnya. The drive was long, especially back then: there were many roadblocks to pass, it was winter, and everything was destroyed.

There were four men with me: the driver, the senior agent to his right, and two more agents on either side of me in the back. They mocked me while we traveled. They called me a spy, accused me of having links with militants and said, "Did your militant buddies at least teach you how to shoot a gun?" At some point after twilight set in, they chose a very remote strip of forest halfway between two checkpoints, stopped the car and said, "Now we'll see if you know how to shoot." They forced me out of the car. Naturally, they were armed. Each one had a Kalashnikov. But I thought it was impossible that they would give me one. And then I realized what they want to do: They wanted to put a Kalashnikov in my hands so that my fingerprints would be on it — so that they could accuse me of something later. I flatly refused, saying that I would not touch anything. They realized then that I would not give in to pressure so easily. But, nevertheless, they tried to intimidate me in this way. We arrived at 7 p.m. They put me up in the hotel and took my passport.

The interrogation began the next morning and lasted all day, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. I remember it well because they had a TV on and in those days NTV would broadcast *Itogi* with Yevgeny Kiselyov every Sunday. And when at 7 p.m. *Itogi* came on, they were in for a shock and I was in for a shock because Kiselev started the broadcast by mentioning me. He said something like, "We still have no news from correspondent Anne Nivat who went missing three days ago. We do not know where she is. Our correspondent in France has met with her parents." And I saw a report about my parents on NTV. They were speaking Russian (because my parents are well-known translators and experts on Russian literature) in my kitchen, in our family home. There I was, sitting with the FSB agents, all of us together watching that show. That's when they decided to get rid of me quickly and told me that they would send me to Moscow the next day.

And then I did something unexpected: I asked them where my satellite phone was. They replied that they had not been able to use it because it was locked with a PIN and because the battery had died. And then I suggested, "Want me to show you how it works?"

October 8, 1995: The village of Roshni-Chu, which was often visited by Dzhokhar Dudayev, is bombed. According to Shandor Messarosh, the head of the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya, who visited the village after the bombing, 28 people were killed and many houses were destroyed. As a result of the raid, several ChRI soldiers were killed as well, including Magomed Khachuyev, the chief of security for the ChRI delegation at the talks with Russia.

October 9, 1995: Boris Yeltsin issues a statement blaming the attack on Romanov in Grozny on supporters of Dzhokhar Dudayev. The Russian side officially terminates the negotiations. The army is ordered to disarm the forces of the Chechen resistance.

October 11, 1995: At the talks in Grozny, the head of the Chechen delegation, Said-Usman Yarikhanov, announces Dzhokhar Dudayev's decision: The resumption of talks is only possible under the condition that "UN security forces" arrive in Chechnya.

October 12, 1995: Aslan Maskhadov, on the contrary, declares his readiness to continue the negotiations under the previous terms.

October 14, 1995: Russian aircraft conduct airstrikes against Dargo and Belgatoy.

October 14–15, 1995: The Congress of the Socio-Political Forces of Chechnya is held. Among the participants is Shamil Basayev. He announces that there will be no elections in Chechnya as long as there are Russian troops on republican territory. He also states that he has four containers full of radioactive waste at his disposal.

October 15, 1995: The village of Kharsenoy is bombed. Many homes are destroyed. At the same time, the Russian military demands that the Chechen unit surrounded in in Achkhoy-Martan surrender 150 firearms. The village is shelled, causing civilian casualties (wounded).

October 20, 1995: At a press conference in Moscow, Doku Zavgayev claims that the Supreme Council of the Chechen Republic is the only legitimate authority in Chechnya. The day before, Umar Avturkhanov and Salambek Khadzhiyev had condemned Zavgayev's return to politics, describing it as "destabilizing and divisive to the constructive forces in Chechnya."

October 24, 1995: Khadzhiyev and Avturkhanov resign. The new chairman of the Chechen Committee of National Accord becomes Lecha Magomadov, while Zavgayev becomes president of the Government of National Revival.

On the same day, a rally is held in Grozny demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops. According to HRC *Memorial*, the rally is attended by five thousand people.

In Vedensky District, residents stage a kangaroo court and try soldiers from the 506th Motor Rifle Regiment, who are accused of crushing passengers in a Zhiguli car with their infantry fighting vehicle. The next night, Chechen forces attack a Russian military convoy near the village of Tsa-Vedeno. Eighteen people are killed.

October 26, 1995: Doku Zavgayev renames the Government of National Revival to the Government of the Chechen Republic.

HRC *Memorial* writes, "In October, the situation in Chechnya is complicated: There are numerous reports of shelling and airstrikes against Chechen villages controlled by the ChRI, as well as reports of the shelling of Russian posi-

We went to the terrace to get a better signal and I called the editorial office of Echo of Moscow. They instantly put me on live air, and I explained where I was, who was around me and what had happened to me. The next day I was sent to Moscow. Everyone was waiting for me there: an attach? from the French Embassy and *Liberation*'s Moscow correspondent met me at the airport. I gave a held a press conference right then and there.

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After that I went back to Chechnya many times and in a similar manner — that is, on my own. The only exception was when I went on a trip organized by the military. In those days, all the journalists preferred such trips, because they were much simpler. As for me, it was always easier to go on my own. But when I went on this organized trip, it was also very interesting because afterward, my readers could compare my reports from this sponsored trip with my reports from my independent ventures. This comparison offers a lot of insight. But there was nothing special about it when it came to the Chechen war. It's done

this way in all major conflicts — that which in English is called "embedded journalism." I never worked that way. I was always on my own and I would stay with ordinary people and only sometimes with the military.

But I must say that it was not easy — neither with the federals nor with the militants. In war, the situation is constantly changing. And I did not want to be limited to one side, whether federal or separatist. I wanted to be among the civilian population, to maintain my freedom of movement and freedom of expression. But I did manage to interview all the chief militants: Maskhadov, Basayev, al-Khattab. I also interviewed ordinary fighters who did not know exactly why they were fighting. They were exactly the same as ordinary Russian conscripts who had no idea why they were there, whom they were fighting and for what. This too is common to all wars. It is necessary to communicate with everyone. I do not remember exactly how I first got in touch with them. I think I got help from a former militant from the First Chechen War; he could help me during the 1999 campaign because he knew many of the militants. I call him Islam and I wrote about him in my book, *Chienne de Guerre: A Woman Reporter Behind the Lines of the War in Chechnya*, [published in France in 2000 and subsequently translated into five languages]. Shamil Basayev told me many times, "Stay with us, please." Because it was certainly in his best interest for the purposes of propaganda. But I refused. He understood perfectly. He was no fool. I told him that I would stay neither with him nor anyone else. I was there to constantly move from one camp to another, to depict the complexity of the war. In my view, working this way is paramount. Only working in this manner will allow you and your readers to see a complete and detailed picture of the war. War is always a complicated thing; who am I

This is something that words cannot convey. And no one has forgotten it. It is too tender to forget. How much time will we need to forget the war? In France, the last war ended in 1945 — that is, 70 years ago. But we still remember it. We still speak of it.

to judge who is right and who is wrong? That is not my role.

Of course, some of the rank and file militants did not immediately understand how I worked or why I was among them, why I was taking such a risk. And it really is hard to understand. Our work, the work of war correspondents, is very risky not only because of the dangers of war, but also because of the propaganda, because each of the warring sides wants to impose and disseminate its own message.

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The huge difference between 1997 and today is that back then the wars did not last for 15 years. Try to imagine: There was no war. Everyone was hopeful. The war — it means death, it means suffering, it means a diaspora of those who fled the republic for Western Europe. There is not one family in Chechnya that did not suffer from those two campaigns. This is something that words cannot convey. And no one has forgotten it. It is too tender to forget. How much time will we need to forget the war? In France, the last war ended in 1945 — that is, 70 years ago. But we still remember it. We still speak of it. We have reopened the dialog with our former enemies, the Germans, who, in turn, have done incredible work on their own, on their Nazi past. All this happened through dialog and through the work of historians — that is, everything that did not happen in Chechnya back then and everything that neither Chechnya nor Russia wish to do today. Nothing has been done to ensure that the people can recover.

I was in Donetsk, I was in Luhansk. There is no comparison there to the war that was under way in Chechnya in the autumn of 2000. None at all. Those who think that one could compare these two wars are deeply mistaken. The kind of large-scale war that took place in Chechnya is not taking place in the Donbas. This does not mean that there is no war in the Donbas. The Ukrainian side calls it an "anti-terrorist operation," the same rhetoric as the Russians employed in Chechnya. But what is happening in Ukraine is incomparable to the war in Chechnya, in which aircraft bombed the entirety of that small territory day and night. It was nothing short of carpet bombing. And even though the opposite is claimed, the aircraft did bomb the civilian population: I know because I was there, among the civilians, under the falling bombs. What is happening in the Donbas is also horrible — after all, no one knows what will happen there next — but that does not change the fact that the two situations are different all the same.

tions. The peace process has virtually collapsed — the OSCE has reduced the number of its personnel in its Assistance Group, while the Special Monitoring Commission has ceased operating altogether."

November 1, 1995: Doku Zavgayev is confirmed as head of the Chechen Republic by the so-called Supreme Council. Human rights sources point out that "this position was not provided for either by the Constitution of the Russian Federation or the Constitution of the Chechen Republic."

November 5, 1995: The Supreme Council of the Chechen Republic passes a resolution for holding presidential elections, setting the date to December 16, 1995 (the same day that elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation are scheduled to be held in Chechnya).

November 16, 1995: The election campaign gets underway. Oleg Lobov claims that the deployed troops will not exert pressure on the civilian population. According to him, the curfew will not affect the voting either.

November 20, 1995: An assassination attempt is made on Doku Zavgayev in Grozny. He escapes unscathed.

December 8, 1995: In Moscow, Viktor Chernomyrdin and Doku Zavgayev sign an agreement on the foundations and principles of relations between Russia and the Chechen Republic.

December 13, 1995: ChRI units enter a number of Chechnya's large towns — Shatoy, Novogroznensky, Achkhoy-Martan, Urus-Martan and Gudermes — seeking to interfere with the December 14–17 elections announced by Russian authorities. Armed clashes take place in Shatoy, Novogroznensky and Achkhoy-Martan.

December 13, 1995: Gudermes is surrounded by Russian Army and MVD troops.

Morning of December 14, 1995: An intense firefight breaks out between Chechen militia and Russian troops in and around Gudermes.

Over the radio, the city administration appeals for residents to remain calm and remain in place until the situation stabilizes. There is no talk of evacuating the civilian population. The city is shelled from artillery in the first half of the day. A Russian armor column pulls up to the city and also begins shelling residential areas. Russian snipers fire on anyone moving through the streets of Gudermes.

The fire is so intense that people cannot even relocate from their homes to shelters. The streets are strewn with the wounded who cannot be reached or assisted. Eyewitnesses also report seeing young children lying next to their dead parents, who could not be retrieved due to the shelling.

Water and power service to the city are cut off. Those who managed to reach their basements are forced to wait there in cold, cramped conditions, without food or water.

The residential neighborhoods near the train station, the commandant's office and the city police department are destroyed. Even the areas of the city that did not see any conflict between the Chechen militia and Russian troops are subjected to heavy fire. Thus, for instance, Russian troops shell the area around the City Hospital No. 2 which contains the sick as well as, beginning on December 14, the wounded.

December 15, 1995: Russian troops begin shelling the town of Gudermes with Grad rocket artillery. Patients of

Viktoriya IVLEVA,

Moscow–Grozny, November 2014

THE DESCENDANTS OF HADJI-MURAT

"There was no talk of hating the Russians. Young and old alike, what the Chechens felt was stronger than hate. It was not hate; it was a refusal to recognize these Russian dogs as human, and it was accompanied by such a revulsion, abhorrence and bewilderment before the casual cruelty of these creatures, that the desire to exterminate them, like the desire to exterminate rodents, venomous spiders or wolves, was as natural a feeling as the feeling of self-preservation."

Leo Tolstoy — Hadji Murat

With great pain in my heart and torment in my spirit, I write this epigraph, thinking of the state's terrible guilt before the people of my land. And before the Russian people, perhaps, in particular.

In '92, back before the war, I was in Grozny and met with President Dudayev. Besides the general-president himself, in the office with us was a boy of about 12 in a deerskin ushanka that kept slipping down the back of his head. The boy held a Kalashnikov in his hands.

"One of my relatives," Dudayev explained. "He's protecting me. Children will never betray you."

The boy treated his AK like a teddy bear — he hugged the rifle to himself, stroked it and, even, I think, whispered things in the rifle's ear. The general smiled as he looked at him.

Grozny, still undestroyed, stretched all around us.

I never went back to Grozny or Chechnya, but even what I saw in the photographs and video footage, what I heard from my journalist friends, was too much for my eyes and ears.

Then, in the autumn of 2014, exactly on the 20th anniversary of the war's beginning, I found myself in the Chechen capital. I had come to gather accounts from that time. Hardly anyone wanted to speak about those terrible events, which left their mark on absolutely everyone in the land of the Vainakhs. Those who agreed to share their memories asked me to redact their names — as if they were committing some kind of transgression.

As if it was they who had killed someone, and not the other way around.

Grozny itself is stunning to any ordinary person in its silence and sterility. It feels like everything around you is made of paper or celluloid and that you are looking not so much at a living city as at a fairly run-of-the-mill architectural model. In this city, with its unbelievably clean streets, which one really could walk safely at night in proud solitude, I could not shake the feeling of artificiality. The silence, the cleanliness seemed so unnatural.

Even the black, narrow, full-length skirts that many women wore irrespective of age, and the shawls and hijabs, all were simply screens and decorations. What was no mere ornament, however, was the palpable desire to extinguish the people's memory of the war. It is unbelievable, but in all of Chechnya there is not one monument to the PEACEFUL residents who died

City Hospital No. 2 are evacuated under fire, but casualties from subsequent days try on their own or with the help of others to reach the hospital despite the ongoing shelling. The same day sees a mass flight of refugees from Gudermes. The civilian population is forced to flee the city under heavy fire. Volunteers from the local community lead women, children and the elderly from the city, selecting the safest ways possible and offering their cars and buses to ferry the refugees. White flags (improvised from diapers etc.) are displayed on the cars. Nevertheless, according to residents, many of the cars and buses fleeing the city — as well as people fleeing on foot — come under fire from helicopters firing machine guns and rockets. The gunships hover at a low altitude, meaning that the pilots can see that there are women and children walking down the roads. As a result, there are many casualties among the refugees.

December 17, 1995: The surgical ward of Gudermes City Hospital No. 2 is completely destroyed by missiles fired from helicopters. Another hospital on ulitsa Kuybysheva and a nearby mosque also come under intense shelling. According to the testimony of refugees, more than three dozen people are killed at the mosque.

December 14–17, 1995: Elections in Chechnya, held by the pro-Russian government headed by Doku Zavgayev are accompanied by widespread fraud and irregularities.

December 18, 1995: The Central Election Commission of the ChR announces a voter turnout of over 60%. Doku Zavgayev is elected president. Critics of the elections point out that no voting took place in 200 of the 300 Chechen settlements.

December 18, 1995: Russian aviation conducts airstrikes against Gudermes. According to eyewitnesses, by this time, the majority of the Chechen militia have left the city, but there are still many civilians, most of them elderly, sick or wounded in the basements, who have had no one to help them evacuate.

December 19–20, 1995: Russian troops occupy Gudermes and commence cleansing operations in the city.

December 25, 1995: At a press conference, the Russian commander in Chechnya, Lieutenant-General A.A. Shkirko announces the number of civilian casualties in Gudermes: 267 people. In the opinion of human rights activists, which is based on the analysis of evidence about the victims in different areas of the city, this figure is significantly lower than the true one.

December 29, 1995: Yeltsin appoints a new head of "security, the rule of law, the rights and freedoms of citizens, protection of public order, crime prevention, and disarmament." Meanwhile, Lieutenant-General Vyacheslav Tikhomirov is appointed commander of the now temporary Joint Forces. Human rights sources point out that "the replacement of General Shkirko with Army General Tikhomirov, who according to the decree is formally subordinated to General Kulikov, foreshadows the coming intensification of hostilities."

Early January 1996: The new head of the OSCE mission in Chechnya, Tim Guldimann, announces that full-scale talks between all the parties will be required for peace.

Night of December 31, 1995: Russian troops based in Khankala celebrate the New Year by shooting every weapon at hand: automatic rifles, machine guns, and APC and tank mounted mortars. Bursts of machine-gun fire cut the

during the two Chechen wars. Their exact number, their names, remain unknown to this day. There is a monument to the Chechen police, a piece of which is made of ancient Chechen headstones. In the '90s, under Dzhokhar Dudayev, these headstones were collected from all over the republic and used as the foundation for a memorial to the Stalinist deportation of 1944. Later this monument was demolished. Now the headstones have been used to commemorate the police...

There is no monument to those who disappeared either.

There's not even one to the children.

There is nowhere to sit down and weep.

And nowhere to bring a flower to.

I stopped by the National Museum — and found nothing dedicated to the events of 20 years ago.

"We do not need to remember that war," a girl-visitor told me.

"Why not?"

"Because that war was with Russia."

It seems that someone has forgotten that people in the Caucasus live long and do not know how to forget.

All the accounts below are given with minimal details; instead of names, there are only the filenames from my voice recorded. I think that it will be easier this way for everyone involved.

Taking pictures in Chechnya is uncomfortable: On the one hand, people turn away so as to obscure their faces — on the other, you yourself feel defenseless as you get out your camera.

All these photographs were taken in the autumn of 2014.

File A0120000

The morning of the first bombings, I ran to the square in front of the Council of Ministers building [during the Soviet years, the SovMin building; as of 1991, the presidential palace]. Everyone was there, protesting.

I said, "Can I say something?"

"Sure, sure. You're Russian, okay, so speak in Russian."

I said, "Mr. Yeltsin, when you were running in the election, you received almost 100% of the Chechen vote. Now you're thanking Chechnya like this? By dropping bombs on our heads? For what?"

I addressed the women too, "Dear Russian mothers, don't let your sons come here. For the money that they've been promised, your sons are being crushed by tanks. Don't let them — lie down in their way. Don't let them come here."

None of it helped.

File A0130000

The bomb struck a crowd of people at the market. The young men were standing there, changing currency, dollars. Women were selling dresses and bread. My sister ran off to see it. She came back horrified: a bloody mass of people, without arms, without legs, without heads. Horror! Later it happened again, after we had gone to Shali, the same tragedy. In the middle of the day — no — it was closer to evening, in the center of the Shali market, again a similar missile. Very many people died on the spot. The men spent the entire night digging graves because there was no other time — with the day came the shelling. So they dug at night and buried people at night. Our neighbor too — he was there at the market — he was hit by a piece of shrapnel, it tore his kidney. He was taken to the hospital — but it was being bombed too — the wounded kept coming in with even worse injuries than his. His people dragged him home with the IV and all, right on the gurney over the fence. Meanwhile, we spent all night in the basement. It was a nightmare. The children and the elders. The house was big, its basement reinforced, prepared for any emergency. That was something really terrifying."

File A0110000

They told them that there weren't any Russians here in Chechnya whatsoever. And they believed them. One day, Valentina Nikolayevna, my acquaintance, went out of the basement to collect some water, and a soldier came running up to her: "Mother, grandma, where are you from? Are there really Russians living here?"

She says, "As you see me before you. We live here."

Later she went deaf — a shell hit her apartment as she was sitting on a stool in her entryway. The explosion ruptured her eardrums. Now when she comes over to watch TV, we turn the volume all the way up. She graduated with honors from two Moscow universities.

File V0100000

Grachev said that his birthday is on New Year's Day and that whoever takes the presidential palace will have a reward from him. And so the airplanes from the airport began to CONSTANTLY fly sorties over our house. As soon as I hear one, I swallow two tranquilizers, while my teeth chatter from terror. You just sit there and hide your head in your

power lines and a part of Grozny suffers power outages during the night. Six people, including a girl, are killed as a result of the "holiday" fire in Grozny.

January 4, 1996: According to human rights activists, Maskhadov orders the cessation of all attacks, provocations and acts of terrorism in the rear of the federal forces (though other sources dispute this fact). However, General Tikhomirov is adamant: "I do not comment on the statements of bandits," he tells reporters. In a speech on "the presidential TV channel, Dudayev says that he will not allow the war in Chechnya to end, even if Russia wants it to."

January 9, 1996: Militia units under the command of Raduyev, Israpilov and Atgeriyev (about 250 people in total) attack a military airfield in Kizlyar, Dagestan. The operation, writes *Caucasian Knot* has been planned in advance: "On December 22 (according to other sources, December 23), 1995, ChRI President Dzhokhar Dudayev ordered field commanders Raduyev and Israpilov to plan and execute a military operation to capture the military airfield of the Dagestani town of Kizlyar. According to information available to the president, eight helicopters were to arrive at the airfield on January 8–10, 1996, carrying ammunition and unguided missiles. According to Dudayev's order, four helicopters were to be destroyed and the rest transferred to Chechnya. The militants act similarly to the terrorist attack in Budyennovsk. However, not everything goes according to plan. When they are unable to hold the airport, the militants retreat into the city and take refuge in the hospital with more than 2,000 hostages. Their demand is the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya.

January 10, 1996: Following negotiations with Dagestani officials, the invaders release most of the hostages. Taking more than 100 people with them as human shields, the militants leave Dagestan. Under the agreement, the Russian leadership was to release Chechen hostages in Chechnya. However, there arose disagreements about the interpretation of the agreement. "The feds believed that upon reaching the village of Pervomayskoye, the hostages would be released. Accordingly, they planned to commence an operation to eliminate the militants as their convoy of buses crossed the bridge over the Aksay River. [...] The convoy arrived at the federal checkpoint in Pervomayskoye around 11 a.m. and headed towards Chechnya. At this time, a message was received over the radio that the bridge had been blown up. The convoy stopped [...] while a police car that had been escorting it drove ahead to verify this information. Almost immediately, the car was attacked by missiles fired from a helicopter. The convoy returned to Pervomayskoye where its rearguard, Turpal Atgiriyev's unit, entered the checkpoint and disarmed the Novosibirsk OMON personnel manning it."

Thus, the militants did not release their hostages and added the OMON personnel to their number.

January 10–14, 1996: Federal forces besiege Pervomayskoye. By that time, the village residents have all been evacuated. "The militants forced their hostages to fortify the village. The hostages were forced to dig trenches. Some of them, in spite of the cold nights, were forced to remain on the buses in order to prevent attacks on the terrorists' positions."

Following negotiations, a small number of hostages is released.

January 15, 1996: According to *Caucasian Knot*, "There are reports that the militants have shot (according to

lap. Like an ostrich. We sat and sat like that, shaking the entire time. Meanwhile they kept flying and bombing, one after another. Everything was in ruins and potholes.

File A090000

What did you want the most during the war?

Peace, silence, warmth — ordinary warmth, to get warm finally. Because the entire time, everything was cold. And the entire time was terrifying. The syndrome of the war lingers in my soul to this day.

File A0270000

My mother and sister lived in a subdivision. The tanks went in there, shooting in every direction. One evening, mom sat down on her bed, fell over and died. My sister got some snow from the yard, washed her as best she could, shrouded her in a blanket and wrapped her in a quilt and buried her right there in the yard. She managed to get out. I didn't know a thing about it. We had absolutely no contact. The last time mom called was on December 16 — and that was it. I never heard her voice again. I went out there in the spring. I show up and someone asks me, "Where are you going?"

"To see my mom."

"Your mom is gone."

Here I realized that my mom was gone forever. I sat down numb, as though paralyzed. Later I started walking. The entire way all the houses were empty and destroyed. Everything was silent — no one out but cats and dogs. I was walking and bawling as hard as I could, screaming "Mommy."

They decided that they would open all the graves that were in the yards, exhume all the bodies and transfer them to one common grave. And when they told me that they would bury my mother in some unmarked grave, I lost my sleep completely. Later it turned out that it was possible to bury her right outside of the cemetery, since the cemetery itself was too full. I went there and found gullies that had been dug out. Two were already covered and had two wooden boards over them with numbers. The third one was still half open with bodies inside. I was still there when a dump truck drove up. Women in masks did the work, throwing the dead into the gully. The smell was terrifying...They unearthed mom's grave in the yard, exhumed her. She was wearing a dress and slippers. We wrapped her in a clean sheet, placed her in a casket and covered it with a white shroud. I had these very pretty blue silk curtains. We used them to upholster the casket, added some white fabric inside and fashioned a pillow. The soldiers welded a cross and I painted it. Then, on a plaque, I wrote "Vera Safronovna Petrova" and her date of birth. And I planted a cedar there...

File S0120000

In Stariy Achkhoy, the women and children had been evacuated, while the men dug trenches and took up positions in the trenches. We had relatives there, and so my son went there to bring them some cigarettes. He was stopped at a checkpoint. The soldiers led him into their tent, took away all these cigarettes, removed his denim jacket that he was wearing, and gave him some other military one, black like a prisoner's. They beat him for three days, asking him: where are you going, why are you going there, where's Dudayev? Then they let him go — he was bedridden with an IV afterward. His whole face was black.

How is he now?

Now? Now he is dead. They killed him during the second war. Some girls found the body while wandering in the woods — they were collecting cones, the sweet-sour ones that grow in the mountains. This was not far from the village of Valerik. An old man washed him in a creek, wrapped him, reburied him and left his shoes on top so that he could be found later...

So you don't even know the date of his death?

No, I don't know it. In October, I consider each day to be the one he died on.

File A0070000

Tell me, did the government arrange any kind of evacuation of people from here?

No. Each time, I had to leave on my own.

Maybe the government offered some kind of humanitarian assistance?

No. Absolutely none. During the first military campaign, they started giving us humanitarian assistance, once the bombing had ceased and an administration had been reestablished. And during the second campaign, the military provided assistance. For example, they would give us barley porridge. Well, and they gave us certificates too. I have this interesting one that states that I was discovered in a basement and therefore wasn't a militant.

How long did you spend sitting in, living in the basement?

Maybe, if you add it all up, we spent about a month sitting down there during the first campaign, and 56 days during the second one.

Without leaving?

I would go out. The grandmas didn't go out.

What did you eat?

We all had some flour and we would bake really basic pancakes on a baking pan.

In the basement?

Yes. There was a Chechen oven in the basement.

And you baked bread in the oven?

Yes. And ate pickled tomatoes.

What did you want more than anything? Something sweet? Sugar?

Silence. Honestly. Nothing else. I was so skinny when I came out. I wanted

various estimates, between two and seven) Dagestani elders who came to them for negotiations and six other hostages who were police officers. Attempts to resume negotiations are not successful and the Russian commanders decide to storm the village of Pervomayskoye using helicopters, tanks and armored personnel carriers, despite the possibility of casualties among the hostages." Federal troops storm the village with heavy weapons. Over the next four days, the village is completely destroyed. In the end, only a small number of hostages is released.

January 16, 1996: Twenty-nine workers from the energy industry are kidnapped in Grozny.

January 18, 1996: Thanks to diversionary maneuvers by Basayev's unit, the militants holed up in Pervomayskoye manage to escape the village and take their hostages into Chechnya. The process of freeing the hostages continues for another month, until February 19.

Late January 1996: In a letter to the Russian State Duma, Chernomyrdin blames the ChRI leadership for the breakdown in talks. He also claims that the elections have revealed the true balance of forces in the republic — that Zavgayev enjoys popular support.

January 31, 1996: Tikhomirov describes the talks under the auspices of the OSCE as a fatal mistake, the situation in Chechnya as being under control, and the Chechens fighting federal troops as nothing but gangs numbering 40–50 people without a unified command. The federal forces, according to Tikhomirov, are planning special operations.

February 4, 1996: Supporters of independence start a series of protests near the presidential palace in Grozny, calling for the withdrawal of troops.

February 7–8, 1996: The protesters are blockaded by the police with trucks and armored personnel carriers.

February 9, 1996: Three grenades are fired from an RPG into the rally. The shooter is unknown. Three people are killed and seven are wounded.

Evening of February 10, 1996: The rally ends following talks between the rally organizers and the MVD.

February 11, 1996: Russian commanders suggest that residents of the village of Oyskhara (Novogroznensky) hand over their weapons and clear the village of militants. On the same day, the village is shelled. The commander of the North Caucasus Military District, Colonel-General A.V. Kvashnin, claims that federal troops were not involved in the shelling and that the incident will be investigated. According to the commander, Russian forces are capable of wiping the village from the earth in a mere thirty minutes if they so will it.

February 15, 1996: The presidential palace — the symbol of resistance in Grozny — is demolished by Russian troops.

February 17, 1996: Russian troops storm Oyskhara (Novogroznensky).

February 19, 1996: General Kvashnin claims that the entire civilian population has fled Oyskhara (Novogroznensky) along the two corridors provided by Russian forces and that there are only militants remaining in the village. Residents who have fled the village dispute this claim. According to *Agence France Presse*, at least 50 civilians have died in Oyskhara (Novogroznensky).

February 20, 1996: Russian troops enter the village and begin cleansing

silence. I didn't want to eat anything. I still have notes I took during the war. Everywhere you look, I wrote: "I want silence. I want silence. I know the Eighth Wonder of the World — it is silence." How I love silence! Though, everyone says that I'm very loud.

Weren't you scared when such silence came?

No. After all, they weren't shooting.

Did you have the feeling that they would return? And shoot some more?

Of course. I knew that it would happen again. And it did. They shoot from every kind of weapon. "Babababoomba...boom-ba!"

Do I understand correctly that there were no announcements made to civilians telling them to leave the city? Like a flier dropped from the air saying, "Citizens, go away because there will be hell here?"

Of course not. Everyone was on their own.

File A0170000

During the first war, there were some soldiers stationed here. They were young: 18 to 20. They would come by and ask, "Do you have any milk, mother? Mother, do you have something warm to eat?" I had a large household back then. God knows I felt sorry for them.

Does that mean that they weren't fed?

They were fed but, it seems that it was some kind of dry food. I don't know. I don't want to talk about what I didn't see. I simply felt sorry for them.

Were any zachistkas [cleansing operations] conducted in your house?

There were. There were.

So what is a zachistka? What does it entail?

At any time, day or night. I basically stopped locking the doors because they would just bust them down with their rifles anyway. One time I awoke at night because I felt something cold — and found a barrel touching me right here on my neck. I open my eyes — two big dimwits are standing there. I think, "That's it! Let it be God's will." It was scary.

And what did they do that time?

Turned everything upside down, took my camera, and an ancient silver belt that my husband had from a Chokha. I had held onto it all that time.

(Second woman): She had a chest. An ancient chest. She kept her things there.

(Interviewer): Couldn't you ask, "Why are you taking my things?"

Oh God no, God no!

(Second woman): Tell her how they hollered at you, "Lie down, bitch!"

File A3300000

During the second campaign, on November 23, I think, I saw my neighbor, a young man, get killed. He sprinted a few meters away from me and it hit him right on the head. A terrible noise that deafened me. I look at him and I see that half his face is gone. And he's all covered in blood. I'm just standing in a stupor, unable to understand or remember anything. People are yelling at me from the basement but I can't understand, I can't hear. "Over here! Over here!" I can't hear. I can only understand that he is no longer. But he just was. I had come out of that door. He had come out of the neighboring one. And in two seconds, he was gone.

Did you hate the Russians back then?

No. Never. You know, I have to tell you honestly, I would even like it if you published this thought of mine — that the Chechens have far less hate towards the Russians than the Russians have for us. Having survived so many hardships during the wars, we, the Chechens, haven't forgotten anything, but we also, I think, have a very high tolerance for people. All the people of the Caucasus are very tolerant. It's like we have a virus of mutual respect that lives in our blood, our DNA. I say this in general; there are of course those who hate Russians.

You call it tolerance, but I think that this isn't tolerance. I would call it something else. I would call it knowing how to agree. Here in the Caucasus, there are many different ethnicities living on a relatively small piece of land. And there are very many different, very different languages and cultures, so you have nothing else to do but find a way to live together. As for us [the Russians], we've always been few and spread out across vast space. We never had to learn how to find agreement. We could always up and move a hundred kilometers away — and live however we wanted.

File B034000

There was a branch of the railroad that passed nearby. The authorities settled the refugees right in the train cars — two thousand people in forty cars. They lived on the shelves and had no way of bathing or doing the laundry. Many of them passed through our house. We had a large boiler with a bath and running water. They would do their laundry here and bathe. The train cars were heated. The conductors would live there with them in these cars. I think they lived there until fall — from spring to fall. Their children went to my school. I remember that we treated them a little better because it was difficult for them — to live in the train cars instead of at home.

How did they get by?

They received humanitarian aid. The Danish Refugee Council set up an office here. The International Red Cross was also here. One time some Russian deputy showed up, walked around, asked questions. But in general, as far as I can remember, it was only the international organizations doing the work. The only Russian organization I remember was called *Druzhba* — it was just a woman from St. Petersburg — but I can't remember if they handed out food or not.

File A029000

I stopped reading posts from Ukraine once I understood that what we lived through here was much worse. I don't

operations. The next day, the command of Russian forces in Chechnya, announces the completion of the operation "to eliminate gangs" in Oyskhara (Novogroznensky). According to Defense Minister P.S. Grachev, of the 250–300 "militants" in the village, 200 have been killed. According to human rights sources, this figure of casualties among ChRI fighters is extremely overstated and most likely includes all casualties killed. This is especially probable as the defense minister made no mention of the civilian casualties.

February 20–21, 1996: The villages of Alleroy, Tsentoroy, Bachi-Yurt and Noyber (Suvorov-Yurt) are shelled by artillery. There are casualties killed among the civilians who have not managed or did not wish to leave these villages.

February 22, 1996: The village of Bamut comes under attack. A battalion from the 693rd Motor Rifle Regiment of the 58th Army tries to enter the village through the Ingushetia-Assinovskaya Gorge. The same day, soldiers from the same regiment pick up a mentally disabled local resident named Sharip Batayev, b. 1964, who is on his way to the Arshty. That is the last time he is seen alive. His body will be discovered on March 20, in a shallow grave located within 5 km of Arshty, at a location that was used as a base by the reconnaissance company of the 693rd Motor Rifle Regiment. Traces of torture, including fractures of his hands and wrists, are found on the exhumed body. The man was killed with by a gunshot to the back of his head.

February 23, 1996: The battalion is stopped and forced to give battle 3–4 km outside Arshty in Ingushetia.

February 26, 1996: At the request of Ingush President Ruslan Aushev, Russian forced begin to withdraw from the Assinovskaya Gorge.

The death of Dzhokhar Dudayev. Spring 1996.

Early March 1996: Tensions mount near the village of Sernovodsk, which is besieged by federal forces.

March 2, 1996: An agreement for a peaceful solution around the village is reached. Most of the ChRI units, formerly located in the village, leave it. The agreement is to be signed the next day at 10 a.m.

March 3, 1996: At 5:45 a.m., in violation of the agreement and without prior warning, three columns of Russian troops enter Sernovodsk and, according to HRC *Memorial*, open indiscriminate fire from small arms, artillery and helicopters.

According to eyewitnesses, the first victims in the village become the passengers of a car that comes under fire from armored personnel carriers (three men are killed; one is injured). At 7:30 a.m., the remnants of the village militia open fire on the Russian troops. Following this, Russian troops retreat from the village.

Without engaging the village militia, the Russian troops begin to systematically shell Sernovodsk and the resort to its north, using artillery and mortars, while helicopters conduct airstrikes. At the time, in addition to the village residents, there are many refugees located in the resort. The "corridor" for villagers fleeing the village is opened only on the following day. As a result, there are civilian casualties — at least 45 killed (including a teenage girl, 17 women and 12 men older than 55) and 68 wounded.

Human rights activists point out that the safe-passage corridor goes into

want to say that people have it easy there — they are also suffering — but there's no comparison. When I read yet another post from Ukraine that says, "Oh, do you know what is going on here?" I simply think — if only you knew WHAT HAPPENED HERE!

File A2800000

I lost a relative, a young man, during the war. He was two meters tall, a blue-eyed, blond, medical student. He was screaming, "I'm a student!" He had his academic records, his passport, his student ID in his hands. They simply led him out and shot him. That was the St. Petersburg OMON. There were soldiers traveling ahead of them. As they passed us, one said, "Hide that boy — there are animals coming behind us." But there was nowhere to hide him. They shot him around the corner. And I just want to look the one who killed him in the eyes and ask, "What did you kill him for?" I understand that, probably, there are thousands of Russian women who want to do the same thing. When a person is being led to the firing squad, the least he can demand, is to know what he is being killed for.

File A029000

Do you know how we had to go through a passport check? I traveled to work in Ingushetia every morning. And there was this checkpoint named *Kavkaz*. It was nothing short of a box office: They were simply collecting tribute. And God forbid if you had some random mark in your passport — like, let's say, your kid scribbled something in pencil. That was all it took. That would grounds enough to be removed from the bus and detained. When the bus reached the checkpoint, all the men would get off — it was really very humiliating — and each one had his passport checked carefully. It took a long time. We, the women, who remained on the bus, would simply gather ten rubles per passport and that was it...

File A260000

I am very fond of wildflowers. The summer of 2000 was sweltering, everything was parched. And suddenly some flowers bloomed in a ditch, near the Red Veterans' corner. They were these really pretty chrysanthemums. So I climbed down there to gather some. Suddenly I hear cursing from the roof: "Shit! Don't move!" It turned out that the ditch was mined. One more step and that would have been it. I stopped, someone came, did something there, and suddenly a guy appeared — probably the same one from the roof. He climbs down into the ditch, gathers some flowers and offers them to me. "Here," he says, "these are the ones you wanted, right?"

[...]

One day we were returning through the trolley depot. Truly terrible fighting had occurred there. We were walking on foot and, bam, we aren't allowed to go any further. And there's a sign hanging there that says: "Halt! Do not pass. I will shoot." And the "do not pass" is spelled as one word. I'm no Russian teacher, but I still know Russian fairly well. And that "donotpass" just stung my eyes. Well, later, they let us pass through after all. So we're walking, and I say, "'Not' with a verb is written separately." And the boy at the checkpoint replies, "What's a verb?"

File S131000

We could to tell that the assault on Grozny was under way because of all

the airplanes flying overhead and so we immediately hid our candles under the table.

What candles?

Well, there was no electricity so we were using candles for light. My granddad was always complaining, "Put the candles away, put them out this instant." We had a feeling that if they saw the light they would bomb us too. So we crawled under the table with the candles, and when the noise from the airplanes was gone, we'd crawl out again and replace the candles on the table.

We slept in our clothes, just to be ready. We were scared. I had this quirk — I would sleep with my toothbrush. One time during an airstrike, we ran out to the street in our clothes and I had the toothbrush with me. I remember later thinking, "Well, I saved the most valuable thing!" As for my passport, I don't ever take it out of my purse to this day. That's a habit I developed from all the passport checks at the checkpoints.

File A028000

"We left the village before the assault. I was 17 and had no passport. They would accept birth certificates though. They already knew that most of the youth didn't have passports. Back then you'd need a lot of money to get one. A passport cost 2,800 rubles. Our authorities, the ones who'd issue the documents, would only accept dollars, not rubles.

They wanted bribes to issue an ordinary domestic passport?

Yeah, like it or not, but you had to find dollars. How were we supposed to find them? So they had no choice but to allow us to pass with just a birth certificate.

We returned three days later when the bombing ended. We dug graves with tractors. Lots of people had been killed. I helped pull the dead out of basements and vegetable gardens. They'd been killed with grenades, covered with earth, doused in gasoline. Sometimes it would be no more than just pieces of human flesh. We would look at the hands and fingers to figure out if they were men or women. Or the legs — we'd look to see if they were hairy or not. Jaws, eyes...

You did all this? As a boy?

Well what can you do? You start doing it automatically without any thought — it's okay — your body stops responding to it, you stop feeling nauseous.

Do you have dreams of the war?

No. Never.

What did you want more than anything?

effect only on March 4.

March 6, 1996: Chechen units under the command of Ruslan Gelayev attack Grozny. They end up seizing the majority of the city. Russian troops suffer casualties. Heavy weapons and helicopters are used against Gelayev's men. The shelling spreads to the residential areas as well.

March 8, 1996: Chechen units under the command of Gelayev retreat from Grozny, taking with them more than 100 civilians. The shelling of the southern neighborhoods continues. According to HRC *Memorial*, over 500 civilians die in the fighting.

March 10, 1996: Fighting breaks out over the village of Bamut.

March 14, 1996: Russian troops (MVD and elements of the 58th Army) besiege Samashki, the location of a large Chechen force and the place where the defenders of Sernovodsk had retreated to.

March 15, 1996: Russian troops begin an assault on Samashki. Approximately half of the village's 12,000 residents have not fled the village during the two hours allotted them. People take cover in those houses that have good basements. This saves the majority of them from the massive and indiscriminate shelling of the village. The Russian forces fire from small arms and mortars, leaving basically no houses standing. During the assault, Russian soldiers use civilians as human shields on at least two occasions, taking people, among them women and children, from the basements where they are hiding from the shelling and placing them on their armored personnel carriers or forcing them to walk ahead of them. According to some of those who were forced to be human shields, they were in mortal danger if the Chechen militia were to open fire. After the Russian forces reached a certain point in their advance, they released the captured civilians. In the occupied part of the village, the Russian troops tried to commence with a cleansing operation, which was however interrupted by members of Khizir Khachukaeyv's unit tasked with defending the village.

March 17, 1996: Russian soldiers again use Samashki residents as human shields. In the morning, they are defending a house at 2 ul. Rabochaya, in the basement of which the residents of several houses — approximately 30 women, 8–9 children, 8–9 elders and several middle-aged men — have taken cover from the shelling. These civilians are led out onto the street and arranged in front of the armored personnel carrier. The human shields enable the Russians to advance about 300 meters. Reaching the canal that divides Samashki into east and west, the Russian unit stopped. The armored personnel carrier that the human shields had covered was placed into a shelter behind a building. At this point, the commander issued the following order to the civilians: "Disperse!"

On the southern outskirts of Samashki, during a cleansing operation in an area under their control, Russian soldiers commit a premeditated attack on civilians. About 40 villagers who had taken cover in the house of Mukhadin Malachiyev (16 ul. Kalinina) are led out to the courtyard. After searching the house, the Russian soldiers leave the courtyard and lob three grenades into it. As a result, 18 people are wounded (among them 9 women and 2 children). For Bakisat Elsanova and Shayman Gichiyeva, the wounds turn out to be fatal. On the same day, Russian troops again employ civilians as human shields.

Evening of March 17 and morning

I stopped by the National Museum-
and found nothing there dedicated
to the events of twenty years ago.

To get a good night's sleep. To just lay down and sleep. Everything else was whatever.

Do you know how people would sleep? In their clothes, ready to go. Ready for everything. Always. No one ever got undressed. Even children. Everyone was on alert.

A0150000

How old were you when the war began?

Twenty-three.

And where were you living then?

In Grozny, in subdivision No. 2.

And it all caught you unawares?

Yes, of course. There was a lot of talk and anxious talk. But everyone stubbornly refused to believe that something bad could happen to us.

Did you want Chechnya to be free?

How can I put this — I never participated in any of those movements. Back then we took pride in how peaceful our region was. We thought that we had very good lives.

So does that mean that you did not subscribe to or understand Dudayev's ideas?

No. Absolutely not. We didn't want any revolutions. Our family never condemned Soviet power. If things had happened, they had happened. Grandma would tell us about the hardships she had faced, but no one ever accused anyone. She would recount how the soldiers would help or offer advice about what things to take with her. How one soldier told her, "Take your sewing machine. It will come in handy." On the other hand, we did commemorate the day of deportation every year. I remember even that there were some kind of rituals. We were forbidden from collecting water on that day. Some words would be said in commemoration.

Speaking of memory, I am astonished that in the republic, there is not a single monument to the civilians who died.

There used to be such monuments. People would erect a tall pipe of a steely color and hang a flag atop it. When we saw such a pipe, we would know that this was for a person who had died during the fighting.

And now?

Now they're gone. They were removed. There is a collective grave in Grozny, where both Russian and Chechen soldiers are buried. It's at an ordinary roadside. EMERCOM dug a deep a ditch, 200–300 meters long and several meters wide. They would transport all the corpses there and dump them in there. Now there's nothing there. A factory is being built...

Was there any kind of animosity?

No. As strange as it sounds, there was no animosity. There was fear — that I remember very well. In August 1996, I experienced my first bombings. It was a nightmare that stayed with me for a long time. When we returned to our subdivision, in October of '96, I couldn't remain anywhere — not in the apartment, not on the street — without being afraid. I couldn't sleep. I kept imagining that at any moment it could all start again. It was a horrible fear. There was no anger, though.

File S013000

What does it mean to become a refugee all of a sudden?

We didn't imagine we would become refugees. I mean, really, how difficult could it be for the enormous Russian army to establish constitutional order as they liked to call it? Later we began to understand that these were only brave words, and the actual facts were quite different. Then there was a feeling of emptiness and it seemed as if time had stopped. I was 23 and I had certain plans that I wanted to pursue. Instead, I was forced to reorganize everything in my head, by force. I could see that nothing would happen, that nothing would come true like I had wanted it. It was complicated. It was empty. We thought only about how to survive and whom we would see from our neighbors, friends, relatives...

Was it possible to communicate at all?

No. Not at all.

File S230000

Today, if you recall the war, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

I lost my father during the war and because of it. My father was kidnapped. After the first war, people started trading people.

Your father is a Chechen?

Yes.

I thought that only people of another faith would be kidnapped...

No, of course not. Chechens would be kidnapped too, in order to be ransomed.

How was he kidnapped?

He was going to work or from work — I don't remember exactly now. Along the way, he was carjacked and they started driving him away. But they didn't get far because he put up a fight. They shot him right there on the road, right in his own car. I suspect that dad simply pushed them to the point of killing him so that there would be less problems for us and so that he wouldn't be humiliated.

Were there many such kidnappings?

Hundreds, I'd guess. You'd hear about it all the time — here a kidnapping, there a kidnapping...

Why do you believe that the kidnappings were related to the war? Were there no kidnappings in Chechnya before the war?

of March 18, 1996: Chechen militants defending Samashki lead village residents out to the southern outskirts of the besieged village and open negotiations with the Russian commanders about allowing civilians to flee the combat zone.

Morning of March 19, 1996: A helicopter conducting an airstrike against Samashki fires a missile at a gathering of civilians awaiting permission to pass through Russian checkpoints. One person is killed and six or seven are wounded. Only following this incident do the Russians start permitting people to leave the village.

March 20–22, 1996: Russian aircraft drop thermobaric bombs on Samashki, while artillery and tanks conduct massive shelling of the village. Chechen units, however, break out of the encirclement without suffering heavy casualties and leave the village. All told, 35 civilians and 45 militants die in the fighting.

March 28, 1996: At 8 p.m. Russian aviation conducts airstrikes against the settlement of Katyr-Yurt in Achkhoy-Martanovsky District. The bombs fall on the Khazhgeriyev household, which is well-illuminated and located in the very center of this large village. Nine people from one family become the casualties of the airstrikes.

They are Abdul-Kagir Khazhgeriyev, 38, his pregnant wife Zareta (who was about to give birth), 25, their son Dukuvakha, 6, and daughter Yakha, 2, Aset Khazhgeriyeva (who was in her fifth month of pregnancy with twins), 18, Khava Khazhgeriyeva, 13, Zelimkhan Khazhgeriyev, 11, Zavalu Saydulayev (a nephew), 7, and Grozny University student Aslan Gaygirayev, 18.

April 2, 1996: The Protocol of Peace and Agreement is signed by federal forces, the government of D. Zavgayev and the village of Shalazhi, located 40–50 km south of Grozny.

April 3–4, 1996: Russian aviation conducts airstrikes against the village of Shalazhi, causing civilian casualties and destroying dozens of homes.

April 4, 1995: According to HRC *Memorial*, after a 16-day-long bombardment, Russian troops enter the village of Goyskoye, having suffered 64 men killed, 150 wounded and 16 MIA over the course of the fighting. In the following days, however, they are forced to retreat. The Chechen side meanwhile loses 26 men killed and 63 wounded. The fighting over Goyskoye began at the end of March. The Chechen commander was Akhmed Zakayev.

Early April 1996: General Vladimir Shamanov's First Mobile Group is conducting combat operations in Vedensky and Nozhay-Yurtovsky Districts.

April 16, 1996: Amir ibn al-Khattab's unit destroys a column from the 245th Motor Rifles Regiment on a mountain road between the villages of Yaryshmardy and Dachu-Borzoy. HRC *Memorial* writes that "the federal forces lost 95 men killed (of them, 26 officers) and 54 wounded. Only 13 soldiers made it out of the ambush unharmed. The column was attacked in Shatoysky District, which D. Zavgayev had referred to as a peace zone after signing agreements with the local village administrations."

April 17, 1996: RF Minister of Justice Valentin Kovalev claims that the Russian leadership cannot hold talks with Dudayev who "is the subject of criminal proceedings" and offers Dudayev to voluntarily appear before a Russian court.

April 19, 1996: According to human

Of course there weren't.

What about under Dudayev?

No, that didn't happen. Perhaps there were some isolated incidents, but it wasn't a large-scale phenomenon. During the war, people got the sense of lawlessness. And the system itself — it didn't protect individuals because there was a more pressing, larger problem — the war, the militants. Each person, it followed, had to look out for himself and take care of his own security.

File S250000

We were very scared that they would come and kill and humiliate us. You weren't guilty, but you knew that they would find a reason to punish, humiliate, kill, rob you.

I frequently hear here this word "humiliation," which doesn't normally crop up that often. Everyone mentions humiliation. How was this humiliation expressed? How were you humiliated?

I had to leave my own home. Walk out and leave, when I didn't want to do anything of the sort. That's humiliation.

That's humiliation for you?

Of course. It's such a feeling of helplessness. You cannot live where you want, in your own home. And you're not guilty of anything at the same time.

It's strange, I think that a Russian person would not call this humiliation. Many other words could be used — it's obvious that this is horrible. But it couldn't be humiliation.

When someone does something against your will — for me, that's humiliation. And for my community it's humiliation. Humiliation is when someone comes to you, inspects you, searches everything, doesn't ask you for permission, and you're forced to explain yourself, smile and avoid provoking any aggression. You can't be indignant. You have to try as hard as you can to present yourself in the most positive light possible and convince them that you aren't dangerous — and it doesn't matter what they say to you or that they're rough with you, swearing, scolding, demanding, extorting money or something else. Or they accuse you: "Where are the men? Did you fight?" And you have to exercise self-restraint and smile and turn everything into a joke, while walking a tightrope the whole time.

Did you ever find yourself in such a situation?

Of course.

File A220000

I got lucky. I only found myself in a zachistka twice. I was living in a neighborhood where they didn't happen much. The soldiers came into our house — I think they were some elite unit because the young men seemed dashing and were two meters tall, Slavic-looking, as if they'd been specially selected — healthy and handsome the whole lot. And they simply did their job. There were no lewd glances, there wasn't that creepy feeling that you, as a woman, are the object of someone else's desire. Or to be more precise, it was there at first, but then it went away.

They simply spread out throughout the entire house, rummaged around through everything, did their job and left. That was a good feeling — like a fear that even turns into something like gratitude that they had just left like that. Because I was alone in the house. And I didn't know what I would do, helpless, against a whole horde of men.

They rummaged through your things?

They didn't rummage in any things because we didn't have any things. Everything was empty. Bare. You could examine all our possessions with one glance...They spent more time looking in the yards, the basements, the more hidden places where something could be secreted, maybe something dangerous.

File A290000

They thought that everyone here had been preparing for war and that we had therefore made all these pickles in advance. But we have families, large ones, and everyone is always coming over or going to someone else's house. We would make a hundred jars of pickles for our family alone — tomatoes, cucumbers etc. Those pickles saved a lot of people during the hungry times.

What did you want the most during the war?

I wanted to return to where I lived. To see everything that was familiar. To my neighbors, my friends...I wanted to see each person and rejoice that they were alive.

File D130000

Water was a big problem in Grozny. We spent half the day at the university studying, if you could call it that, because they would periodically declare an air raid alert. And the rest of the day we would spend delivering water to apartments. We would mount canteens under the gutters and pray

rights sources, during a speech in the Duma, Defense Minister Grachev admits that federal forces in Chechnya were not notified of the Russian president's peace plan.

Night of April 21, 1996: A missile strike near the village of Gekhi-Chu kills President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria Dzhokhar Dudayev. According to one version of events, writes HRC *Memorial*, "when Dudayev got in touch with State Duma deputy Konstantin Borovoy, Russian aircraft locked onto his satellite phone and conducted a precision strike using homing missiles." Under the ChRI Constitution, Vice-President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev is Dudayev's successor.

April 23, 1996: At a meeting of the State Commission for the Settlement of the Chechen crisis, Chernomyrdin says, "We never said that there should be restrictions to the fight against terrorism. The UN Charter provides for the concept of 'peace enforcement,' which can be applied in this case. We will pursue the tactic of peace expansion combined with a stringent use of force." The same day, State Duma Chairman Gennady Seleznyov says that the Duma is preparing an amnesty resolution for members of illegal armed formations in Chechnya, who have committed serious crimes.

April 24, 1996: Gen. Tikhomirov tells reporters that federal forces are not involved in Dudayev's death. According to Tikhomirov, the assassination of the ChRI president is "an internal affair of these gangs." An unnamed source in the MVD, however, makes comments to the press that Dudayev was killed in retaliation for the militants' recent destruction of a military convoy near the village of Yaryshmardy: "During April 21 and 22, missile and bomb strikes were being conducted in the mountainous areas of Chechnya against 6–7 Dudayev's command headquarters." At the same time, Akhmed Zakayev, Dudayev's national security aide, declares that the entire peace process is now in question. Meanwhile, in Grozny, the first session of the Coalition Council takes place. The Council is tasked with uniting the various political parties and movements around Zavgayev. This does not happen, however. Instead, the Council becomes opposed to the Zavgayev government. On the same day in Argun, a ChRI detachment seizes an MVD office without any fighting, disarms its personnel and makes a successful retreat.

April 25, 1996: At 6:40 a.m., Russian aviation bombs ChRI forces blockaded in Shali. As a result, there are civilian casualties, both wounded (up to 29) and killed, as well as considerable damage to the village buildings. When village officials attempt to arrange an evacuation of women and children, Russian forces at the checkpoint open fire on the vehicles being used by the refugees. The shelling wounds nine local residents, including two children. Later, one of the women dies from her wounds.

April 25, 1996: Russian aviation attacks the village of Chishki, despite the fact that village officials had recently signed a protocol of peace and accord with Zavgayev's pro-Russian Chechen government. According to village officials, one woman is killed and two other residents are wounded. One month earlier, the village was also subjected to airstrikes, in which civilians were among the victims.

May 3, 1996: Grozny residents detained in Khankala are convoyed to Grozny. They include V.U. Mezhidov (b. 1958), V.N. Scherbina (b. 1974), V.D. Gayev (b. 1939), M.A. Edanbiyev (b. 1958), Kh.E. Dzhamankhanov (b. 1966). All of them were detained on

that it would be clean. Because the rainwater would be dirty and you couldn't drink it. It had this strange aftertaste. And we would make corn porridge. We would add extra pepper to cover that aftertaste.

File A260000

During the second war, many people fled to Ingushetia. We were renting a room from some strangers. There were many of us in there, all relatives who had nowhere to go. It was boring and cold, but you couldn't remain indoors either. There was no space whatsoever. You couldn't turn around. In the morning we would go out and have no idea what to do with ourselves. There was a theater there that would put on free concerts for the refugees. It would always be packed full of people from Grozny. And we would go there seemingly to watch the show, when really we wanted to see each other, talk to each other. The show would be going on, while in the audience there'd be sort of like a roll call under way: who's from where, who knows whom, who has what news...There wasn't any information, nothing was organized and no one knew anything. There were only rumors and gossip. There weren't any telephones. And we would go there for that. "Well, what's new? What'd you hear? This one they killed, that one they killed." We survived on that. And it helped. It was harder for those who had fled to an isolated place where there weren't any people to commiserate with. We got lucky that there were many of us and we constantly supported each other. The strangest thing was the inaction and idleness. Because you don't know what to do with yourself from the despair.

There is this parable about Lot and his wife. They were fleeing Sodom, the city that God had punished and promised to destroy, wipe off the face of the Earth. But Lot was righteous and the Lord told him to take his wife and kids and leave without looking back. They left, but Lot's wife turned to look. And God turned her into a pillar of salt. For many years, I didn't understand the significance of this parable. I just thought it cruel. I kept thinking that God is love, so why then was there this cruelty here? Why turn a woman into a pillar only because she turned to look back at her home? And only after talking to refugees did I understand that God saved her from her memories. From the most difficult thing. And so that she wouldn't sow the same thing among her relatives.

I agree. My first lock of gray hair appeared during the war. You go away and you understand that you are saying goodbye to the city and its residents who are like your own family. You see the military convoys going in, while you're going out and you understand what will happen in there. And later, you are talking and listening to all these horrible tales about what happened and how, and you think, why am I alive? Why is it I am hearing this? Why don't I die from all of this that I am hearing? How much must my heart see and hear for it to break? And you understand that there is no end, no limit to it. What do I need it for? I don't want any more. Your imagination is enough to understand and accept that which you hear. Because people cannot do this, but they do it anyway. Then you think, why haven't I died or become petrified or turned into a pillar of salt?

File A140000

It seems to me that many people came here to fight because of helplessness. They had a wife and kids to feed. And after all, the pay here was good. And if they had only drunk less here, stayed more sober, then probably it wouldn't have been that bad...

Were they constantly drunk?

If you are 18 and you are brought here on December 31, on the eve of the assault on Grozny, then if you don't start drinking right away, you simply won't get out alive. December 31 before the presidential palace was a massacre. Afterward, the civilians had to go around gathering both the Russians' bodies and the Chechens' bodies piece by piece.

File A520000

The war took one of your sons and broke your other son psychologically, since it was impossible to come through it unharmed. Are you still angry?

I'm not angry per se, but I often think about how Russia periodically exterminates its own citizens. There is always some group of bandits that doesn't agree with the state — it's not just a Chechen thing. But why is it that it works out this way? I'm not angry: I'm nonplussed. After all, I hadn't done anything. I never taught my kids anything bad. So I can't understand why...

From the memoirs of a resident of St. Petersburg, a retired senior sergeant of the marines. (Recorded in St. Petersburg in the summer of 2011.) The plane with the marines landed in Grozny on December 31, 1994 — right before the assault on the city. The marines were told that this was going to take 3–4 days and that they were just going to be helping out a little. The marines believed them. The senior sergeant, who was a little over 20 then, believed that all they would do was show up, arrest everyone, take them somewhere and go home. Here is what came later:

April 30 at the checkpoint in the township of Voykova in Grozny. On the way, Khanpasha E. Dzhamankhanov dies from beatings. The other four prisoners are also subjected to beatings and arrive in critical conditions. In those days, another Khankala detainee, a certain Mr. Kushparov, was also beaten to death.

May 4, 1996: Yeltsin announces that he will visit Chechnya. At Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport, Beslan Gantamirov is detained and taken to the Lefortovo remand prison. The Prosecutor General's Office accuses him of embezzling federal funds allocated for the restoration of Chechnya's economy.

May 6, 1996: Russian troops enter Shali unopposed and conduct a search during which they discover no Chechen units in the city. Yet another "peace protocol" is signed with local leaders.

May 7, 1996: At approximately 3 p.m., helicopters conduct airstrikes against Urus-Martan. Several residents are killed and wounded. A. Askhanov, the representative of the pro-Russian Chechen authorities, states that five helicopters took part in the airstrikes.

Evening of May 10, 1996: Four Russian helicopters conduct more airstrikes against Urus-Martan. As a result, one city resident is killed, eight people are seriously wounded (four of them children) and seven houses are destroyed.

Night of May 11, 1996: Russian helicopters conduct more airstrikes against Urus-Martan.

May 10, 1996: Acting ChRI President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev announces that he is ready for a dialog with Russia, albeit only with those members of its leadership who officially declare their uninolvement in Dudayev's death and who have the authority to impose a moratorium on military operations.

May 17, 1996: The State Duma passes a resolution of amnesty to persons involved in the armed conflict in the Chechen Republic.

May 23, 1996: Russian soldiers complete the encirclement of Bamut. The village is occupied the next day. Ruslan Khayrokhoyev's detachment, which has been defending the village, manages to use the twilight and the heavy fog to escape.

May 24, 1996: The Russian government confirms its agreement to hold talks between Yeltsin and Yandarbiyev.

May 25, 1996: Gen. Tikhomirov announces that following the seizure of Bamut "there are no longer any significant pockets of resistance by Dudayev's forces. This is another step towards negotiations without any preconditions."

May 27, 1996: Acting ChRI President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev arrives in Moscow at the head of a Chechen delegation. He is accompanied by the head of the OSCE mission in Chechnya, Swiss diplomat Tim Guldimann. The start of negotiations in the Kremlin is marked by an incident when Russian President Boris Yeltsin, sitting at the head of the negotiating table, attempts to seat the delegation headed by Yandarbiyev across from the pro-Moscow Chechen leader Doku Zavgayev and members of the Russian delegation. Dzhokhar Dudayev's successor refuses this outright, offering Yeltsin to meet "one on one" instead.

In his turn, the Russian president rejects this proposal. The verbal sparring continues for several minutes and Yandarbiyev threatens to turn around

After several days, I was sent to the command point with a message. The CP was a few blocks away, but reaching it and remaining alive was only possible by way of basements and the sewage system. I descended into the first basement and saw people, women and men, sitting on little couches along the wall. They had put their hands out open before them so that I could see that they posed no threat. It was well-lit down there — they had torch lamps going — and I remember there were ovens made from bricks. I began walking past the people as they sat with their hands before them, quietly watching me. It was the same thing in the next basement. Afterward, I climbed through a manhole out to the street, crawled to another manhole, tumbled into it — and found it stuffed full of dead bodies.

We entered some empty apartment. It was already pillaged. A birdcage was hanging in its center. In it lay several burned parakeets. They had burn lines along the middle of their backs. I actually felt worse for animals than people there. I imagined that the people could find a way to get out, but the animals couldn't. When I was working in the kitchen, I had a three-legged dog and two cats. There were also many rats there. People come to us from the basements, bringing their kids who had been bitten by rats.

We had this chief medical officer who would read us lectures about how to manage our mental state. He would tell us that we had to always keep our minds occupied with something, didn't matter what, so long as we weren't thinking about THIS. He would make booklets and forced us to memorize jokes and poems.

We were sent as reinforcements to the Lenin collective farm. There used to be a poultry farm there during the Soviet days. You could go there, buy a chicken and have it butchered right in front of you. There was a demolished monument there — the plinth still had the chieftain's feet on it. I recognized them by the shoes and the remnants of the cape. We started a fire in the evening. I fell asleep next to it with my machine gun. I was already a junior sergeant by then, a dogged warrior. I wake up — everything around me is flashing and booming. If I had gotten to my feet, they would've ended me, so I crawled toward a nearby pit we had dug. Then I heard Chechen voices. I dived into the pit and a few moments later, they began to throw the dead on top of me. One corpse was lying across my legs, just like that. I don't know how long I was in there until I heard Russian voices. Later they told me that more than a day had passed. I wanted to yell to them that I was in there, but I couldn't say a word. I climbed out like that, in silence. As I began to come to, I finally whispered to them: There are people there in that pit. Their answer was, "There are people here everywhere." After that I was taken to a tent, examined, had my knees knocked on, my eyes shifted left-right, my head twisted — then they sent me back to my unit. Later the commander told me that he had reckoned me a goner.

One day, I spied a dead little soldier. He was lying in the street with a spoon in his hand. There was a tank standing in the place where his head had been. It's impossible to describe a crushed human.

There was this one OMON squad. We called them the "Japanese squad" because their eyes were shaped like that. Anyway, their checkpoint was something sumptuous — draped with rugs and full of VCRs and crystal glass. They lived like kings.

The burned bodies were first wrapped in a shiny material that resembled aluminum foil, then doused with rubbing alcohol and some kind of gunk. Then the air would be pumped out. I saw them do it many times. And there was a specially-dug ditch, full of dead bodies, and you couldn't see the bottom. And you couldn't see their faces; it was all just bodies in down jackets and camo.

The homeless would frequently do the burying. Bums that had come from I don't know where (but there were many of them around). They would be issued masks and they would collect the bodies and bury them in the courtyards. Another time, we were near a destroyed church, and some people were unloading caskets from a truck, and we kept joking that those were for us maybe.

I don't owe anyone anything, and I don't need anything from anyone. I did my duty and I live the best way I know how. I don't ask anything of anyone and the less people remember out me, the easier it is for me.

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "Chechnya?"

Dirt. Impenetrable dirt and an absence of water. That's how we would tell greenhorns apart from veterans — they were all clean, while we were all smelly and overgrown.

Did you feel hate?

No. There was no hate. No one really wanted anything particularly bad to happen there. More likely, it was me who wanted something bad to happen to them. In the end, it was we who went there, not vice versa. Things worked out the way they did on their own, like they always do in the army, in a war...

and leave if the meeting does not take place on equal terms.

In the end, Yeltsin is forced to change his seat to face Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, and the meeting continues in an extended format with the participation of all members of both delegations.

The talks result in the signing of the agreement "on ceasefire, the cessation of hostilities and measures to resolve the armed conflict in the Chechen Republic." The negotiations are resumed the next day. An agreement about the cessation of hostilities is reached on June 1, and another agreement about the exchange of prisoners is reached within two weeks.

May 28, 1996: Leaving the ChRI delegation as de facto hostages in Moscow, Yeltsin flies to Chechnya where he congratulates Russian military personnel on their victory. He returns to Moscow the same day.

May 29, 1996: The ChRI delegation returns from Moscow. According to HRC *Memorial*, Maskhadov orders ChRI units over the radio to refrain from active operations.

May 31, 1996: During a passport check in Shali, federal soldiers detain 14 civilians and policemen. Human rights sources write, "In response, a ChRI unit attacks a checkpoint near the village of Shuani and captures 27 MVD soldiers."

June 3, 1996: Russian aircraft bomb Chechnya's Nozhay-Yurtovsky District.

June 4–6, 1996: Talks between the Russian and Chechen delegations are underway in Nazran. HRC *Memorial* writes that "the ensuing agreements provide for the de-blockading of settlements and roads, the withdrawal of federal troops, the exchange of prisoners and persons forcibly detained, the closure of filtration points, the disarmament of Chechen troops, and only after that, the holding of elections."

June 9–11, 1996: The Nazran talks draw to a close. According to the discussed and agreed-upon military issues, all Russian military checkpoints on the roads are to be removed between June 11 and July 7, the disarmament of all militant forces is to take place from July 7 to August 7, and federal troops are to complete their withdrawal by August 30. On its way back, the Chechen delegation hits landmines that have been laid in the road. Several people are wounded as a result of the explosions.

June 14–16, 1996: Elections are held in Chechnya for deputies to the ChR National Assembly as well as for the president of the Russian Federation. HRC *Memorial* reports that the elections are riddled with massive irregularities and fraud. Since none of the candidates receive an absolute majority in the presidential elections, a second round is scheduled to take place. Gennady Zyuganov comes in second after Yeltsin, while General Alexander Lebed comes in third.

June 18, 1996: Lebed is appointed presidential aide on national security as well as secretary of the Russian Security Council.

June 28, 1996: The 245th Motor Rifle Regiment begins to pull out of Chechnya, as has been provided for under the withdrawal plan. On the same day, a bomb explodes at a Nalchik (Kabardino-Balkaria) bus station. Six people are killed and about forty are injured. Later on, Khaykhoroyev — who had earlier disappeared from Bamut — will be found responsible for the attack.

Early July 1996: Russian Security Council Secretary Alexander Lebed meets with the commander of the Joint Group of Forces in Chechnya, General

LETTER TO GROZNY

An uncommon chill, a few anxious days of unpleasant events, and as this terrible week winds down, the death and burial of an old friend...

I thought, I'd get some rest, some sleep. And suddenly, oh Grozny — more shooting, more death! I browse Facebook endlessly: watch videos, look at photos, read comments and messages from my Grozny friends. I can't understand a thing (well, like anyone else), even after reading the official reports! The long-suffering House of Print and School No. 20 have been occupied...

I wanted to make sense of it all first, calm myself and only then sit down to write, but I realized — no! Now. This very instant! Let it lack any logical, any temporal order. I'll start from wherever and stop only once I've run out of strength.

Why do I delve into these events? Why can't I live my modest life, the life of a woman who is no longer young? Probably because I could not do it back then, 20 years ago. I remember everything well. Some people, some details of my everyday life before the war have faded from memory, but everything that followed December 1994 still lingers before my eyes.

My dear Zainap, my dear Fatima — we lived through so much together! I am glad that you are in Europe with your children and that no one threatens your lives any longer. Maret, Taita — how worried I am about you, how I yearn for you to have peace and tranquility! Ayshat, Baudi, Khamzat — I sometimes ask myself: Does the news of further deaths, of further fires, reach you up there in the heavens? Thank God, you are forever beyond their reach!

I wrote about Dr. Ayshat, the chief physician of the charitable women's hospital; I wrote about a Russian family — Gennady and Lyudmila — who left after the first war and settled in Novosibirsk where they dreamed of returning to a peaceful Grozny. Gennady didn't live long enough to see it. It's unlikely that Lyuda will go now.

I am afraid that I won't go either...

I'm no Groznyean and I never saw the former garden-city, but sometimes I forget that and compare the city with my friends and express my views on Grozny today — a city that will never again be invested by that former, singular, now-lost spirit.

The first time I saw the city it was already in ruins and still the war raged around it, destroying it further and further beyond repair. By the time it finally ended, there was nothing left to destroy.

I remember our trips to Ingushetia, when it was too dangerous to stay in Grozny. How I loved those islands of safety! Finding shelter in Makhachkala or Nazran, we slept peacefully, we were almost happy...then the troubles began in Ingushetia, in Dagestan too.

And again I understood little about what was happening, I just felt sorry for the people I met there: children without fathers, mothers without children...I went on working as a psychologist in Chechnya and Dagestan.

I have been to many places, I have seen a lot of things. My worldview would change several times a week. I saw terrible destruction. I worked with child victims of anti-personnel mines, children who had lost their arms or legs and sometimes both. And I despised the federals! Yet whenever I'd return home, I'd hear stories like those of a major from the SOBR special police, stories that treated of the deaths of friends in Chechnya, and I wouldn't know whom to believe, whom to pity.

I got used to arriving in Chechnya and discovering that a few more friends had vanished and tightening my headscarf that much tighter — as salvation, as a symbol that I was on their side. In their peaceful hometowns, mothers wept receiving letters of condolence. In Chechnya, crowds of them wandered everywhere, no longer afraid of anything: looking for even just the bodies of their children. In 1996, we were working with the military and I was soulsick for our boys. They were so thin, so poorly equipped, so cold. And then later I was soulsick for those whom they killed.

At the Ingush branch of HRC *Memorial*, I met a young man who had been snubbed by his fellow servicemembers because he could not kill women and children. He showed me burn marks from cigarettes on his body. That's how they punished their own!

I listened to the stories of Chechens, my peers, who had studied in Rostov and Moscow, who had friends who were Russian and therefore refused to take up arms and kill Russians. They were squatting in refugee camps and staring hopelessly into the distance.

And I saw Chechen boys who swore on the graves of their raped sisters to seek revenge forever.

We traveled a lot with colleagues, watching out for each other faithfully and tenderly. When I saw Russians manning the checkpoints, I would get off the bus and beg: "Son, let us through, we are looking for children." It was the truth. And when the checkpoint was Chechen, my Chechen sisters would get off and tell them about me: "She's one of us, she is treating our people." And this was the truth too.

I gave 10 years to Chechnya, made many kind friends, sisters, brothers. My work kept me from my own children. I would leave my son with my eldest daughter and experience unending guilt before my own family. I feel it even now.

Our own died beside us — Popkov, Chuykova, others. Alina Allo lost her leg. The Chechens were anguished about their fates. And I suffered and

Tikhomirov. According to official sources, "a frank conversation took place" and a "mutual understanding was reached."

July 1, 1996: The Chechen side announces that after July 7, it will take "defensive measures," since none of the Russian military checkpoints have yet been removed.

July 3, 1996: Boris Yeltsin wins the second round of voting in the Russian presidential elections.

July 6, 1996: The representative of Aslan Maskhadov again calls on the Russians to remove the checkpoints. Otherwise, writes HRC *Memorial*, the Chechen side will consider itself free of all the obligations it has agreed to.

July 7, 1996: The Russian side responds that a complete removal of the checkpoints will not take place until "the general situation has been normalized." Zavgayev declares that he is ready to hold talks with Yandarbiyev.

July 9, 1996: Under the auspices of the OSCE, talks are held between Yandarbiyev and Vyacheslav Mikhailov, the Russian ethnic affairs minister. Both sides express their interest in peace. But on the same day, federal forces introduce a curfew between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. in Chechnya. At the same time, the village of Gekhi is blockaded and shelled. The village has served as a base to a ChRI unit commanded by Doku Makhayev (the mastermind of multiple hostage-taking operations and explosions in Grozny). During the shelling, several civilians are killed.

July 10, 1996: Federal forces shell the village of Makhkety. HRC *Memorial* writes, "The federal command announced that federal aviation and artillery have conducted precision strikes on the headquarters of Yandarbiyev." There are multiple casualties and destroyed homes in the village. According to Tikhomirov, he has issued an order to "take all necessary measures to find and arrest Yandarbiyev," writes HRC *Memorial*.

July 11, 1996: Makhayev is killed. Also killed is the deputy commander of the North Caucasian district, MVD Major-General Nikolai Skrypnik. Meanwhile, a terrorist attack takes place in Moscow: A trolley bus is bombed, wounding five people.

July 12, 1996: Another trolley bus is bombed in Moscow. Twenty-eight people are wounded. According to officials, the attacks have "links to Chechnya." After visiting the scene of the attack, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov commands his chief of police to implement a response "against the entire Chechen diaspora in the capital," writes HRC *Memorial*. Back in Chechnya, the Gekhi operation draws to a close.

July 13, 1996: Federal troops demand the surrender of weapons from villagers in Alleroy, Tsentoroy, Bachi-Yurt and Khosi-Yurt. The villages are blockaded in the meantime.

Afternoon of July 14, 1996: On Minutka Square, the 101st MVD Brigade fires on a patrol vehicle of the pro-Russian Chechen police. Earlier at the same location, a serviceman from this brigade had been killed by an unknown assailant. An APC arrived to answer the emergency call. Without investigating the situation, the soldiers open fire on the assumption that ChR MVD personnel are militants. As a result of the shooting, a teenager is killed and two women who were in the store Luch are wounded.

July 14, 1996: Yeltsin issues Presidential Decree "On measures to stabilize the activity of state agencies in

Abdulla DUDUEV

HE STAYED YOUNG FOREVER

We met for the first time at the Chechen television station in June of 1994. I was doing my practicum there during my sophomore year of college. I was almost 18, while Bilal Akhmadov and Alvi Zakriev, having already completed their first two years, were respectively four and three years older. All three of us were so fascinated with broadcasting that we would remain at the station long after our practicum ended. We worked for the news. At the time, new developments were breaking at a blistering pace — even by today's standards. The protests throughout the republic were growing every day. The feeling that we were witnesses — in our case, the storytellers — of truly fateful events was at once stimulating and encouraging.

The TV station in Kirov Park became our home; we spent our days and our nights there.

Bilal was the most talented, the most erudite and decisive. On top of that, he was more charismatic than Alvi and I too. He was always rushing onward into the thick of it. I remember with what great difficulty we dissuaded him from his insane idea to go to the lair of the opposition, which had already been armed by the Russian government — to Nadterechny District where a correspondent for republican televi-

was afraid that we were next. Yet I always came back.

Little Makka, whom I would take home with me for several years, would go to bed with a large kitchen knife. Surprised, I asked, "Why?" And she whispered back, "What if THEY come?" Then I embraced her and assured her that THEY wouldn't come here.

In the refugee camps, children would ask me, "Do you live in a house?" I felt ashamed, as if it were I who had deprived them of their homes, and I would stay and live with them in the tents.

My last trip took place in the summer of 2010. I was leading a seminar on ecology. Skyscrapers were being built in Grozny, a new avenue, a new concert hall and many more wonderful things. I recalled the films about the first Young Communists who would build cities and I felt fortunate that I too could see a beautiful city rising before my eyes. With every passing hour, I fell deeper and deeper in love with it!

And then my friends started getting some strange text messages...They had found the bodies of Natasha and Zarema. How we had hoped that they would return alive! The mood grew tenser and tenser. Everyone around me was speaking Chechen and I knew that that only happened when they did not want to trouble me. There were two Frenchwomen at the seminar; they were constantly admiring photographs of the Chechen wilderness, dreaming of going there sometime. We were put in a car. The route we took seemed oddly long and suddenly I realized that we were at the airport in Ingushetia. And that was how we departed — without our belongings — I to Rostov, the girls to France. As for my friends who never left Chechnya even during the two wars, they too soon left for Europe.

I am often invited to Grozny, frequently for important reasons. Yet I do not go. I do not know present-day Grozny and I don't understand why it needs me or why I need it.

I peruse the photographs, joyfully recognizing the familiar streets, admiring the palaces, the new buildings.

My dream is to see those Chechens who now live in Western Europe walk those beautiful streets.

I want to walk down an avenue, meet those who are now in heaven and embrace them! Sometimes I hear their voices, their greetings. Sometimes I feel their affectionate embraces so vividly that tears come to my eyes.

I wish you peace and happiness, Grozny!

Yours,
Lyuda Pavlichenko
December 2014

the Chechen Republic."

July 15, 1996: Rocket attacks are conducted against the villages of Stariye Atagi and Shalazhi. Some residents suffer injuries and several homes are destroyed. In the north-western suburbs of Grozny, two APCs open fire on three cars. Thirteen people are killed. Russian troops announce the defeat of Chechen separatists in the villages of Tsentoroi, Alleroy and Bachi-Yurt.

Mid-July 1996: Vedensky District residents Khadzhimuratov and Gabayev are illegally detained at the detention center in Khankala. Shamil Basayev and Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev learn of the detention of these people and offer to release ten Russian POWs in exchange for them. Officials from the pro-Moscow Chechen administration also appeal for the immediate release of Kadzhimuratov and Gabayev. As a result, both men are released.

July 17, 1996: Russian aviation conducts airstrikes in the vicinities of Shatoy and Vedeno. At a meeting of the Commission for the settlement of the Chechen conflict, Chernomyrdin declares, "Over the past six months we have eliminated an unconstitutional regime that threatened the territorial integrity of Russia"; "there are no longer any active hostilities underway"; "the opposing side is guilty of aggravating the situation, having made the initial provocation in contravention to the peace agreements signed in Moscow and Nazran."

July 27, 1996: Ethnic Affairs Minister Mikhailov, the head of the federal delegation, announces that "no negotiations with representatives of the Chechen opposition will take place, until their side publicly condemns terrorism."

July 29, 1996: An attempt is made on Aslan Maskhadov's life. The Russian military and the Zavgayev government describe the assassination attempt as "a consequence of internal Chechen disputes."

July 31, 1996: The military confirms that Russian aviation is conducting "airstrikes in the south of Shatoysky District against clusters of pro-Dudayev forces." Human rights sources point out that Zavgayev denies this information the same day. Speaking from Moscow, he claims that federal troops have conducted no combat operations for eight days already, and that the situation in the republic is moving toward stabilization.

August 5, 1996: People detained in Grozny during a raid and thereafter held at the base of the MVD's 8th *Rus* Special Forces squad in Khankala are released. The detainees were subjected to repeated beatings. At least one of them, Bauddin S. b. 1955, residing at 24 ul. Vyborgskaya, township of Chernorechie, Grozny, was extorted for his car by an officer from the squad.

Morning of August 6, 1996: ChRI units enter Grozny. According to HRC *Memorial*, the day before, despite rumors about an impending assault, "more than 1,500 military and MVD personnel — including a regiment of the pro-Russian Chechen police — were removed from roadblocks and withdrawn from Grozny to carry out operations in the village of Alkhan-Yurt." The police mount a defense against the Ichkerians but are forced to retreat from the city to the safety of Russian military bases. Fighting breaks out in the center of Grozny, causing many civilian casualties. The House of Government, the MVD and the FSB buildings are surrounded. Federal forces attempt a breakthrough from their military base in Khankala but fail. The city is shelled with heavy artillery. Due to low

Aslanbek DADAYEV

HE WAS FILMING HIS FIRST FOOTAGE OF THE WAR

My friend Bilal Akhmadov was one of the first journalists to die during the Russian-Chechen war. His name is at the top of the list on the monument to journalists who were killed in this war, which we set at the foot of Mount Elbrus in 1996, together with Russian journalists. At that time, the last name on this mournful list was that of Ramzan Khadzhiyev, ORT correspondent for Chechnya and a Chechen himself. An armored personnel carrier had fired on his car from close range on the outskirts of Grozny. This monument to more than twenty fallen journalists had been made in two duplicates. The original was installed in Elbrussky District of Kabardino-Balkaria as planned, while the duplicate was supposed to be delivered to Grozny and erected in the city center. This task was assigned to Kazbek Khadzhiyev, the younger brother of Ramzan Khadzhiyev, the then press secretary of Aslan Maskhadov. However, for some reason, that second monument has remained at the Nalchik television station to this day.

I grew close to Bilal Akhmadov not only through our shared profession but also through our joint realization that we were witnessing historical changes. Both of us were 20 years old back then and we were so fascinated by the unfolding events that our young brains did not have time to thoroughly analyze the significance of what was happening. What we see enthralled us. The consequences were tragically unpredictable.

Anywhere he went, at work or at home, Bilal was the life of the party. He did not share the pathos and extremism that typified young Chechen men of that time. His sincerity helped him in any kind of situation. We were three back then: Alvi Zakriev, Bilal and I lived together in an apartment on ulitsa Rozy Lyuksemburg. Alvi and I worked in the ChechechnPress state news agency, located on the

sion could easily have been torn to shreds. It was bad enough constantly getting calls to our studio from anonymous bastards who would threaten to seize the station.

After the assault of November 26, my relatives forced me to stop working for television. Because I was the youngest of my brothers, I could do nothing but submit to this decision of "the family council."

I never saw Bilal again...

But he went on, working as a journalist and cameraman.

During the December 31 assault on Grozny, he left the presidential palace against the advice of his friends and made his way to the railroad station — the location of the heaviest and bloodiest fighting.

He never returned.

Many quickly realized that he had not made it out alive from that "meat grinder" (as that night's events were subsequently called). Still his relatives waited and hoped. They could not reconcile themselves to the thought that he was gone. The very next day, on January 1, Abdurakhman Akhmadov, Bilal's father, rushed to look for his son despite the ongoing bombings and artillery strikes. He would continue his search for another four years, until a heart attack forced him to stop. In August 1998, Mr. Akhmadov's heart, the heart of a man in the full flower of his life, failed beneath the onerous suffering foisted upon him.

Bilal's sister, whom Bilal knew up to the age of three (in the photo, she is in her brother's arms, to the right) and two younger brothers, who never got a chance to meet him, have all grown up now.

They do justice to Bilal: Larisa graduated summa cum laude from the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia and now works as a jurist in a very prestigious institution; Mansur and Munir, meanwhile, are pursuing their studies at a Moscow university.

Bilal would be proud of them...

cloud cover, the use of aviation is almost impossible. Residents flee the Chechen capital.

August 7, 1996: At 1 p.m. the Grozny City Hospital No. 4 suffers airstrikes; the surgical ward, where an operation is underway, is destroyed. As a result, several patients are killed along with seven medical workers.

August 9, 1996: Yeltsin is inaugurated as President of the Russian Federation. Chernomyrdin instructs Defense Minister Igor Rodionov (Grachev had been removed from the post in June) and Interior Minister Kulikov to solve the problems in Grozny immediately.

August 10, 1996: Yeltsin declares this a day of mourning in connection with the events in Grozny. Lebed is appointed plenipotentiary representative of the Russian President in the Chechen Republic. He meets with the Chairman of the Union of Russian Muslims Nadir Khachilayev and Dagestan Security Council Secretary Magomed Tolboyev. Their discussion centers on the cessation of hostilities in Chechnya.

August 10, 1996: Finding themselves surrounded in Grozny, a group of Russian soldiers enters Hospital No. 9 and takes patients and medical staff hostage. The group is led by a certain "battalion commander Vladimir." The soldiers contact their command over the radio and request assistance. The response, however, is "there will be no help. Hold until the last man." The soldiers take up defensive positions in the hospital building. According to medical workers, they close and even booby-trap the entrances and then announce that no one can leave. Firing points are established on every floor.

At the time, there are about 300 sick or wounded patients in the hospital, as well as about 100 family members and 90 medical staff. Among them are approximately 20 children.

Khizir Khachukayev, the commander of the ChRI unit besieging the hospital, contacts the terrorists in the hospital. According to him, the hostage-takers say that if they are not fired on, they are prepared to leave. They are granted their request; however, later, the soldiers announce that they have been ordered to remain in place. The terrorists threaten to start killing patients if the Chechen militia fire on them or attempt to storm the hospital.

The terrorists who have captured the hospital maintain regular contact with their commanders. They tell medical staff that their commanders have ordered them to remain in the hospital. Small groups of federal soldiers, who have been occupying the buildings around the hospital, relocate to the facility as well. At the same time, the terrorists' commanders refuse to allow even women, children and those patients who can walk to leave the hospital. The doctors are told that only the regiment's commander can grant the unit permission to leave the hospital. The commander is located in a former driving school about 600 away from the hospital. Officers allow M. Tembulatov, the deputy chief doctor, to leave the hospital in order to personally speak with the regiment's commander, having first apprised him of this over the radio. During the meeting, the doctor asks the regiment's commander to release all patients who can walk as well as family members who are there to take care of the bedridden patients. The commander, however, only allows fifty women and children to leave the hospital. As a result, all the children and all the women who are willing are allowed to leave the hospital. Nevertheless, many women refuse to leave, afraid for the fates of their relatives and loved ones. Most of the medical staff remain in the

fourth floor of the presidential palace. Bilal worked for Chechen state television. He was loved by all.

At the beginning of the fighting in Grozny, Bilal was dashing around the republic with his camera in hand. Journalists from Russia and abroad would hang around ChechenPress, waiting to head out to the site of yet another air or artillery strike. Bilal talked his way into their company and began filming his first footage of the war.

During the assault of December 31, Bilal and I were in the basement of the presidential palace. I was helping my colleagues maintain a live broadcast; Bilal was filming from inside both the assault and, later, its disastrous consequences for the Russian soldiers. The footage he captured still shows up in various videos and documentaries.

Late that night, the basement of the presidential palace was noisy and crowded. The Chechens had fought off the first attack and were invigorated by their success. A group of Russian State Duma deputies headed by Sergei Kovalev were there along with some Ukrainian volunteers. Their conversations and chatter constantly found their way into Bilal's camera lens. Late at night, a wounded Ukrainian was brought into the basement. He died on the operating table. Oleg, another Ukrainian, approached Kovalev and told him through clenched teeth that he was announcing a Ukrainian jihad against Russia. Bilal caught all of that on tape. I remember Mr. Kovalev's reaction:

"God bless you, young man! What a terrible thing to say."

Later, in a dark corner of the basement, we reviewed the day's footage on the camera's display, not fully grasping the complexity of the situation we had found ourselves in. At any moment, the building we were in could have been bombed. Perhaps it was due to the presence of the Russian deputies that this did not happen that day.

The gunfire went on uninterrupted through the night of December 31. We could hear the ammunition exploding inside the destroyed tanks almost until dawn. That night, Bilal went out

with a group of Chechen fighters to get footage of the area around the railroad station where the worst slaughter had occurred. Burned tanks and hundreds of dead bodies. Bilal came under fire near the freight yard. His body was never recovered, due to further fighting in the area. Several volunteers offered to retrieve the body but the risk was simply too great.

For many years Bilal's family hoped that he had miraculously survived and would return home. Just like thousands of other Chechen families. Twenty years later, the dead and the missing remain in their families' memories — young and full of life. This is exactly how Bilal Akhmadov has remained in my memory as well.

hospital as well.

August 10, 1996: Russian soldiers use flamethrowers against the basements of houses located on ul. Abakanskaya in Grozny, without first ascertaining whether the people inside are civilians or not. In the basement of house number 40, at least 12 people are burned alive, among them women, the elderly and children (aged 3–4).

August 11, 1996: A Russian column breaks through to Grozny from Khankala. According to HRC *Memorial*, the Commission for the Settlement of the Chechen Crisis, chaired by Chernomyrdin, approves the military option and the introduction of a state of emergency in the country. Lebed meets with Maskhadov near the village of Stariye Atagi. They agree that all issues concerning military operations and the withdrawal of troops will be settled within seven days.

August 11 (and again on August 12 and 17), 1996: Soldiers from the MVD's 101st Brigade based in the 15th military base capture a group of men — residents of the nearby neighborhoods of Grozny — and declare them their hostages. For their release, the soldiers demand that the hostages' relatives deliver to their base either wounded Russian soldiers from a checkpoint that had been surrounded by Chechen units, or the bodies of their fellow servicemembers, or that the relatives convince ChRI militia to allow food supplies to reach the surrounded Russian checkpoints. In most cases, the submitted demands are met and the hostages are released. One of the hostages, however, Alexey E. Ptukhin, is shot. There are also accounts asserting that two other hostages are murdered.

August 12, 1996: In Grozny, Russian troops stationed in the former driving school, attempt to break through to Hospital No. 9. However, ChRI units repulse the attack. Only after that do the Russian soldiers who seized the hospital and took hostage the medical staff, patients and their relatives, decide to negotiate the terms of their release.

A meeting between the Chechen commander Khizir Khachukayev and one of the commanders of the terrorists who have entrenched themselves in the hospital takes place in front of the hospital building. Several nurses and doctors surround them as human shields. The officer agrees to withdraw his subordinates from the hospital; however, he demands a guarantee of safe passage — and he is unwilling to trust the promises of a Chechen commander. The deputy chief doctor of the hospital repeats his earlier proposal of having a portion of the hostages voluntarily surround the terrorists as human shields during their withdrawal. By 3 p.m. of August 12, an agreement is reached. Both sides promise not to occupy or shell the hospital in the future.

The Russian soldiers leave the building, surrounding themselves with the human shields — around 100 volunteers from the medical staff, ambulant patients and family caregivers. The group reaches Russian positions without incident and releases the hostages.

As the civilians who served as human shields are returning from the Russian positions, the hospital is subjected to mortar fire. At the time, the medical staff is preparing patients for evacuation to the premises of the International Committee of the Red Cross, located nearby. The shelling kills nurse Toita Kutukhanova and wounds two other nurses, two doctors and one female patient.

August 12, 1996: During the fighting in Grozny, Russian forces also took other civilian hostages and placed them

Elena SANNIKOVA

VIKTOR POPKOV WAS KILLED FOR PEACEMAKING

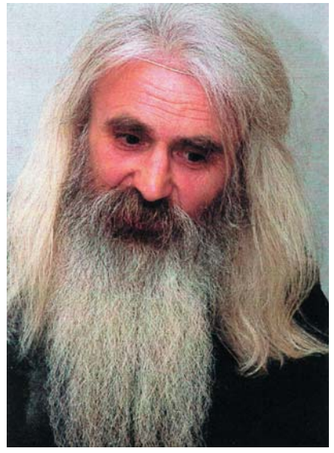
Viktor Alekseyevich Popkov was fatally wounded outside of Alkhan-Kala village on April 18, 2001. The burst of gunfire directed at him also struck Doctor Roza Muzayeva, who was to examine patients that day in the war-torn village of Yalkhoy-Mokhk of Kurchaloyevsky District. Dr. Muzayeva was saved. Viktor Popkov passed away from his wounds one and a half months later.

Many of us met Viktor Popkov in the early '90s, when he was trying to find people for *Potok Mira* ("Torrent of Peace") — the peace initiative he hoped to build. The idea was simple: If two or three hundred volunteers would go to a "hot spot" to persuade the warring parties to exercise mercy and to alleviate the suffering of civilians, it would help stop the evil or at least reduce its scale. And if peacemaking could be pursued without sparing any effort, the war itself could be stopped.

Viktor Popkov's proclamation "A Chance for All," which set out the substance of "Torrent of Peace," was signed by numerous public figures, writers, scientists and human rights activists. However, few volunteers stepped forward to go to the war zones. Small groups headed by Viktor Popkov traveled to Abkhazia in 1992–93, and later to Chechnya beginning in December 1994.

During the intensive bombing of Grozny in December 1994 and January 1995, Viktor Popkov remained in the city, recording information, aiding the wounded and working to release prisoners of war. He repeatedly took part

in the exchange of prisoners during the war and was repeatedly detained by both warring sides. In the summer of 1995, he organized a mission of observers for the negotiations beginning then. Appealing to humaneness and charity, he sought to protect everyone from death.



From the outset of the Second Chechen War, Viktor Popkov regularly delivered humanitarian aid to villages destroyed by Russian aircraft and artillery, helping the most disadvantaged — people who had lost their homes and livelihoods. After a lengthy trip to the mountain villages, from which he returned in January 2001, Viktor Popkov put off his next journey in order to raise funds for more substantive assistance: He sought to establish at least one permanent medical center, ensure regular delivery of medicine to remote places and arrange food aid for starving families.

Natasha Estemirova introduced Viktor Popkov to the village of Yalkhoy-Mokhk in the fall of 2000. The beauty of the place astonished him. But he was even more stunned by the suffering that the residents of the mountain villages had to bear. There was constant shelling, a lack of medical care and medication, a lack of food and children's clothing — such were the realities of everyday life in these villages. Without access to medical care, people would frequently die from their wounds. Many wanted to flee with their children to a refugee camp but had no means to do so.

Throughout the winter and early spring of 2001, Viktor Popkov worked on an aid program for the residents of Chechnya's mountain villages. He spoke about their situation at conferences and wrote about it. He managed to raise the funds to purchase a large shipment of medication, to purchase a car and to find a doctor willing to take this trip. At the time, Roza Muzayeva, a native of the village of Alkhan-Kala, was a refugee living in Moscow. She welcomed the opportunity to help her compatriots.

It bears mentioning that around this time, Viktor Popkov became a deeply religious man. With the blessing of his Old Believer spiritual father, he commenced his novitiate and began to wear a cassock, causing many to take him for a priest. His last trip to Chechnya began during the Holy Week — the most important part of the year for Orthodox Christians. Religious people tend to spend the Sunday that concludes this week worshiping at the temple. That year however, Viktor Popkov sought to spend Easter in Yalkhoy-Mokhk, having been deeply affected by the suffering and misery he had seen there. He considered that his Christian purpose impelled him to spend the feast of the Resurrection with those who were in dire need of assistance.

In Khasavyurt, with the help of Dr. Muzayeva's relatives, Viktor Popkov purchased a UAZ van, loaded it with medication and food, and on April 15, Easter Sunday, reached Yalkhoy-Mokhk. There he hastily equipped a medical center where Dr. Muzayeva began to receive patients, while Viktor Popkov gathered and recorded information. Dr. Muzayeva later told me that the villagers, knowing that it was Easter, brought Viktor Popkov dyed eggs as an Easter gift, even though food was scarce and they themselves were Muslims.

Two days later, on Tuesday, Viktor Popkov and Dr. Muzayeva traveled to Grozny in order to arrange the hospitalization of children in need of urgent care. But the required officials were not there (life in the ruined city was only just beginning to recover) and they were forced to stay the night with Dr. Muzayeva's relatives in Alkhan-Kala. Early on the morning of Wednesday, April 18, they set out back for Grozny in order to catch the officials as their offices opened. As they were leaving the village, a car overtook them, opened fire on theirs, and sped away. Passing through the local checkpoint unimpeded, it disappeared.

The funds raised by Viktor Popkov never did reach the residents of the mountain villages. The medical UAZ van that Viktor Popkov missed so much during his prior trips, had been in his service less than four days. The patients whom Dr. Muzayeva had begun to treat in Yalkhoy-Mokhk remained without further assistance.

The shooting of a man who had traveled to a war zone with medication and a doctor is a testament to the moral degradation that is only further exacerbated today. Anna Politkovskaya was killed for her articles on Chechnya, Natasha Estemirova for her human rights work.

Viktor Popkov was killed for peacemaking.

A year before his death, Viktor Popkov met with Aslan Maskhadov. He managed to arrange this meeting with great difficulty, and he asked Mr. Maskhadov to sign documents calling for peace and vowing to treat prisoners of war humanely. Mr. Maskhadov signed these documents — Viktor Popkov announced this at a conference upon his return to Moscow. He dreamed of achieving a negotiations process that would lead to a cessation of hostilities. However, the Russian leadership's response was firm and unambiguous: "No negotiations!"

Since then, little has changed. There are still many more volunteers willing to fight than to restore peace, and both of the warring sides hate peacemakers.

The bright memory of Viktor Popkov lives on in the hearts of many — like-minded people, opponents, those with whom he worked and those whom he helped. However, his name deserves to be more widely known. It is an injustice that it is not.

Perhaps society is not yet ready to remember the true peacemakers?

And yet, today, peacemaking is urgently needed. But will it be expressed as it should? Will people manage to impartially and selflessly stand up on the side of good — renouncing the belligerents' arguments and combatting evil with goodness, and cruelty with mercy?

The fate of the 21st century depends on how society decides this question. And also on our answer to the following question: Were the peacemaking aspirations of Viktor Popkov merely naive — or were they a missed chance for all?

in a pit in Khankala. Along with Magomed and Alimkhan Taramov (a father and his son, residing at 41 ul. Odesskaya in Grozny) four other people were imprisoned in the pit. The Taramovs are released on August 16 after their relatives bring eight bodies of Russian servicemembers killed in action to the base of the MVD's 101st Brigade.

August 14, 1996: Boris Yeltsin meets with Alexander Lebed and on the same day issues a decree that dissolves the State Commission for the Settlement of the Chechen Crisis as well as all other negotiating groups. From now on, the Russian Security Council headed by Lebed will handle the settlement process. According to HRC *Memorial*, the intensity of the shooting in Grozny falls sharply.

August 19, 1996: Around 1:50 p.m. thirty high-explosive artillery shells fall on a residential quarter of the township of Chernorechye, on the southern outskirts of Grozny. A one-story house is completely destroyed and an elderly woman is killed.

August 20, 1996: Twelve people are killed after a helicopter fires on a convoy of cars and buses carrying refugees out of Grozny. The attack takes place near the village Goyty.

Night of August 20, 1996: Residential buildings along ulitsa Griboyedova in Grozny are subjected to fire from heavy artillery. Several one-story houses are completely destroyed.

August 21, 1996: The bombing of Grozny intensifies. Incendiary ordnance is used. In particular, the five-story buildings along ulitsas Saykhanova and Ulyanova are destroyed. Russian forces are using Grad rocket artillery to shell the city. Refugees continue to flee the city.

August 22, 1996: During negotiations, Lebed and Maskhadov draft a document that provides for the disengagement of the warring sides, the withdrawal of troops and joint control over the individual districts of Grozny.

HRC *Memorial* writes, "According to incomplete data, between August 6 and 22 in Grozny alone, 494 soldiers and police officers were killed, 1,407 were wounded, and 182 went missing; 87 armored vehicles were disabled. No one counted the number of Grozny residents killed. Journalists suggest this number to be 2,000 persons. More than 220,000 refugees fled the city."

August 31, 1996: Following the meeting in the Dagestani town of Khasavyurt, Russian Security Council Secretary Alexander Lebed and Chief of Staff of ChRI Armed Forces Aslan Maskhadov sign a joint statement about how future negotiations will be conducted. This agreement will subsequently be called the Khasavyurt Accord. Federal troops begin to withdraw from Chechnya. At the same time, both sides agree to a deadline for signing a political agreement between Russia and Chechnya. That deadline is December 31, 2001.

Russian Security Council Secretary Alexander Lebed and Chief of Staff of ChRI Armed Forces Aslan Maskhadov.

December 31, 1996: The last Russian soldier leaves the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria.

Aslanbek DADAYEV

THE "FUTILE WORDS" OF LARISA RUBALSKAYA

Late December 1994. Grozny was surrounded by Russian troops. Residents languished in the anticipation of an assault. The sky was besooted, sullen, fitting of the mood. Sharip had come to Grozny on urgent business (government agencies and institutions remained open until the last moment). A friend had asked him to check on his apartment in the center of town. As soon as Sharip unlocked the door, the telephone in the apartment rang. Answering the phone, he was surprised to hear a pleasant, slightly hoarse, female voice:

"Hello? Hello? Is this Grozny? Please don't hang up. This is the Moscow editorial office of the Japanese newspaper *Asashi Shimbun*. I am the interpreter. My name is Larisa Rubalskaya!"

Sharip replied that, yes, this was indeed Grozny. It turned out that the woman was randomly dialing Grozny numbers and had called precisely at the moment when Sharip had entered the apartment.

According to Sharip, Rubalskaya was ecstatic from her luck. Sharip was astonished by such an unexpected conversation with the well-known Russian poet.

"Larisa, is it really you?" he asked shocked.

"Yes — why? Have we met before?"

"No unfortunately, but I remember your poetry very well:

Bedash a splash of conjury into the goblet's crystal gloom.

The melted candles are agleam with mirrors,

And futile words I'll wearily exhale.

Extinguished is my hearth; I did not light another..."

"My god, you've read my poetry? Could you tell us about what is happening there, in Grozny? I am calling on assignment for my editor."

Sharip spent the next hour relating the conditions in the city and the mood among its residents. At times, he would simply walk up to the window and report what he saw on the street.

At the end of their conversation, Larisa Rubalskaya spent a long time thanking Sharip for his help. She asked him to write down her number in Moscow and made Sharip promise to call her the next time he visited the capital.

A year and a half later, Sharip found himself in Moscow. After wrapping up the business he had there, he called Larisa Rubalskaya. I do not have the verbatim transcript of the conversation, but I know it was brief and went approximately as follows:

"Hello! Good day, Larisa!"

"Hello, who is this?"

"This is Sharip. You called me by chance on the eve of the Grozny assault and we spoke for a long time. You made me promise that I would call you the next time I was in Moscow. So, I am here and decided to call..."

"Yes, I remember, but...you know...don't call here again..."

Sharip is currently a successful lawyer, working the toughest cases that come his way. He still listens to romantic songs.

The words were futile indeed...

Elena SANNIKOVA

VERSES ABOUT CHECHNYA

1.

The planet will forget humanity
Forever...The twenty-first century
May perhaps never happen.

Naught but oblivion will dominate
A gelid eternity. Everything
Ends here — in the ruins of Grozny.

2.

I am wandering, I am stumbling
In darkness impassable, my boots soaked
From treading into these muddy potholes.

No roads — it's wayless. No homes — just ruins.
How will I find my way into Grozny?
You, driver, won't you help me with a ride?

Won't you tell me in detail how the shells
Came flying; how you and your relatives
Hunkered in that cold basement enduring;

How the men in the masks later burned down
Your homestead; how they led your dear brother
Away into nowhere.

Oh, would there be no rumors of children
Gone hoarse with crying, of an old woman,
How she hollered...How later at sunrise,

From a wound he had gotten, your uncle
Died suffering. With your aging mother,
Alone you survived by some miracle.

Blackened, the leaves have settled in the ditch;
Torn is the way. No, I'm no journalist —
No reporter am I.

Just assume that without any purpose
I go wandering here in the moonlight...
I've just — I've caught your scorching sorrow,

And I am drawn here as by some giant
Magnet...Don't you laugh now: I know that there
Are no fewer bandits here
Than in my dusty Moscow, than in my
Bitter country...Stop there: I'll get out there
At Berezka, just past the trash dump.

Through the wayless darkness I will wander
Alongside these trenches...Goodbye brother,
May the Lord guide you. Don't worry — I'll make it.

3.
(Explanation)

Let me not hide my feelings,
Barely audibly whispering:
What has become of me,
Chechnya, my dear?

Through an unhappy series
Of glum, overcast days,
Why do your villages strike me dearer
To me than my own native land?

The valley lies sprawling,
Wondrous are the mountains in snow...
You are wealthy with tears and ruins,
And I — I am unable to help.

The pain of helplessness gnaws
As though knives that are cutting ...
I'm a Russian after all, so what —
What have you to say to me? Speak!

Without mind, without will,
Losing their souls,
My brothers by blood
Are slaughtering you.

I can't look around,
Pain vices my temples...
Where can I hide myself
From this shame, this ennui?

Here's a light rain —
Smears on the windshield
And ruins upon ruins
Pass like ships in the murk.

My eyes I will shut and
What response will I hear?
What — what is happening to me?
Am I wounded? No?

How much blood has been spilled,
For nothing, in vain?
And I know all my suffering
Is as a drop to the sea.

A nighttime of centuries,
Of ages, ends here.
Even with my confession
I cannot help you one bit.

I will gingerly squeeze
This gray ash to a fistful.
By way of farewell — if I may —
Please accept, this "forgive me..."

4.

The sorrow won't settle
The woes won't be forgotten...
I can't scoop out the sea,
Yet I'll return once again

To this land of brief winters,
Where the frosts are mild —
Where the gray hairs are young,
And the tears are too old.

Where the mountains are high,
The sunny summer is lovely,
But where the limitless sorrow
Wears gray ashes year round.

And the sadness approaches —
Like a stone that is weeping.
While over the ruins,
A lone torch flickers and flares.

The Presidential Palace in Grozny, which became one of the symbols of Chechen resistance. Beginning on December 31, 1994, the Russian army tried in vain to capture the palace, despite the support of artillery and aviation. The palace was finally demolished with bunker busters on January 18.

Beginning in the spring of 1995 and lasting until the end of that year, the ruins of the former residence of President Dudayev became the site for numerous rallies calling for Chechen independence and the withdrawal of Russian forces. On February 5, 1996, Russian troops demolished the palace ruins.