

The North Caucasus Flashpoint for War

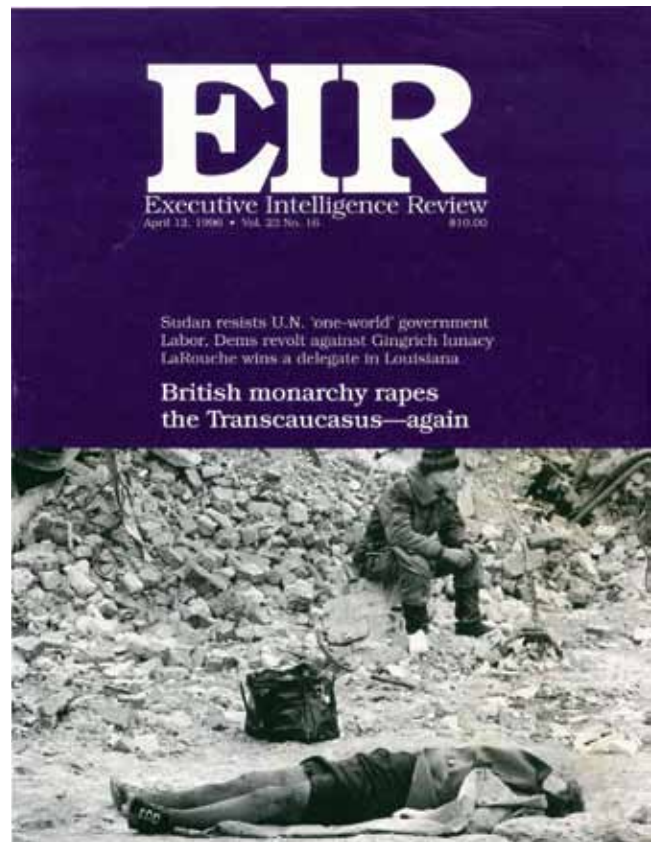
by EIR Staff

This article was first published in EIR, Sept. 10, 1999. The full headline was “Russia’s North Caucasus Republics: Flashpoint for World War.”

In *EIR*’s cover story of April 12, 1996, “Britain Rapes the Caucasus, Again,” the North Caucasus republic of Chechnya figured as one of the main, British-ignited detonators of military-political crisis in the south of Russia. Ex-Soviet Gen. Jokhar Dudayev had proclaimed the independence of Chechnya in 1991, just as the Soviet Union broke up. At the end of 1994, Russian military forces were sent to force Chechnya into compliance with federal rule. The resulting conflict brought casualties in excess of 80,000. It ended in a truce in the Summer of 1996, negotiated by then-Security Council official Gen. Alexander Lebed. Resolution of Chechnya’s political status within the Russian Federation was deferred for five years, until 2001.

It was clear from the outset, that Dudayev was a pawn in a British geopolitical game, played out on the same terrain as the decades-long North Caucasus agitation against the Russian Empire in the 19th Century. For years, analysts and profilers orbiting around British intelligence had predicted a Caucasus revolt that would destroy the Soviet Union. The chief propagandist for this was Prof. Alexandre Bennigsen of the Sorbonne, in Paris, where he was the protégé of Louis Massignon, the Dean of Orientology and a Sufi mystic. Bennigsen’s daughter, Marie Bennigsen Broxup, has followed in his footsteps and is now editor of the British quarterly *Central Asian Survey*.

The “Chechen Republic” was accepted in August 1991 as a full member of the Unrepresented People’s Organization, the key UN-approved non-governmental organization (NGO) for British insurgencies aimed at fragmenting large nations. In October 1991, the UNPO sent a team to monitor the “elections” in Chechnya. The



team’s report was printed in full in Broxup’s *Central Asian Survey*.

Dudayev received encouragement and patronage from former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, her ally Lord McAlpine, who conceived the project for a “Caucasus Common Market,” and the Minority Rights Group of Britain, chaired by Sir John Thomson, former British ambassador to India and then to the United Nations. So did Dudayev’s successor (Dudayev was killed by a remote-controlled missile strike in April 1996), Gen. Aslan Maskhadov.

Today, however, even Maskhadov says openly that unrest in the North Caucasus is being directed by foreign powers, interested in destabilizing Russia. The main operational force is a radical wing of the Chechen independence movement, led by Shamil Basayev, and the Jordanian-national, Commander Khattab (Hottab)—both of them operatives of the British-run international “Afghansi” terrorist capability (see two-part *EIR Feature* on “The New International Terrorism,” Oct. 13 and Nov. 10, 1995). They operate out of areas in Chechnya that are not even under Maskhadov’s control, but are power-domains of the “Wahhabite” factional movement.

Their main target in 1998 has been Dagestan, the

linchpin of the Russian North Caucasus. Not only is Dagestan strategically crucial because of its size, its Caspian Sea coastline, and its potential as an oil pipeline route, but the geographical placement of some of the 23 ethnic groups in Dagestan threatens to make any conflict there into an international one. The Lezgins, who inhabit southern Dagestan, overlap the border with northern Azerbaijan.

Dudayev's Rise to Power

Dudayev's rise did not match the democratic rhetoric of his foreign supporters. In November 1990, the Chechen Popular Congress, whose members largely favored autonomy within Russia, was formed, with Dudayev among its leaders. In June 1991, he was elected its head. The Congress called for complete independence from Russia; those nationalists who favored less drastic steps were purged. On Sept. 1, 1991, Dudayev condemned the Chechen Supreme Soviet as illegitimate, and declared himself Chechnya's ruler. His followers stormed the parliament building that day, and seized control of the Chechen Soviet later that week.

When Russian Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoy called for disarming Dudayev's militias on Oct. 9, 1991, Dudayev ordered a mobilization of all Chechens against Russia, and his allied Vaynakh Democratic Party called for "holy war." A "general election" in Chechnya on Oct. 27 brought Dudayev 90% of the vote, and Dudayev was quickly granted emergency powers by his rubber-stamp parliament. At the same time, Dudayev declared full Chechen independence. No state formally recognized the entity, but various countries did sign treaties with Dudayev—Turkey, Germany, Japan, the Baltic states, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.

Dudayev was plagued by challenges from various Chechen clans and parties. In April 1993, he summarily shut down parliament and the constitutional court. Rebellious Chechen forces withdrew to the northwest, where they began receiving aid and supplies from Moscow. Civil war ensued. In June 1994, the Chechen opposition launched an unsuccessful bid to seize Grozny, a failure that soon led to direct Russian military intervention.

In early December 1994, Russian aircraft began bombing airfields and army camps in Chechnya. On Dec. 11, some 40,000 Russian troops entered Chechnya, but were badly defeated when they tried to take the capital in January. The Russian Air Force then began carpet-bombing Grozny, razing the city and killing

close to 25,000 civilians. The Russians finally took the ruined city and three others, as the war shifted to the mountains.

Despite a ceasefire in June 1995, and the Russian installation of a new government supplanting Dudayev as President in December, the war in Chechnya continued until the Summer of 1996, characterized by bombings of Chechen villages by the Russian Air Force, in retaliation for guerrilla assaults on occupying Russian troops.

London's Staging Ground

Russia's war in Chechnya officially ended in 1996 with the capture and devastation of Grozny, capital of Chechnya. That war, and the lack of immediate economic reconstruction of the area, led to the conditions that have allowed terrorism to flourish in the region, and have allowed British-American-Commonwealth agents-of-influence to buy up the services of particularly Chechen-based guerrilla commanders.

London already had extensive capabilities in place, as *EIR* documented on Dec. 5, 1997, in the article "British 'Do Business' in the Caucasus." The British capabilities, we reported, comprise "business projects, cultivation of political assets, and irregular warfare." Besides the ongoing maneuvers by ex-KGB officer and longtime British crony Haidar Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, we pointed to the role of Lord McAlpine, formerly a director of his father's engineering and construction firm, Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons, and a vice president of the European League for Economic Cooperation. Usually resident in Venice, Lord McAlpine was instrumental in bringing Britain's current New Age eco-fascist Tony Blair regime into office. A close friend of Lady Thatcher, and a top Tory Party fundraiser for 15 years, he McAlpine defected to the late financier Jimmy Goldsmith's Reform Party in 1996.

McAlpine's business partner Hozhahmed Nukhayev, president of the Caucasus Common Market Closed Share Society, worked in 1997 to get the franchise to operate the Chechen segment of the Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline. Nukhayev and McAlpine launched the Caucasus Investment Fund and Caucasus Common Market scheme with billionaire Saudi arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi; McAlpine was a partner in the pipeline venture, as well. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* reported in 1997 that these deals were facilitated by one "Mansur" Jahimczyk, executive vice president of the Caucasus-American International Chamber of Commerce, a

shady Polish-born operator, who styles himself after one of the 19th-Century leaders of anti-Russian guerrilla warfare in the Caucasus (who was, in turn, an intelligence operative from Italy). As a student in London, Jahimczyk converted to Sufism, preparatory to launching his North Caucasus career.

In 1996, the year of the truce in Chechnya, Marie Broxup undertook a fact-finding mission to the North Caucasus. Her message was: Dagestan is next. The Dagestan project has been kept at a boil in British geopolitical circles, ever since. Typical is a feature in *The Economist* of July 18, 1998, titled "Russia and Dagestan: Losing Control?" The commentary suggested, "Add Dagestan to the list of unruly statelets that threaten to tear up Russia's southern rim."

The means for blowing up Dagestan is an insurgency that has next to no basis within that multi-ethnic district: the Wahhabite sect of Islam. Sufism is the traditional religion in Dagestan, not Wahhabism, which is a tiny minority.

Shamil Basayev is the Chechnya-based guerrilla commander most active in keeping tensions high in Chechnya, and launching Wahhabite operations into Dagestan. His closest allies have been Commander Khattab and the mysterious terrorist Salman Raduyev, who is sometimes called, with quotation marks, "Salman Raduyev," on account of the possible death of the original Salman Raduyev in a bombing some years ago. Basayev burst onto the scene in June 1995, when he and 100 of his men seized a hospital and took hostages in Budyonnovsk, Dagestan. Throughout Russia, the violent Budyonnovsk raid hit hard psychologically; it was seen as the expansion of the Chechen war against the rest of Russia.

Shamil Basayev wears his "British pawn" credentials on full display. He trained for his *jihad* in the Afghansi camps, as he said in July 1995: "I was preparing for war with Russia a long time before the aggression against Chechnya began. Together with fighters from my Abkhazian [separatists within Georgia] battalion, I paid three visits to Afghan mujahideen camps, where I learned the tactics of guerrilla warfare."

In July 1998, as acting Prime Minister of Chechnya, Basayev situated his operations within the "Ring around China" geopolitical offensive of the British-American-Commonwealth forces, when he sent an open letter to Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji. According to *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, Basayev gave Zhu an ultimatum, that if China once more referred to Chechnya as part of

Russia, Chechnya would launch support actions for the Uighur population of northwest China to split off as an independent state.

British Irregular Warfare

At the end of 1997, just when Zbigniew Brzezinski's *The Grand Chessboard* design for the fragmentation of Russia was published in translation, thereby provoking a furious reaction from leading political figures in and outside of government in Moscow, the combined political and business offensive from Britain into the North Caucasus stepped up. In March 1998, Chechen leader Maskhadov visited London. He claimed that Baroness Thatcher was going to visit Chechnya as soon as two British citizens, detained by a Chechen gang, were released, but Thatcher's office denied the visit plans, as well as Maskhadov's claim that Thatcher was going to head up a commission of experts to analyze relations between Russia and Chechnya.

It was evident, that other assets than General Maskhadov were being cultivated. It is useful to look at 1997-98 developments through the eyes of a Russian investigative report, published by Shamsuddin Mamyev and Pyotr Ivanov in *Kommersant-Vlast*, on Feb. 10, 1998. We do not vouch for the accuracy of details contained therein, but the report indicates how London was perceived in Moscow as fanning the flames in the North Caucasus.

The *Vlast* report said that a British delegation, arriving in Grozny on Oct. 13, 1997, represented "the financial group of [the late] Jimmy Goldsmith," together with "his son-in-law, Pakistani playboy Imran Khan," and Lord Alistair McAlpine, "Goldsmith's political ally for many years." They were dealing with the Chechens for the right to rent the Chechnya segment of the Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline, in exchange for investment in reconstructing the Chechen economy.

"Two weeks later, a day before the first Azeri crude oil reached Chechnya, Khozhahmed Yarikhanov was removed from leadership of the Southern Oil Company (YUNKO), and the company as such was dissolved. With this dissolution, the Moscow-Grozny oil agreement lost its grounds. The financial genius of the dead Sir Goldsmith was preferred by the Chechen powers to [Russian auto and oil magnate] Boris Berezovsky's shuttle diplomacy. Soon, on Nov. 5, Berezovsky was removed from the post of Deputy Secretary of Russia's Security Council. The same day, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* published the text of the British-Chechen contract, provided to the

newspaper by Maczej “Mansur” Jachimczyk.”

Vlast went on to review the history of the Caucasus Common Market and Caucasus Investment Bank, and suggested that these commercial dealings fold seamlessly into the arrival of British irregular warfare capabilities in the region:

“In late November, the investment fund, promised by the British, was presented in London. On the eve of this event, Goldsmith’s heir Lord McAlpine introduced Nukhayev to Margaret Thatcher. . . . Goldsmith’s group was not going to limit its activity to Chechnya. The game was spreading to Dagestan, where a new political forces, the Wahhabites, were activating.

“On December 10, a tender for the development of Russia’s (including Dagestan’s) oil deposits was held in Moscow. Twelve days later, the Wahhabites, trained by a citizen of Jordan along with Chechens, attacked the Russian garrison in Buinaksk. The terrorist group that destroyed a regular tank unit, questioned the guarantees of oil transit, previously given by Russia.

“To make sure the oil company representatives understood who was behind this armed attack, Goldsmith’s group dropped several hints. On Nov. 14, Lord McAlpine declared his intention to send a squad of former British commandos to Chechnya under the pretext of an operation to save two ethnic British [hostages], but also with a plan to ‘train the (Chechen) government’s troops.’ Nukhayev promised to earmark \$400,000 for these purposes. In December, Imran Khan was going to visit Chechnya. In mid-January, Jachimczyk and Nukhayev initiated sending a group of Polish commandos to Chechnya.”

The *Vlast* authors suggested that Goldsmith’s group was not only “outflanking Russia,” but, by establishing itself in the North Caucasus, had “*challenged the United States*.”

Chechnya and Dagestan

There was a summit of leaders of the North Caucasus republics of the Russian Federation, plus the adjacent territories of Stavropol and Krasnodar, held in Grozny, Chechnya in April 1998. It was the initiative of Russian Vice Premier Ramazan Abdulatipov, who is originally from Dagestan. By the time of the meeting, however, the entire Chernomyrdin government had been dismissed by President Yeltsin, so Abdulatipov presided with diminished authority. While he argued for economic reconstruction and other measures to prevent the further fragmentation of the region and its divi-

sion from Russia, Nukhayev of the British-run Caucasus Common Market showed up and gave a speech that became the conference keynote. Immediately after that summit, Maskhadov made a statement echoing Nukhayev: Chechnya had already effectively separated from Russia, and could restore its economy without Russian assistance. “All the neighbors have understood this,” said Maskhadov, and “the future of the Caucasus is a confederation.”

Coverage of the April 1998 meeting in *Moskovskiy Novosti* makes clear that Maskhadov’s strongest opponent on this issue was Magomedali Magomadov, head of Dagestan’s State Council, who said that “Dagestan has remained, remains, and will remain part of the Russian Federation.”

On April 26, Chechen Deputy Premier Movladi Udugov, leader of the Islamic Nation party, held a “Congress of the Chechen and Dagestani Peoples” in Grozny. Magomadov declined to attend. The Congress declared itself “permanent,” and Shamil Basayev was elected its head.

Almost immediately, there was an escalation of kidnappings, raids, and assassination attempts, inside Chechnya and then, increasingly often, in Dagestan. The targets were key Russian officials, foreigners, and Dagestani political and religious leaders, opposed to the separatist plot.

Kidnappings: In May 1998, Russian Presidential envoy Valentin Vlasov was abducted outside the village of Assinovskaya, Ingushetia near the Chechen border. The place was close to where an NTV television crew from Moscow was captured in 1996. The area around Assinovskaya is described by Russian media as a sort of “well,” under control of neither the Chechen nor the Ingushi authorities, but of the Wahhabites. Udugov denied that Grozny was involved.

There had already been 200 kidnappings in and around Chechnya in 1997. There are kidnappings for ransom, and politically targeted kidnappings. Chechen police who attempted to stop the guerrillas’ activities were kidnapped. Dagestani security official Magomed Tolboyev said in May 1998 that there were “Dagestanis operating between the two republics under the guise of being Chechens. International groups have been formed. An entire network of ‘spotters,’ kidnappers, middlemen, negotiators, etc., is in operation.”

On Dec. 21, former Chechen Prime Minister Salambek Khadzhiyev, who had resigned in October 1995, was abducted.

The origins of the Chechen kidnapping industry and its interface with drug- and gun-running in the region, were traced in Roman Bessonov's series, "Chechnya: the Russian Sicily," (*EIR*, April 28 and May 5, 1995). North Caucasus kidnappings are unpredictable and often barbaric, as in the highly publicized cases of the detention, rape, and release of British citizens Jon James and Camilla Carr in 1997-98, and the capture and beheading of five British and New Zealand electronic communications technicians, accused by Chechen gangs of being spies. Boris Berezovsky, the Russian financial and political operator close to Yeltsin's family, has made a business of arranging for kidnap victims in Chechnya to be freed, often behind the back of a federal government policy of paying no ransom.

Assassination attempts and bombings: In January 1998, federal security forces in Dagestan neutralized explosives in a car placed in front of the House of Parliament in Dagestan's capital city, Makhachkala.

On April 28, 1998, a car loaded with explosives blew up in Makhachkala, just when the car of Dagestan Deputy Prime Minister Ilyas Umakhanov was to pass by. There were several attempts on the life of the anti-separatist Mayor of Makhachkala, Sayid Amirov, during the year. Mufti Sayid-Magomed Abubakarov of Dagestan, a vocal opponent of the Wahhabites, was murdered by car-bomb in Makhachkala in August 1998, after previous unsuccessful attempts.

Akmal Sayidov, Russia's deputy representative in Chechnya, was kidnapped on Sept. 29, 1998, and murdered. Shagid Bargishev, head of Chechnya's Department for the Prevention of Human Abduction, was murdered in Grozny on Oct. 25, 1998. On the same day, an assault on Chechnya's Mufti, Ahmadhaji Kadyrov, destroyed three houses.

Escalation to War

In December 1998, Chechnya's Shariah Court attempted to dissolve the parliament and seize the reins of power in Chechnya. Maskhadov beat back the attack, but his authority has weakened, while Basayev's rose. The tempo of attacks on the Russian military stepped up, in parallel, until the outbreak of full-scale combat.

The most serious fighting since 1996 occurred after Wahhabite forces from Chechnya seized villages in Dagestan. Maskhadov himself charged that the Wahhabites were financed from abroad for the purpose of destroying the North Caucasus, as well as Russia. He

was seconded by Ingushetian President Gen. Ruslan Aushev, who told *Moskovskie Novosti* on Aug. 24, "It is not a secret that the bandits [in Dagestan] are financed by rival forces which are trying to change the route of the Caspian oil pipeline."

From Jan. 1 through June 1999, more than 100 people, mostly troops and police manning border posts, through to June, were killed in raids by Chechnya-based guerrillas. There were raids against both Interior Ministry and regular Army forces serving in the area. The ouster of Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov, who had pursued a diplomatic and economic-reconstruction approach to stabilizing Moscow's relations with Maskhadov, gave the green light for a sharper escalation of the conflict, which had begun to explode in March of this year.

From March onward, there were higher death tolls and new, high-ranking kidnap victims. In March, Interior Ministry Gen. Maj. Gennadi Shpigun was kidnapped in Grozny, a crime attributed in the Russian media to Chechen Commander Barayev, "Salman Raduyev," or, for Byzantine motives of Russian politics, Boris Berezovsky.

A number of Russian strategists became convinced that "after the Balkans, the Caucasus is next." While the world's attention was fixed on Kosovo, Russia began to build up troops near the borders of Chechnya. Between March and the end of June, at least 17,000 Russian Interior Troops were brought into position, while Prime Minister (for that moment) Sergei Stepashin's successor as Interior Minister, Vladimir Rushailo, said the force might be increased to 70,000. In the latter half of June, these troops were buttressed with heavy artillery units.

On July 3, Rushailo had told the Russian Federation Council that he was prepared to order preemptive attacks against Chechen terrorists engaged in kidnappings, assassinations, and other actions aimed at destabilizing the border region. "We are talking about [securing] territories along the administrative border [with Chechnya]. It will be a local operation linked to attacks on our border posts and checkpoints." On July 5, for the first time since 1996, Russian military units carried out an attack against Chechen rebels, along the Dagestan regional border. The July 5 military operation by the Russian Army involved helicopters and mortar fire, targetting a group of several hundred Chechens.

The invasion of Dagestan by Wahhabite guerrillas

from Chechnya, in August, has been covered by *EIR* over recent weeks. Russian combined ground-air operations drove them out, whereupon Basayev threatened to hit Russia with new acts of terrorism, “such as the world has not seen.”