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MUSLIM NATIONALISM IN THE POST-SOVIET CAUCASUS: THE DAGESTANI CASE

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Introduction

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union a period of national and Muslim revival began in Dagestani towns and villages. But the local economy and society still retain a number of Soviet institutions and values, such as collective/state farms, the Soviet administrative system, the general education and health services etc. Moreover, as will be shown, the formation of national communities in Dagestan was completed during the Soviet period. How can we explain the persistence of the Soviet system in Dagestan in the 1990s? Is there any connection between Soviet structures and the current rise of Muslim nationalism? And what influence might these structures have on the development of post-Soviet Dagestan?

These questions will be dealt with in this paper(**). The term nationalism is used here in the sense accepted in contemporary anthropology and history. It refers both to the mental and political process of grouping people in large congruent 'nation-state' communities. Such communities are not primordial, but rather modern ones, proper to industrial and industrializing societies (1). In the Dagestani case their social, economic, and cultural foundations, as I shall argue, date back to Soviet times. In the paper they will be defined as a Soviet legacy.

As is known, the Soviet state was always strongly opposed to any nationalist movements. Since the 1920s Dagestanis have experienced many national and religious persecutions. On the other hand, global Soviet reforms promoted the formation of national communities and a nationalist mentality among Dagestani Muslims, favouring the ethno-political integration of small ethnic groups of mountain people as well as the establishment of regular economic and cultural ties between all the zones of Dagestan.

Local and Soviet Roots of Muslim Dagestani Nationalism

Muslim Peasants in Pre-Soviet Dagestan

According to contemporary scholars, the modern ethnic and economic characteristics of the Dagestani zones were mainly formed before the XIXth century (2). The Mountains, which cover 37 per cent of the total area and comprise 21 of the 39 districts (rayons) in the republic of Dagestan, were inhabited before the revolution by Muslim Caucasian peoples. The mountain people were occupied with terrace agriculture and cattle-breeding, using the Lowlands as their seasonal pasture-lands. According to the 1926 Census the greatest ethnoses in the Mountains were Avars (176.3 thousand), Dargins (125.7 thousand), Lezgins (112 thousand), Laks (39.9 thousand) and Tabasarans (31.9 thousand) (3).

There was also a dozen ethnic minorities, their languages being of the Nakhsky and Dagestani linguistic group. These consisted of a single large village (such as the Archi, Bezhta, Botlikh, Kubachi, Khwarshi, Tindi) or a few relatively small neighbouring ones (such as the Bagulal and Chamalal). Before the Russian conquest the mountainous ethnoses formed ethnoterritorial, economic and military leagues (so-called 'free communities' or 'bo' in Avar and 'khuravo' in Dargin). The Avar 'bolmats' (common tongue), Kazi-Kumukh (future Laki) and Guney (Lezgin) patois were used as tools of communication between them (4).

The Lowlands occupy 51 per cent of Dagestani territory, and this is where its 10 modern districts are located. Before the revolution this area belonged to Turkic-speaking Muslim farmers and settled cattle-breeders. Both mountain people and lowlanders formed the mixed rural population of the Foothills, which lie in central and northern Dagestan. The third region now comprises 12 per cent of the republican area with 8 districts. Through the Foothills lowlanders have maintained close economic relations with the mountain people since the XVth century. But administratively all three zones of Dagestan were united only by the pre-revolutionary Russian and subsequent Soviet authorities. Between 1922-1923 and eventually in 1957 the north-eastern Muslim and non-Muslim regions of the Dagestani Lowlands (the former Terskaya Province [oblast'] in tsarist Russia) joined the republic.

Three great Turkic peoples, the Kumyks (88 thousand), Nogays (36,7 thousand) and Dagestani Azeris (8,5 thousand) had kept their dominance in the Lowlands and the Foothills by 1926. At that time the Russians used to call the lowlanders by the name of their most powerful ethnos 'Kumyks'. For the same reason the common name of the mountain people in tsarist Russia was 'Lezgins' (5). In fact rural Dagestan had no ethnic and linguistic unity up to Soviet times. Only Muslim scholars (alims) in all three zones of the country were linked to the living literary Arab language (lugat al-fuskha) and religious culture. Most of the Muslim villagers did not know the language of their Russian conquerors before World War II.

In spite of the growth of towns and rural migrations away from Dagestan under tsarist rule, rural Muslim ethnoses continued to live in ethnically homogeneous laterally separated communities. The strict endogamy of rural communities (jamaats) and even peasant clans (tukhums) preserved their ethnic identity. The serious reasons for the continuity of local traditions were the economic autarkia of villages and the self-government of a large number of them. Dagestani jamaats could live secluded, inward-turned lives because of their diversified subsistence economy, whose general structure was a combination of farming, cattle-breeding, gardening and often handicraft industries in peasant households. At the turn of this century a peasant family usually reserved two thirds of its household production for its own consumption and sold the rest (30 or 40 per cent) in the local rural markets and fairs regularly held in the largest villages, such as Khunzakh, Botlikh, Akhty, Kumukh, Kubachi, Aksay and others. These were economic and political centres in the countryside.

The 1868 Code of native rural communities upheld the status quo in the social organisation and traditional law of Dagestani Muslims. Up to the mid-1920s Russian officials ruled over the natives by means of local oral courts, which consisted of village alims and kept most of the norms of the traditional (adat) and Muslim (sharia) laws (6). Strong ethnic rivalries and quarrels over land both among jamaats and between mountain people and lowlanders prevented the national consolidation of all Dagestanis in their struggle against the Russian conquerors in the XIXth century. Therefore the semi-religious union of mountain people created by the Muslim brotherhood (tariqa) Nakshbandiya in Shamil's liberation movement and later during the great uprisings in 1877 and in 1918-1921 was reported not to have lasted. After their defeat the mountain people were again separated into former conflicting local communities (7).

Ethnic and Social Transformation of Muslim Villages Under the Soviet Reforms

The abolition of local peasant institutions began only in the late 1920s. In 1927 the Bolsheviks suppressed rural oral courts all over Dagestan. Income and charity collections (waqf, zakyat) for village mosques and the teaching of Arabic by village alims were persecuted. By these drastic measures all the traditional leaders of rural ethnic groups became outlaws. The most active of them were victimized between the 1920s and 1940s. Besides the thousands who were arrested and killed, the families of village elders, mullahs (dibirs) and those who participated in the resistance to Soviet power during the Civil War were forcibly deported from Dagestan several times after 1927. This deportation was suffered by about two thousand peasant families and tukhums, as so-called 'kulaks' (8).

After these social and religious persecutions the Soviet regime started the drive to full collectivization: earlier in the Lowlands (in 1929-1930), later in remote regions of the Mountains and the Foothills (in 1934-1939). Collectivization was accompanied by the mass resettlement of mountain people from districts with land hunger and a considerable surplus of the population into the Lowlands and the Foothills, which had better land and a smaller population. Before World War II 1,157 thousand hectares of the best lands from the former landlords (pomest'ya) and fiscal (kazennyye

zemli) estates in the Lowlands became the property of small mountain collective and state farms. In the 1940s, after the liquidation of malarial areas in the Tersko-Sulakskaya lowland, Soviet rulers organised the resettlement of mountain volunteers and the former nomad No-gays to this region. This resettlement programme lasted up to the early 1970s. According to the 1970 Census approximately 200 thousand Muslim peasants (or 40 thousand households) had been resettled. They founded 76 new villages, a large number of which sprang up from the former seasonal cattle-breeding hamlets of mountain people (kutany, kazmalyar) (9).

A large number of settlers' villages (auls) were formed in two typical ways. Either a single jamaat organized a new village with its own ethnic culture, language and name, or several auls belonging to the same ethnos sent their settlers, who formed a village with a more unified ethnic culture and language (10). Novye Khwarshini, Novaya Khushtada, Novo-Sasitli, Novo-Vikri and other contemporary mountain villages in the Lowlands were founded in the first way. Examples of the second method are Avar Pervomayskoe and Kokrek, Lak Novo-Kuli, Lezgin Novyy-Aul, Dargin Soviet-Aul, Nogay Glavnyy Sulak.

Sometimes settlers from ethnically different jamaats were lodged by authorities in houses of Kumyk and Russian peasants (in Aksay, Kostek, Chont-Aul, Pokrovskoye, etc.). Traditionally homogeneous villages in the Lowlands and the Foothills have been transformed in this way into ethnically mixed ones. But despite the consequent assimilation of mountain people and lowlanders there occurred in this latter case the division of the village into two parts: a native one in the centre and another on the outskirts inhabited by settlers with their own mosque and Soviet administration.

Organized resettlement has largely modified the ethnic and territorial situation in Dagestan. The rural population of the Lowlands and the Foothills became ethnically heterogeneous. Historical ethnic borders were irrevocably confused. Most mountainous districts retained their ethnical homogeneity, although peasant communities have lost their former isolation and avtarkia. For more than four decades Dagestani villagers have been living on rather cheap food imported from south Russia and the Ukraine. Moreover, in the early 1960s the abolition of Stalin's passport system, attaching people to the land, caused a spontaneous massive migration from uncomfortable collective and state farms to towns and out of Dagestan. From 1914 to 1926 the number of Dagestanis who moved to Russia dropped from 83,317 to 33,697, but between the 1960s to 1980s the number again increased to 627.2 thousand. According to the 1989 Census the rate of migration was 26 per cent of the whole rural population (11). My investigations in villages of Tsumadinsky district have shown that now almost 40 per cent of their permanent residents annually leave their homes and move to Rostov, Krasnodar, Kabarda, Kalmykiya or, comparatively more rarely, to Ukraine for seasonal farm work. Between 1992 and 1995, because of the migration of women and adolescents, rural schools began their lessons only at the end of October.

The massive resettlements and migrations that occurred in Soviet times

favoured the fusion of ethnic minorities in Dagestan. In this way a basis for the Soviet policy of so-called 'national consolidation' was created. It was much easier to rule over large national communities than over the numerous isolated ethnoses of pre-revolutionary times. Therefore both in passports and in all the Soviet Censuses from 1939 to 1989 (12) most of the Dagestani minorities were considered to be part of more numerous and influential ethnic communities.

In this way 13 Ando-Tsez ethnoses and Archins were united with the Avars, who belong to the same linguistic group. Kaytags and Kubachins became Dargins, Terkemens were transformed into Kumyks. Also, an unsuccessful attempt was made to unite Aguls, Tsakhurs and Rutuls with Lezgins in southern Dagestan. Thus 30- 40 pre-revolutionary ethnoses were transformed into 6 large native national communities. In the 1950s and 1960s 3 small ethnoses (Aguls, Tsakhurs and Rutuls) obtained the status of 'nation'. At present there are 10 native national communities, including the Nogays, and 4 non-Dagestani ones (with Russians in the first place) in the republic.

In practice 'national consolidation' means the introduction in primary schools of so-called 'national' tongues. In secondary schools Russian is mainly used. In the official affairs of collective farms and village Soviets, in governmental decrees, and in the republican and local press, only Russian and 13 other 'national' languages are used up to now. The patois of ethnic minorities have no alphabet and cannot be used in written form. As for the 'national' tongues, all of them have a unified script: Arabic, used before the revolution (the so-called 'Ajam script' in the Mountains, 'Turki' in the Lowlands and the Foothills) was changed into Latin between 1928 and 1937, and then into a modified Cyrillic alphabet in 1937 (13).

Both the increased ability of the peasants and the impact of Soviet cultural policy augmented the number of tongues used by the traditionally multi-lingual Dagestanis. At present rural men know, besides their native patois, some local 'unwritten' dialects, one or two 'national' languages, and Russian, or Azeri in the southern regions. Peasant women and teenagers in particular do not have a good command of tongues used by other national communities in Dagestan. The number of people who can speak, read and write in Arabic has decreased considerably. If in 1926 only 39 per cent of Dagestanis could speak Russian fluently, in 1989 82 per cent of townspeople, and 57.4 per cent of peasants (60-70 per cent in settlers' auls) used Russian as their second language (14).

My fieldwork data show an interesting feature of the modern ethnic mentality of Muslim peasants. The local ethnic culture appears not to have been destroyed completely, as was expected by Soviet officials, but modified considerably within the Soviet state system. Now it consists of several 'levels': local, national and Dagestani ones. In their villages mountain people and lowlanders regard themselves as a part of a native ethnic minority (Kostekis, Shinazis, Tindis etc.) just as before the revolution. But outside the home in a different ethnic and linguistic medium peasants are transformed into representatives of their national community (Avars, Dargins, Kumyks, Lezgins etc.). Both mountain people and lowlanders usually obtain protection and aid from town

officials and residents appealing to the sense of their common 'national' solidarity (for example: Avarness, Kumykness, Lezginness, etc.). When outside their republic, Muslim peasants consider themselves 'Dagestanis'. In the last case the Russian language (Azeri in the South) is used as their common group Koine.

These data give evidence of the persistence of the local ethnic identity of the Muslim peasants. In fact rural ethnoses have retained the main features of their pre- revolutionary ethnic and social values and institutions. In spite of the disintegration of tukhums, village endogamy has survived in the Mountains up to now. My fieldwork data show the continuity of secret Arabic teaching in many mountainous auls. Large jamaats have secretly maintained their Muslim oral courts, which are convened in cases of land and inheritance lawsuits between collective farmers. Traditions of mutual aid assistance while harvesting or building a house (Avar 'gway', Dargin 'bilqa', Kumyk 'bulqa', Lak 'marsha', Lezgin 'mel', etc.) have persisted in collective/state farm brigades (15). In the late 1940s a series of semi-religious agricultural festivals, which seemed to have disappeared during collectivization, were renewed all over Dagestan. In 1940s and 1950s the Soviet rulers had to authorise the 'Festival of the first Furrow', the 'Festival of the Flowers', and 'Novruz Bayram' (16). The purely religious culture and institutions of rural ethnoses continued to be outlawed till the late 1980s. Then a period of Muslim enthusiasm began, which will be discussed later.

On the other hand, although Dagestani peasants still maintain the vested common interest in favour of their local traditions, now the structures and values of national societies formed in towns are superimposed upon local ones. At present there are 8 towns instead of the 4 pre-revolutionary ones in the Lowlands and the Foothills. Thanks to the Soviet policy of industrialization the urban population increased from 85.1 thousand in 1926 to 786.7 thousand in 1989, and now accounts for 43.6 per cent of all the Dagestanis (17). Urban comforts, opportunities to get a better education and high-paying jobs are luring a proportion of village youth into towns. During my fieldwork I have received the impression that a large number of peasant teenagers admire city ways and consider townsmen of their own national community more refined and 'lucky'.

Their parents are well aware that in fact rural ethnic communities are ruled over by urban larger ones, through the system of Soviet institutions, and recently through the Party organizations as well. In Soviet times the peasants' position outside their native community depended both on the languages they could speak and the 'nation' they belonged to. A national community might hold a high or a low rank in the mobile hierarchy of 'nations' which has secretly been operating in Dagestan since the 1920s.

National hierarchy in Soviet Dagestan

In the 1920s and 1930s the 'nativization' policy (korenizatsiya) favoured replacing pre- revolutionary Russian officials with native ones. Therefore Lezgins installed large clans of their kin and countrymen in Party structures, and Kumyks obtained the main influence in the People's commissariat of Agriculture, while Azeris seized the powerful commissariat of Internal affairs (NKVD) (18).

On the other hand, the Moscow government was always afraid of 'bourgeois nationalists' in the Caucasus and would help one national group in its struggle against another, more powerful one. Therefore, in the late 1930s the Lezgin domination was replaced by an Azeri one. From the late 1940s to 1990s the Avars retained power in Dagestan (19). Non-Avars had no access to power structures, their national communities being under the Avar command. Lezgins also had to submit to the Azeris. In southern Dagestan and especially in Azerbaijan, where two thirds of the Lezgins (500 or 670 thousand) live, they were deprived by Azeri officials of many civil rights and of their national language. Therefore, about 200 thousand Azeri Lezgins had to join the Azeri national community. Furthermore, between the 1960s and 1980s the small southern ethnoses of Rutuls, Aguls, Tsakhurs separated from the oppressed low-ranking Lezgins and formed their own national groups (20).

The last changes in the 'national' hierarchy occurred after the disintegration of the Soviet state in 1991. The pro-Soviet Avar rulers of Dagestan had lost the support of both the former Moscow government and Communist Party structures, which became powerless and outlawed after the defeat of the Putsch in Moscow in August, 1991. In 1995 most of the Party officials managed to be included in the Dagestani People's Council (which substituted the former Supreme Soviet), where the Avar lobby is still powerful. But the attempts of modern Soviet leaders to control the internal situation have failed. Non-Avar national communities have stopped submitting to Avar clans. Criminality has increased considerably in the towns, especially in the capital city Makhachkala and in Khasavyurt. The Avar rulers have become unable to provide protection for members of the Dagestani parliament among whom there are a large number of Avars. The murderer of the Avar people's deputy M. Suleymanov and the organizers of attempts upon the life of the Avar political leader and member of government Gaji Makhachev have not yet been identified (21).

The collapse of Soviet governmental influence led to the formation of several independent democratic parties in the towns in 1991 and 1992. Those parties and the Islamic movement in the countryside were in strong opposition to the Soviet Avar lobby. In June 1991 the Dargin religious group 'Jamiatul Muslimi', the 'Islamic Revival Party' and other Islamic groups held a mass meeting in Makhachkala insisting that the government of the republic should allow the haj and lower the cost of travel to Mecca for Dagestanis (22).

Townspeople, a large number of whom were born villagers, were split into several antagonistic 'national' groups. From 1991 to the middle of 1992 Kumyks fought against Avars, Chechens were in opposition to Lak and Avars, and Lezgins resisted Azeris. Furthermore, all of these urban groups announced themselves as 'a national and democratic opposition to the pro-Communist Supreme Soviet'. In summer 1991 most of them formed the United Committee, which held two mass meetings in Makhachkala and Khasavyurt in August and September, 1992. The opposition demanded new elections for the republic's government and the withdrawal of Russian internal security troops brought into northeastern Dagestan in spring 1992 (23).

The Soviet Legacy in the Current Ethnic Evolution of Dagestani Muslims

The collapse of the Soviet Union caused not only changes in the national hierarchy but also the rapid growth of nationalist and Muslim fervour in Dagestan. This process is generally seen by the Dagestani and Russian democratic press as 'the beginning of the great desovietisation of society'. One would probably think this point of view is right. In the 1990s peasants and townspeople destroyed most of the monuments of Lenin, and other Soviet and Party leaders. In the towns many streets took the names of the imam Shamil, All Kayaev and other local Muslim heroes. Almost all the newspapers and magazines changed their odious Soviet titles. For example, the local 'Kolkhoznik' in Tsumada became 'Tsumadiezul haraq' (i.e. the Voice of Tsumada, in Avar), and the popular Avar newspaper 'Baarab bayrakh' (the Red Banner) turned into 'Haqiqat' (the Truth). Political leaders of most orientations openly reject the Soviet values of the previous period. The mosques, suppressed under Soviet rule, have again been turned over to Muslims, their number having increased from 27 in 1988 to more than 2000 in 1998 (24). All these cases seem to indicate the disappearance of the Soviet system in Dagestan.

But in fact, as my fieldwork data have shown, Soviet traditions are far more durable than they appear to be. The recent 'desovietisation' means merely the abolition of Soviet symbols and official ideology and doesn't affect some important Soviet psychological values and social institutions. In order to explore the impact of the previous Soviet period on the future national and social evolution of Dagestan, I offer three areas of relevance: political movements, mentality and ethnic conflicts.

Muslim Peasants in Political Movements of Townspeople

Firstly, both the urban national movement and the rural Islamic one were generated within macrosocial national societies formed as a result of drastic Soviet reforms. In towns the national Avar intelligentsia founded some groups, which later united into 'the Popular Front named after the imam Shamil'. The Kumyk 'Tenglik', Lezgin 'Sadval' and 'the Movement of Chechen People' were formed in the same way. Most of them represent large national communities despotically dominated in the national hierarchy under the Soviet rule. Therefore, they now seek to regain supreme power in Dagestan or the division of the republic into several independent countries. The Lak people's movement 'Gazi-Kumukh', Dargin 'Tsadesh', Rutul 'Namus', and the 'Tabasaran' society are not so radical. These parties wish only that their national communities should retain the lands they received during the resettlement and maintain their cultural autonomy. Thus all the urban national opposition, as former Soviet national clans, provides protection of the ethnic identity and interests of the main national communities in Dagestan. Moreover, national clans and ethnic associations that had dominated the Soviet administration afforded a social basis and organized mass support for the

leaders of the opposition during meetings between 1991 and 1993 (25).

In the countryside the political activity of national communities is veiled by Islam. At present the mass enthusiasm aroused by rural Islam, which obtained total religious freedom by the early 1990s, eases communication for, and the political mobilization of, the peasants. The centre of the rural Muslim revival is in north-eastern Dagestan. Here Avar, Dargin and Kumyk communities have formed a number of Islamic organizations of different political orientations. The above-mentioned Avar 'Islamic Revival Party' and Dargin Society 'Jamiatul Muslimi' unite some thousands of radical village youths. Both parties advocate the same slogans of religious and political independence for their national communities. The party organisations are similar to the fundamentalist 'Muslim Brothers' in the modern Arab World (26). However, in fact the fundamentalists don't play the leading role in Dagestan.

The majority of Muslim peasants condemn their actions and give support to local Muslim scholars and mullahs (dibirs, alims), who are inclined to support the government. Jamaats often make them responsible for the defence of their community interests in land and other local conflicts. It should be pointed out that the traditionalist Muslim clergy was also split on the basis of nationality from the very beginning. At the first session of Muslims of the Northern Caucasus, which took place in May 1989 in Buinaksk, the Mufti Gekkiyev, who had compromised himself by collaborating with the state security organs, was deposed. The Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus continued without a leader for several months and at the beginning of 1990 broke up into several independent republican branches.

In its turn the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Dagestan (SDMD) broke up into several national communities at the third congress of the republic's Muslims, which took place in Makhachkala in February 1992. The SDMD was headed by one of the leaders of the opposition Avar Islamic-Democratic Party of Dagestan, the rector of the Islamic Institute in Kizilyurt, S.-A. Darbishgajiyev. However, he was supported only by the Avar jamaats, the religiously indifferent Tabasarans and Laks and also a minority of the Dargins and Chechens. Soon after the congress the independent Kumyk and Lak Spiritual Directorates in Makhachkala and the Dargin Kaziye in Izberbash were formed. At their heads were the former leaders of the Dagestan SDMD, the Kumyk Bagautdin-haji and the Dargin Abdulla-haji (27). Thus all the most politically active national communities in Dagestan-Avars, Kumyks, Laks, Lezgins and Dargins-formed their own independent political and religious organizations.

These above-mentioned cases show that the Soviet legacy with respect to internal ethnic structures is important and not completely destructive. The fusion of local ethnic, national and Muslim values and institutions in modern peasant and non-peasant movements supports the inner coherence of national communities and reinforces the ties between local ethnic groups belonging to them. This fusion determines the social behaviour and political activities of the Muslim peasants. As my fieldwork data show, in the countryside the local ethnic interests of peasants generally prevail over their national ones. On the other hand, both nationalist and religious claims arise within migrant communities in

towns and in areas with a mixed ethnic population. While living here peasants often seek membership of their urban ethnic groups by means of participation in nationalist movements.

Islam is also playing a significant role in the political mobilization of Dagestani peasants. It currently exerts a rather constructive influence over village political and social evolution while preventing local village administrations from collapsing into chaos and disorder. In the 1990s many village dibirs were elected to village administrations. The most popular of them became people's deputies in the People's Council and at the Congress of the Dagestan Peoples held in Makhachkala in November, 1992 (28). So the former Soviet institutions, which now help the consolidation of native national communities, have acquired the immense moral prestige traditionally inherent in Muslim leaders.

The Muslim Nationalist Mentality

Secondly, there is a strong impact of the Soviet legacy on the pattern of the nationalist mentality of Muslim villagers. During my fieldwork in Dagestan I was very surprised to find that my respondents involuntarily share some Soviet conceptions of the nation and the state, despite their passion for Islam and the local values of mountain people. In Soviet times many notions and ideological clichés, spread through the secondary schools and the mass media, influenced peasant views. The Russification of 'national' languages introduced into them a modern political and scientific vocabulary. According to recent linguistic investigations, this vocabulary consists of 40-60 per cent Russian, or to be more accurate, Soviet terms. There are such loan-words and calques as 'partiya' (party), 'revolutsia', 'sobraniye' (meeting), 'uchrezhdeniye' (office), Kumyk 'ish gyun' (a day of work on a collective farm), Lezgin 'khkyahunar' (elections) (29). That is, since the Soviet reforms Russian has mostly been substituted for Arabic in the role of the all-Dagestani means of administrative, political and cultural intercourse.

Ideological loans appear to be much more important. Peasants have adopted the vulgarized Marxist idea of the brutal 'colonial exploitation' of non-Russian peoples in tsarist Russia. Then they reinterpret the Soviet power as Russian 'colonial' rule and tend to consider the post-Soviet 'Moscow rulers' as heirs of 'Russian imperialism', which continues oppressing non-Russian 'Muslim nations'. On the other hand, Dagestanis knew by experience, that subordination to 'Moscow' usually gave them some important advantages, such as 'order', internal security, land for mountain people etc. Therefore popular attitudes to the Soviet times remained ambivalent up to the early 1990s.

The collapse of the USSR in 1991 and the consequent downfall of the central Party and state control over Dagestan under Yeltsin caused a decline in the standing of Russia and the explosion of nationalist anti-Russian feeling. Having lost most the advantages they had enjoyed in Soviet times, peasants accuse post-Soviet Moscow 'democrats' of 'having oppressed and offended Dagestani Muslims'. The desire for the national

and religious independence of Dagestan paradoxically combines in their mentality with a strong nostalgia for 'order in the country', as existed under Stalin, Andropov, and Brezhnev. Many Dagestanis believe that now their republic should imitate not the Russian but the modern Turkish form of modernization, in which a dominant Islam, a secular state and relative prosperity are united together. The most popular national leader for them nowadays is the Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, whose programme combines populist, Islamic and pro-Soviet slogans.

The analysis of the Dagestani peasant mentality's new nationalistic and Muslim tendencies presents evidence of the complex fusion of its three main elements: Soviet, national and Muslim concepts. A modified Soviet attitude to the nation and the state is obvious here. Thus we can assume that the Soviet legacy will probably determine the development of Muslim nationalism among peasants and village migrants for a long time, or at least, for the next two or three generations of Dagestani Muslims. In cases of conflicts between different national communities this legacy might endanger the political situation in the republic, since the idea of 'national offenses' has some destructive tendencies.

Ethnic Conflicts in the Countryside

Some dangerous effects of the Soviet legacy in Muslim villages appeared during several rural conflicts in Dagestan between 1991-1997. They are the third important sequel of the Soviet rule for Dagestani peasants. The latent period of their growth lasted up to the late 1980s. Now we can divide these conflicts into three types: those concerning 'national' lands, migrations and diasporas.

The most dangerous type of ethnic conflict is undoubtedly the first, whose centre is now in the north-eastern and north-western regions of the Lowlands and the Foothills. Here the resettlement of the mountain peoples was accompanied by the forcible deportation of the whole Chechen population to Kazakhstan in February 1944. In 1957 historic Chechen territories in Dagestan were returned to them, apart from the former Kazbegovsky and Aukhovsky (now Novo-Lak) districts, which were reserved for Lak settlers. Only in July 1991 did the third Congress of the Dagestani people's deputies decide to restore the latter district and by mutual agreement of the Lak settlers and Kumyks to transfer the Novo-Lak district to the Kumyk Lowlands (30).

The putsch of August, 1991 and then the Russian-Chechen war of 1994-1996 have delayed the implementation of this decision for several years. Since the Russian and Dagestani governments became sluggish and failed to take responsibility, the Chechen clans which head the Organized Committee of the Restoration of Aukhovsky district favoured the occupation of territory in the district by Chechen- Akkin families whose relatives were deported from here in 1944. The local Lak authorities stopped the mass resettlement, but failed to prevent the unauthorized capture of Lak lands by Chechens. In September, 1991 the Dagestani and Russian governments by an agreement with both conflicting sides

succeeded in temporarily cooling the Chechen-Lak dispute. But at the end of 1992 it flared up again. By 1998 Chechen families had seized more than 450 plots of land and were now quickly building houses on them. The Chechen governments of D. Dudayev and A. Maskhadov provided economic support to the Akkins and encouraged the Chechen mass media in Dagestan to seek 'to turn Lak, Avar and Dargin settlers out of historic Chechen lands' (31).

Furthermore, a series of land conflicts has developed in the Lowlands between Kumyk auls and village communities of mountain peoples (Avars and Dargins) resettled on Kumyk lands after 1957. The centres of such conflicts are usually villages with mixed native and resettled populations. In early 1992 the beginning of the division of collective farm lands into peasant's personal plots (*priusadebnye uchastki*) provoked quarrels and even fights in the Kumyk villages Kostek, and Aksay, the Nogay settlement Glavny Sulak in Khasavyurtovsky and Makhachkalinsky districts (32). The Kumyk people's movement 'Tenglik' tried to exploit these conflicts in its struggle for power against the Avar and Lak movements. In September 1992 it organised two mass camps in Makhachkala and its environs in order to stop the Lak resettlement in the Kumyk lowland and to obtain territorial demarcation among the national communities in Dagestan (33). In the near future such serious ethnic tensions between the lowlanders and the mountain peoples' national leaders seem likely to weaken considerably their temporary union against the government.

All the cases of ethnic land tensions result from provocative ethnic boundaries drawn in the Lowlands and the Foothills in the 1940 and 1950s. The conflicts are unlikely to be resolved in the near future since Soviet resettlements and migrations have irreversibly modified the ethnic structure of most rural districts. The lowlanders' national communities and some mountain peoples (e.g. the Laks) have lost their territorial entity. Therefore, to my mind, the aims of the national territorial demarcation advocated by a section of the democratic opposition are very dangerous for the internal security of Dagestan.

In order to weaken ethnic tensions and to gain a temporary stability in rural areas the Dagestani authorities should not change the current administrative boundaries of districts with a mixed ethnic population. It is also important to avoid the abrupt breaking-up of Soviet institutions in villages such as collective/state farms. Most of the above-mentioned incidents of conflict were caused by this. My fieldwork data show that Muslim peasants themselves are aware of the dangerous effects that might be provoked by a sudden abolition of local power and social institutions inherited from Soviet times. Not without reason, the majority of the rural population voted temporarily to keep collective farm property and the former administrative system firstly during the all-Dagestani referendum on the land on June 28, 1992 and then at the Congress of the Dagestani Peoples, held in Makhachkala on November 13 and 14, 1992 (34).

The internal security of Muslim villages has also suffered from the social tensions outside Dagestani territory, in the republics of the CIS, from 1990 to 1997. These have caused the serious and correlated crises of mass

Dagestani migrations and diaspora communities in different regions of the former Soviet Union. In tsarist and Soviet times the main migration flowed to central Russian regions and to Azerbaijan. Now, in the Russian-speaking areas of the Volga-river, Kalmykiya, Kabarda, Stavropol'e, and Krasnodar are permanently living more than 170 thousand Dagestani Muslims, especially Avars, Dargins, Laks. About 50 thousand Avars and more than 500 thousand Lezgins and Tsakhurs have settled in northern Azerbaijan (35). Moreover the village subsistence in the Mountains is largely dependent on seasonal migration away from Dagestan.

Therefore some difficulties in regular migration have been very destructive for the Muslim village economy and social stability, especially in Avar, Lak, and Lezgin regions, where the rate of migration is the highest in the republic (30-60 per cent of the rural population). Civil and ethnic wars in the Transcaucasian areas, in Chechnia, in Central Asia (Tajikistan), where the Lak community was quite considerable, impede the traditional migration to these regions. In 1992 a new Law Code deprived Dagestanis of civil rights and defranchised them in Kalmykiya. For last five or six years Krasnodarsky Cossacks have been prohibiting land-leasing to seasonal Muslim migrants. In its turn the public mood in Moslem Dagestani villages has become hostile to the Christian natives of the republic, especially to the Tersky Cossacks (36).

Between 1991 and 1996 refugees from diaspora communities probably aggravated the inter-ethnic antagonisms in Dagestan. Civil wars caused a mass flight of Laks from Tadjikistan, of the small Avar community (16 thousand) from mountainous Georgia, and of Kumyk migrants from Chechnia. Most of the refugee families returned to the towns and villages of their historic homeland. The conscription of Lezgins for the Karabakh war induces them to escape from Azerbaijan to their relatives in Dagestan. Refugees form the most dangerous group in Dagestani urban and rural society. Any grievance might cause them to flare up. Therefore, the closing of the frontiers with the Transcaucasian states announced by the Russian authorities provoked mass meetings of Lezgins in August and September, 1992 and again in April, 1994. Yeltsin's government had to promise them to establish 'transparent' boundaries between Russian and Azeri Lezgistan. The same decision concerning the Georgian border, which divides two Avar communities, may be made at the end of this year (37).

These preventive measures are unlikely to resolve the problems of migrations and diasporas. Now the common tendency towards social and economic insecurity in most of the CIS's countries impedes the resolution of the crisis of ethnic relations in the Dagestani countryside. But, to my mind, the continuity of the ties that traditionally connected Dagestan with other republics of the former Soviet Union is able to reduce the destructive effects of this crisis. The ties between Dagestan and Russia are now the most important. The latter goes on importing quite cheap grain and food (about 50 per cent annually), fuel (20 per cent of gas and 32 per cent of petrol annually) and also receives more than three-quarters of Dagestani migrants (38).

The republic should also develop its own national rural economy. Up to the mid-1980s Soviet rulers completely neglected the development of the

Mountain areas and preferred to resettle mountain people in the Lowlands. According to the view of contemporary Dagestani economists such a policy laid down the origins of post-Soviet land conflicts (39). The first programme for the development of the Mountains was created under Gorbachev, but not realised completely. The recent 'Mountains' and 'Grain' programmes (1992-1995) are much more realistic. The Russian and Dagestani governments supplied 613 million roubles for the restoration of terrace agriculture, the improvement of living conditions in the Mountains and the development of light food industries in 24 districts (including the Mountains and the Foothills) (40). The realization of these projects should reduce the rate of migration and of unemployment in mountain villages. The possible development of some twelve thousand hectares of arable land neglected during the Soviet period may ease land conflicts between different national groups. However, at present the continual inflation in Russia has become a serious drawback for both programmes. This can be improved only if private sponsors, perhaps from the numerous Muslim Dagestani diaspora in Turkey, take part in the projects. In this way Dagestani villages will be able in 15-20 years to begin to overcome the most destructive effects of the Soviet period.

Conclusion

To put our argument in a nutshell: the impact of the Soviet legacy is likely to determine both the future ethnic evolution of the Dagestani Muslims and the development of land, migratory, and diasporal conflicts in the republic for a long time to come. Despite all the official declarations concerning 'the lack of national antagonisms, and national equality in the USSR' a secret ranking system of macrosocial national communities operated in Soviet Daghestan since the 1920s. The local ethnic and religious cultures appear not to have been destroyed completely as had been expected by Soviet officials. Instead, their mental and social structures were integrated in a rather complicated fusion of Soviet, Muslim and local traditions. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union the movement for national and religious liberation arose in Dagestani towns and villages. But in fact the Muslim mentality and ethnic institutions continue to be largely dependent on the former Soviet national communities. Their mobile hierarchy is now more apparent than under the Soviet rule.

NOTES

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Back to [index](#)