

THE NORTH CAUCASUS: Minorities at a Crossroads

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by HELEN KRAG and LARS FUNCH



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MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP

is an international non-governmental organization working to secure justice for minorities suffering discrimination and prejudice and to achieve the peaceful coexistence of majority and minority communities.

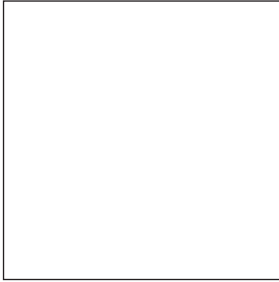
Founded in the 1960s, MRG informs and warns governments, the international community, non-governmental organizations and the wider public about the situation of minorities around the world. This work is based on the publication of well-researched reports, books and papers; direct advocacy on behalf of minority rights in international fora; the development of a global network of like-minded organizations and minority communities to collaborate on these issues; and by the **challenging of prejudice and promotion of public understanding** through information and education activities.

MRG believes that the best hope for a peaceful world lies in **identifying and monitoring conflict** between communities, **advocating preventive measures** to avoid the escalation of conflict and **encouraging positive action** to build trust between majority and minority communities.

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THE PROCESS

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CONTENTS

- 5** Preface
- 6** Glossary
- 7** Introduction
 - The objective of the report**
 - The approach**
 - Minorities – a term**
 - Maps and tables – some pitfalls**
- 9** The region, the republics and the peoples
 - The region**
 - The history of the region
 - The administrative and territorial units
 - Diversity**
 - Ethnic groups
 - Language
 - Religion
 - An overview of the North Caucasian peoples
- 26** Current Issues, Claims and Conflicts
 - Introduction**
 - Relations to Russia and Russians**
 - The Russian Federation's attitude
 - Russians in the North Caucasian Republics
 - The Cossacks
 - The adjacent Stavropol and Krasnodar Provinces
 - Regional mobilization: cooperation of North Caucasian peoples**
 - National mobilization: minorities and republics**
 - Republics with more than one group in power
 - Republics led by one titular group
 - North Caucasian peoples in Georgia
- 37** A summary of major trends
- 39** Proposals for action
- 41** Notes
- 45** Further reading

UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL OR ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

(Adopted by the UN General Assembly; Resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992)

Article 1

1. States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories, and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.
2. States shall adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends.

Article 2

1. Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (hereinafter referred to as persons belonging to minorities) have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.
2. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life.
3. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live, in a manner not incompatible with national legislation.
4. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain their own associations.
5. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain, without any discrimination, free and peaceful contacts with other members of their group, with persons belonging to other minorities, as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States to whom they are related by national or ethnic, religious or linguistic ties.

Article 3

1. Persons belonging to minorities may exercise their rights including those as set forth in this Declaration individually as well as in community with other members of their group, without any discrimination.
2. No disadvantage shall result for any person belonging to a minority as the consequence of the exercise or non-exercise of the rights as set forth in this Declaration.

Article 4

1. States shall take measures where required to ensure that persons belonging to minorities may exercise fully and effectively all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law.
2. States shall take measures to create favourable conditions to enable persons belonging to minorities to express their characteristics and to develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs, except where specific practices are in violation of national law and contrary to international standards.
3. States should take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue.
4. States should, where appropriate, take measures in the field of education, in order to encourage knowledge of the history, traditions, language and culture of the minorities existing within their territory. Persons belonging to minorities should have adequate opportunities to gain knowledge of the society as a whole.
5. States should consider appropriate measures so that persons belonging to minorities may participate fully in the economic progress and development in their country.

Article 5

1. National policies and programmes shall be planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities.
2. Programmes of cooperation and assistance among States should be planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities.

Article 6

States should cooperate on questions relating to persons belonging to minorities, including exchange of information and experiences, in order to promote mutual understanding and confidence.

Article 7

States should cooperate in order to promote respect for the rights as set forth in this Declaration.

Article 8

1. Nothing in this Declaration shall prevent the fulfilment of international obligations of States in relation to persons belonging to minorities. In particular, States shall fulfil in good faith the obligations and commitments they have assumed under international treaties and agreements to which they are parties.
2. The exercise of the rights as set forth in this Declaration shall not prejudice the enjoyment by all persons of universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.
3. Measures taken by States in order to ensure the effective enjoyment of the rights as set forth in this Declaration shall not prima facie be considered contrary to the principle of equality contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
4. Nothing in this Declaration may be construed as permitting any activity contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, including sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of States.

Article 9

The organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system shall contribute to the full realization of the rights and principles as set forth in this Declaration, within their respective fields of competence.

UNITED NATIONS COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (1966)

Article 27

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Article 2

1. States parties condemn racial discrimination and undertake to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating racial discriminations in all its forms and promoting understanding among all races,
2. States parties shall, when the circumstances so warrant, take, in the social, economic cultural and other field, special and concrete measures to ensure the adequate development and protection of certain racial groups or individuals belonging to them, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the full and equal enjoyments of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These measures shall in no case entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate rights for different racial groups after the objectives for which they were taken have been achieved.

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (1989)

Article 30

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

COPENHAGEN MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF THE CSCE (CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE); 5-29 JUNE 1990

(Extracts)

32. To belong to a national minority is a matter of a person's individual choice and no disadvantage may arise from the exercise of such choice.

33. The participating States will protect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities on their territory and create conditions for the promotion of that identity. They will take the necessary measures to that effect after due consultations, including contacts with organizations or associations of such minorities, in accordance with the decision-making procedures of each State.

PREFACE

The North Caucasus is a little known region in the Russian Federation which borders on the newly independent states of Georgia and Azerbaijan. It stretches along the Caucasian mountain range from the shores of the Black Sea in the north west to the Caspian Sea in the south east. For centuries it has been seen as the literal and symbolic border between Europe and Asia, Christianity and Islam. It is an area of extraordinary ethnic diversity and is home to at least 40 distinct ethnic groups.

The North Caucasus is an important trading route, and, with the conflicts in Georgia and between Armenia and Azerbaijan, is in a strategic position for pipelines to transport oil westwards from some of the richest oil fields in the world. Politically the region may set important precedents on how Russia seeks to resolve its conflicts, and whether the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) ensures that its agreements are upheld far away from the borders of Western Europe.

The region has repeatedly resisted attempts to invade and conquer, and it was not until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the region was incorporated into the Russian Empire. Following the Bolshevik Revolution and ensuing Civil War the Caucasus region was incorporated into the Soviet system with the creation of nine territorial units.

The peoples of the North Caucasus have been subject to much suffering during this century, from the bitter conflicts of the Russian Civil War, the Stalinist purges and the undermining of regional identity. Whole peoples were deported during the Second World War for allegedly collaborating with the German Army during its occupation of the region in 1942. Partial rehabilitation for the deported peoples came in 1956, but they still live with the aftermath of their deportations. The reallocation of their land which subsequently occurred has caused continuing conflict and distrust between various groups which is making itself felt today.

The North Caucasian peoples began to reassert their ethnic and national identity, as part of the growing ethnic and national awareness that was a feature of the Gorbachev reforms in the late 1980s. However they continue to grapple with the legacy of their imperial and Soviet past. In particular, with the creation of titular nations which was a unique feature of the Soviet period, there has been an explicit linkage between the concepts of ethnicity and territory: many of the groups which are minorities within the North Caucasian republics feel that the only means of securing their rights is to push for ethnically defined territories. In an ethnically diverse region, new means of securing minority rights need to be found, with the creation of political and constitutional arrangements which will protect and promote the rights of all groups within a given republic.

Conflicts between groups in the North Caucasus have already emerged, between the republics of Ingushia and North Ossetia, between the North Caucasian units and the central authorities, and between Georgia and Abkhazia. At the time of writing the continuing dispute

between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic Ichkeria over its declaration of independence has resulted in severe internal clashes.

While the situation is relatively stable elsewhere in the North Caucasus, there are many unresolved issues and claims which need to be addressed if conflict is to be avoided. All of the groups in the region are seeking to reassess the nature of their relationships, both within republics, regionally and in terms of their relationship with the central Russian and Georgian authorities. In terms of economic development, the North Caucasus region has become heavily dependent on central subsidies and imports from other regions of the former Soviet Union. Land reform and privatization have led to heightened fears about the distribution of land and resources.

It is in this context that Minority Rights Group is publishing this new report on the North Caucasus. While it cannot claim to be a comprehensive survey of all the groups in the region, whose actual number remains a matter of debate, MRG and the authors believe that the report has a valuable contribution to make by highlighting the region, the peoples and their history, analyzing the current situation and putting forward some constructive suggestions for the promotion of harmonious coexistence between the groups to ensure the peaceful development of the region.

Alan Phillips
Director
November 1994

Peoples of the North Caucasus

Abaza	Abkhaz	Adygei
Agul	Andi	Avar
Azeri	Balkar	Chechen
Cherkess	Cossacks	Dargin
Dido	Dzhuhur	Ingush
Kabard	Karachai	Kumyk
Lak	Lezgi	Nogai
Osset	Rutul	Shapsug
Tabasaran	Tsakhur	

Administrative territorial units

Abkhazia	Adygea	Chechnia
Dagestan	Ingushia	Kabardino-Balkaria
Kalmykia	Karachai-Cherkessia	Krasnodar Krai
North Ossetia	South Ossetia	Stavropol Krai

Glossary

CIS Commonwealth of Independent States, which encompasses 12 of the former Soviet successor states

Titular nation
The ethnic or national group which formally is the dominant group in a Republic that bears its name

Nationality
In Russian the word means 'ethnic group'. Each individual's nationality is registered in official documents (e.g. passports)

Oblast Administrative unit in Russia, a district

Krai Administrative unit in Russia, a province

Mountaineers
Peoples of the North Caucasus, 'Gortsy' in Russian

Stanitza
Cossack settlement

Aul Native settlement, village

Propiska
Official and compulsory permit of residence in Soviet cities. Now abolished in most places except Moscow, St Petersburg and some towns in southern Russia which have many refugees, including the North Caucasus.

Taip Clan formation, in which members descend from a common ancestor. A *taip* usually corresponds to two or three villages with approximately 200 families each. This is the basic social structure in Chechnia and Ingushia.

Tukhum
Extended family, consisting of 60-80 families in one or two villages, which constitute a village community. This is the basic social structure in Dagestan.

Sufi Adherent of esoteric Muslim movement.

Tariqa *Sufi* orders centred around holy places and holy men. The most important in the North Caucasus are the *Qadiri* and the *Naqshbandia tariqat*.

Zikr System of ceremonies of each *tariqa*: a silent (gestural) *zikr* for Naqshbandia, a loud *zikr* (singing and dancing) for Qadiri.

Gazavat
Holy war against the Christians, i.e. the Russian colonial power

Shariat Islamic law

Adat Customary law of the various groups

NKVD Narodnyj Komissariat Vnutrennykh Del, the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, also used for the forerunner of the KGB, until 1946

CP Communist Party

CC Central Committee

Note concerning spelling

Geographical and ethnic/national names vary depending on the language of origin (the use of Russian or native names) and the tradition of transliteration or transcription. Most English names are Anglicized Russian forms. In this report we have chosen to use the shortest versions, omitting Russian and English endings except in cases where one form is long-established, e.g. Cossacks.

INTRODUCTION

The North Caucasus region stretches along the high peaks of the Caucasian mountain range, from the shores of the Black Sea in the north west to the coast of the Caspian Sea in the south east. Here geographers have symbolically and physically drawn the border of Europe. Through the centuries great empires have endeavoured to cross this barrier between the Orient and the Occident and conquer the lands beyond. This region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia has been acclaimed by anthropologists for its extraordinary ethnic and linguistic diversity. More than 40 distinct ethnic or national groups are resident in the region.¹ However, what unites many of the peoples of the North Caucasus is a distinctive Caucasian identity.

Despite fierce resistance, the region was gradually incorporated into Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the twentieth century the region became the scene of Russian influx on a massive scale, being integrated in the sovietization process of industrialization, urbanization and education. The region was subject to barely concealed atrocities against the peoples, with their forced incorporation into the Russian Empire, and decades of arbitrary, bureaucratic acts passed by the Soviet administration which affected individuals as well as entire peoples, culminating in forced population transfers within the region and deportations of entire peoples out of the region, fostering feelings of victimization and marginalization. Yet for several decades the peoples of the North Caucasus were largely forgotten and ignored by the outside world.

During the late 1980s, however, the political changes which were taking place in the Soviet Union, gave rise to new hopes for equal participation in decisions concerning the Region, and for self-determination. With the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, the region was divided between three new countries: the largest part belongs to the Russian Federation, while the smaller parts reach into Georgia and Azerbaijan. As a result, the North Caucasus has now become a border region of renewed geopolitical interest. Today, most of the administrative and national units, and ethnic groups, want to redefine their identities, their territories and their lines of cooperation. All peoples and republics are now engaged in an ongoing discussion regarding their futures and are forming shifting political alliances, a process which is made more complex by economic difficulties and growing political pressures, including armed conflicts and voluntary as well as forced migratory flows.

Many of the aspirations of the peoples in the region are contradictory and several forces play off one group against the other. The region is witnessing a number of internal conflicts over territories and borders, with the struggle for sovereignty, and difficult relationships with the new central governments at the forefront. Complex internal claims and disagreements, coupled with a growing antagonism between the region and its political centres dominate the political agenda. The absence of constructive policies and political will to implement them have led in some areas to

cruel open conflicts. Any new attempt to enforce solutions and ignore claims will add to the feeling of estrangement and feed nationalist tendencies both among North Caucasian peoples and among Russians. This contributes to a general feeling of uncertainty and insecurity in a region which could become subject to major turmoil and violence. The North Caucasus is therefore a region not only at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, and of different cultural and political norms, but also at a distinct crossroads concerning its future development.

The objective of the report

It has repeatedly been said that the ethnic cleansing and fighting within and between the successor states of the former Yugoslavia could have been avoided had there been adequate insight into the peoples' claims and controversies, their diversity of interests, and the violations of human and minority rights.

The North Caucasus could become a new test case. In terms of minority issues, the North Caucasus is probably the one region in Europe with the highest potential for long term conflict. If the situation is not addressed shortly, the region is at risk of becoming the scene for ongoing violence and instability.²

Therefore this report aims:

- to convey the most important information about the region and its history, its peoples and their claims;
- to alert the public to a region at risk of an escalation of hostilities, and to the peoples, who – as minorities in newly independent states – are dangerously exposed;
- to supply information on the region and its potential for conflict to governments and international organizations;
- to initiate a debate among the minorities and peoples themselves at the regional level based on unbiased information;
- to suggest some ideas for possible action.

The approach

To convey an understanding of the complex reality of the North Caucasus, the presentation takes three interdependent but not congruent points of departure: the ethnic level, i.e. the varieties of minorities in the region; the national and territorial level, i.e. administrative units or republics; and the historical level. It is the totality of these facts which explain who the peoples are, the rise of their aspirations and claims, and how they are articulated and legitimized.

Conflicts arise primarily at the intersection of ethnic and national territorial levels, they are voiced in terms of justice, autonomy and self-determination, and often they are legitimized by recourse into history. The region and its peoples are currently in search of new identities, new alliances and a new place in the orchestra of nations. With these objectives, disagreements have arisen between dif-

ferent peoples within each territorial and administrative unit, between the various units and between the units and the centres of power.

Disagreements and claims are voiced by the leaders of national and territorial administrative units and by ethnic groups not in power within these units in terms of self-government, self-determination and power sharing. Therefore, it is these units which are the focus of the analysis. The adjacent republics, which are also partly populated by Caucasian peoples, are included when they are relevant to the political situation in the region.

We have chosen this approach for three reasons: the interests and claims of the minorities, the geopolitical interests and alliances in the region, and a belief that only solutions involving the entire region have a chance of succeeding.

We – the authors as well as Minority Rights Group (MRG) – are well aware of the fact, that, being outside observers, we cannot speak on behalf of the minorities described. However by giving voice to all groups in the region with equal empathy, we hope that this report includes information and evaluations that will also be useful for the groups and their representatives themselves.

Minorities – a term

An explication of the usage of the terms ‘minority’ and ‘minority rights’ are needed. In Russian, the principal language in the region, the term ‘minority’ is still conceived as derogative, meaning at the lowest level of a hierarchy of development and of legitimate rights. It means much less than ‘nation’ and ‘small peoples’, terms which in Soviet administrative practice were related to the hierarchy of republics, autonomous republics and districts. Each of the units had its titular nations with at least a theoretical right to its territory. In Soviet administrative practice, minorities were not considered in the context of territorial rights. Even in very recent publications in Russian, only dispersed peoples, those who are alleged to be without any homelands, are regarded as minorities.³ In official documents national minorities have been defined as those ethnic communities who live outside their own national state borders, e.g. Germans, Armenians, Poles, or outside their national territory in Russia, e.g. Ingush, outside Ingushia, or those who do not have their own state or territory, e.g. Roma (gypsies), Tat⁴ (mountain Jews). Currently the term ‘minority’ is predominantly used in discussions concerning those Russians or Russian-speakers⁵ who are resident in the newly established or re-established states on the territory of the former USSR. In everyday language the term ‘minority’ often has a connotation of a small, unimportant, dispersed or underdeveloped group.

It is not in that sense that the word is used here. We understand minorities as groups in a non-dominant position in their state of residence with a distinctive culture and identity (language, religion, history, etc.) which they wish to preserve and develop. To belong to a minority means to live in a structural position of being dominated by a majority, which often creates difficulties in obtaining equal rights and participation on equal terms. Minorities are created by majorities, whether they are called nations,

peoples, indigenous populations, national minorities, dispersed minorities, immigrants or refugees in international law. It is this socio-political status which makes it relevant to focus on the peoples of the North Caucasus. In the Soviet Union and in the Russian Federation all individuals were, and still are, registered as belonging to specific ‘nationalities’, i.e. ethnic groups independent of an existing territory, with the effect that distinct ethnic identities were preserved or even created.⁶ Others were neglected and disappeared from the statistics, and maps.

This report cannot provide a judgement on the legal status of each group within their states. This must be a question of agreement between the state authorities and the peoples’ representatives. However, the ethnic, religious or linguistic groups in the North Caucasus region can be defined in sociological and in most cases by legal definitions of national minorities or indigenous peoples agreed on by various international bodies, and these should enable the peoples of North Caucasus to secure the rights embodied in these agreements.

Maps and tables – some pitfalls

Maps are provided in the report to help locate the Caucasian republics, districts and minorities. Like all maps they can only offer geographical guidance and outlines. Maps are therefore especially offensive towards minorities with dispersed settlement patterns. Furthermore, maps may reflect wishful thinking, as is the case with Soviet maps, which often reproduce national policies, rather than the realities, whether this was done out of ignorance, convenience or on purpose. Even detailed standard works written by acknowledged scholars regularly rendered the settlement areas of certain ethnic groups as equal with the administrative territory in which they were the major titular nation.⁷ Thus, no map adequately reflects the ethnic and national complexity of this highly diverse region in Europe.

Tables are provided for a very general overview of the number of inhabitants, distribution of population, ethnic groups, languages and religions. One has to be aware that most data is based on the last Soviet census in 1989, which cannot be entirely trusted. The census, for example, only includes those individuals who had *Propiska*, i.e. an official residence permit. In North Ossetia alone only approximately one third of the resident Ingush minority had this permit. Recent changes add to the unreliability of available data: Chechnia and Ingushia have only existed independently for a very short span of time, and, consequently, no official data is available yet. Furthermore, most of the Southern Ossetes are said to have sought refuge in North Ossetia after a war in their homeland, and virtually the entire Ingush population of North Ossetia has reportedly fled from persecution in Ingushia. None of the data given can reflect the major in-migrations of refugees from war zones or the latest out-migrations of Russians and other peoples who are returning to their homelands.

THE REGION, THE REPUBLICS AND THE PEOPLES

The region

There is no general agreement on delimiting the North Caucasus region. Official Russian terms like 'North Caucasus Economic Region' and 'North Caucasus Military District' relate to the new border region to the south of the Russian Federation. These boundaries have been drawn out of Russian administrative, economic and security considerations, and not out of concern for the peoples in the region. There is also an exclusively ethnographic term 'North Caucasian peoples', which encompasses ethnic groups whose native languages belong to a distinct linguistic group. In geographical terms, it is the region in the high mountains, and the northern slopes and valleys of the Caucasus mountains which border the steppe and the black earth belt of southern Russia and the Ukraine. These are both wider and more narrow concepts than the one chosen for this report.

In this report the primary focus is on the traditional habitat of the native peoples north and partly south of the Caucasus mountain range, a region very much determined by geographical conditions.

Three types of landscape are normally distinguished; the low coastlines along the Black and Caspian Seas, the fertile plains and low hills and the high mountains. The mountains barred access from outside until new military technology began to connect the region to the outside world and challenge traditional life styles. In the west the mountains rise out of the water, in the east a narrow coast line parts the Caspian Sea from the mountain slopes. Animal husbandry and grazing combined with handicrafts, the exploitation of natural energy sources and terraced cultivation, especially in the east, predominated the mountaineers' economy. In the lowlands and plains, nomadic or semi-nomadic horse- and stock-breeding together with trading, and farming prevailed.

Many of the North Caucasus people share similar cultural traits and values. They have developed due to similar life conditions and these were enforced during the wars against colonization. The North Caucasians were reputed to be fierce warriors, both in their engagements against outside invaders and in internal fights against each other. They handled their horses and daggers with equal excellence. Looting was a way of life, along with herding and cultivating the soil. Paintings show them as slim, handsome and dark. They have been portrayed by Russian as well as local poets as very hospitable, proud and fearless, and impossible to subdue.⁸

Today, Caucasians have been brought down from the high stony peaks and many, if not most, speak Russian. The society offers equal opportunities to women and men and it is not unusual to encounter women in the higher political strata and in academic positions. Yet traditional gender

relations and family patterns are maintained, and men and male values prevail in public life. The native population in the North Caucasus is clearly distinct from the mainstream of Russian society, in terms of their own sense of identity and in the perception of others. The North Caucasians have common ground in their struggle for their languages, traditions and values, and against dominance from outside. They are minority populations governed from political centres far away – in many ways economically and/or politically neglected.

Much has been sacrificed on the altar of modernization and centralization. During the last century the mountaineers were moved from the high mountains to the plains, farm work was collectivized, and handicraft replaced by industry. The region became totally dependent economically on other regions of the USSR. Gigantic hydropower plants came to replace self-sufficient local energy arrangements. The output of oil fields, mines and industry in the region was exported to other parts of the Soviet Union, while the region itself was reimbursed by imports and subsidies. Power plants, oil fields, mineral deposits and factories notwithstanding, great parts of the region, especially in the east, can only be described as poor – one of the poorest of the former Soviet Union.⁹

The integration into the Russian and Soviet administrative and political system, on the other hand, also brought the development of urban centres, infrastructures and institutions of education although they are few and badly developed compared to other parts of Russia.

During the Soviet regime several peoples became 'titular nations' in autonomous republics and districts. This status entailed certain special rights regarding cultural development and political representation. Although their frontiers and territories were changed rather frequently, this status had a significant effect on the development of national identities in these 'homelands'. The North Caucasus minorities live mainly within seven republics in the Russian Federation (Dagestan, Chechnia, Ingushia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia and Adygea) and in two former autonomous republics in Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia).¹⁰ Naturally, ethnic groups do not necessarily live in the administrative units which bear their name, and all administrative units are inhabited by more than one ethnic group. Furthermore, Russians live in great numbers in most of the republics in the North Caucasus, especially in the cities and industrial centres in the western part of the region.

The history of the region

As is often the case with minorities, written sources on the North Caucasus give preferential treatment to the victorious. The history of the subjugated is mostly ignored and forgotten. Still, there is evidence of eminent principalities in the North Caucasus formed by the Lezgi in the east and the Circassians in the west. The Circassians expanded from the Black Sea south- and eastward, and the feudal princes of their eastern, Kabardian, branch dominated the North Caucasus up to the start of the eighteenth century. The Russian Czar Ivan IV (known as Ivan the Terrible)

apparently for reasons of power, married a Kabard princess, and Russian rulers sided with feudal lords in order to extend power over the Caucasian peoples until armed conquest and collective punishment became the means of expanding dominance and supremacy.

Historical events, particularly Russian colonization policies and Soviet deportation practices, play a decisive role in the current claims and grievances of the North Caucasian peoples. History also serves as criteria in identity and in legitimizing ethnic and national identities. This goes for the early era of the Great Migration of the fourth and fifth centuries as well as for the latest period of drawing new frontiers. Insistence on primordial ethnic bonds with clear historical rights to certain territories or cultures going back to antiquity is popular these days although no ethnic group in the region, whether speakers of Caucasian, Turkic or Iranian languages, or adherents of the Jewish, Islamic or Christian faith, can convincingly state if they stem from one or the other assimilated or converted group of intruders or natives. Claiming history as an ally by using historical arguments that belong to the realm of mythology and imagination has become the norm. There is ample reason for the viability of these arguments because the history of the peoples of the North Caucasus has not been written.

During the Communist Party regime national and regional histories were falsified as they became a taboo – one of the harshest legacies of the Soviet system. The consequences are momentous. The resultant ignorance fostered inadequate research and a scarcity of information on the region and its peoples. Furthermore, it has given rise to the formation of myths, the use of guesswork and the abuse of facts in the political debate. We therefore include a historical sketch which focuses on those periods, events and aspects which are of primary importance for the identity formation of the peoples, and which contribute to an overall understanding of claims and conflicts. This report aims to disentangle historical events and give an account which reflects the experience of the region and the peoples themselves which has been neglected in many records of the Russian and Soviet history.

Early intruders

The Caucasus mountains have from time immemorial been at the crossroads of cultures. Once a barrier between early urban civilizations in Mesopotamia and their trade centres in the south, and nomad cultures in the steppes of the north, the scene changed when Scythians and Sarmatians, and other linguistically Iranian tribes penetrated the mountains displacing each other. One of the most powerful Sarmatian tribes were the Alans who for some time became the dominating power in the Caucasus. Some of their clans settled and mixed with the native population. According to historical sources the Caucasian Alans were called Os, a name the Ossetes of today still carry.

While both Greek and Roman colonies reached up to the shores of the Black Sea, mounted Turkish nomad tribes from the Altai mountains in Mongolia such as the Huns

and later the Avars reached Europe in the first centuries AD, taking the Alans, in the steppes north of the Caucasus and in the Caucasus as their slaves. Some of the Alans moved west, while others continued under Hunnic rule in more or less independent tribal federations. Beginning with the fourth century many peoples in the western part of the Caucasus were converted to Christianity from what later became Georgia¹¹, while the eastern parts came under the influence of the Iranian Sasanids. The Arabs brought Islam in the seventh century.

Out of Turkish and Iranian tribes, defeated Huns and indigenous Caucasians came a new people, the Khazars, who by the year 650 had established a stable state with trading routes across the Caucasus. Despite trade relations, the Caucasus belt separating the Khazar Empire from the Arab lands became the scene of repeated and devastating wars in the eighth and ninth centuries.

Each conquest resulted in migrational processes in the region. The conquerors brought thousands of immigrant families, while those conquered were either killed or assimilated, others emigrated or sought refuge in the mountains.

The process of changing spheres of influence, changing patterns of settlement as well as blending and superseding of ethnic linguistic and religious groups continued during Mongol raids in the thirteenth century. Ghenghis Khan's troops crossed the Caucasus mountains from the south forcing the local population up into the high mountains. The mountains themselves protected its inhabitants against the invaders, and more than once nomads who had threatened the population on the fertile plains chose to retreat into the mountains once they were defeated by newcomers.

In 1227 Ghenghis Khan's grandson Batu with 120,000 men, predominately Turks, moved westward and firmly established The Khanate of the Golden Horde, also known as the Kipchak Khanate, in the North Caucasus. It became the strongest power north of the mountains from the mid-thirteenth century, and was to dominate Russia until the fourteenth century while the Il-Khan Empire, the Persian successor state of Ghengis' Empire extended to the south. At the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth century Timur or Tamerlane conquered a vast empire including the Caucasus and terminated the age of the Mongol yoke.

Most peoples of the North Caucasus consider themselves to be descendants either of one of the great conquering tribes or their victims. Ossetes claim to stem from the Alans, Kumyks from the Khazars, and Nogai from the Golden Horde. Arab and Persian reigns have also left an influence on various cultures. However those Caucasian peoples who do not claim such descendances are calling for their indigenous rights.

Russian conquest and Caucasian resistance

Victimization by conquering powers is a strong element in Caucasian identity. Although there is a very long pre-Russian history of violent attempts to cross the mountains with the aim of conquest, it is the Russian colonization which has left the strongest imprint of disenfranchisement among the peoples of the region.

It was when the Golden Horde had disintegrated, that Russia, in the sixteenth century, became involved in the steppes north of the Caucasus. Russia used the Cossacks who had formed self-governing military communes at the fringes of Muscovy, to protect and expand the Russian frontier. Around 1700 Russia was unambiguously rooted in the Stavropol region north of the Caucasus, and Cossacks began to raid Caucasian settlements regularly. Violent counter-raids by the mountain peoples became a frequent enterprise and contributed to the Caucasians' image of fierceness and hostility which is still present in the Russian mind.

As time went on, several Caucasian principalities had to retract southwards towards the Caucasian mountain range. After several retreats Russia gained access to the then Persian and Ottoman dominated areas in the lowlands and between 1763 and 1793 built a line of fortresses across the country besieging the Caucasus. Practically all towns in the region originate from these fortifications.

Parts of Dagestani, Ingush and Chechen territory were conquered in the 1780s giving rise to desperate resistance under the religious and political leadership of Sheikh Mansur, a Chechen. This was to become the first organized military manoeuvre unifying the mountain peoples in the North Caucasus: Chechen, Ingush, Ossetes, Kabard Cherkess and the peoples of Dagestan. Some 20,000 were brought under and resisted the attack. When Mansur was captured by the Russians, they had to withdraw. Osset territory as well as the Kabarda became Russian. Russia built the military highway, founding the fortress of Vladikavkaz¹² as the strategic centre for further colonization. It was opened in 1888 and connected Osset and Georgian territory. Georgia became a Russian protectorate in 1801, and by the mid-nineteenth century most of Transcaucasus, the area south of the mountains, was under Russian control. Before it was finally annexed and incorporated as Russian provinces, various charters were signed with the Caucasian principalities, including Abkhazia and South Dagestan.

The colonial war continued with renewed vigour when the mountain peoples once again united under the holy flag of Islam and the charismatic and disciplined Shamil, Imam of Dagestan and an Avar. In the early 1830s he called for strict observance of the *Shariat*, Islamic law, and for *Gazawat* – militant holy war against the Christian invaders. Within a very short time a strong Muslim revivalist movement spread through the entire eastern part of the mountains, and united much of the Caucasus region in one regional state formation, the Imamate of Shamil, which lasted for nearly 30 years. Abkhaz and

Cherkess in the west were not converted to the *Sufi* movement but supported the war for independence. Since then Islam has repeatedly functioned as a mobilizing force against dominance from the Russian centres of power.

It was only after Russia had won and settled her disagreements with Turkey, that she threw her massive military force into the Caucasian project of conquest. From the military highway Russia began a methodical advance into the mountains of Dagestan proceeding westwards, placing *aul* after *aul* under her rule, razing many of them to the ground. In 1859 Shamil was caught and arrested. By 1864 the Caucasian War was accomplished. The majority of the Cherkess, then the biggest group in the region, but also Abkhaz, Chechen, Muslim Ossetes and Dagestanis were forced to emigrate and many died en route. New estimates suggest that approximately 1.2 million Caucasians emigrated from Russian-conquered territories, and 800,000 of them lived to settle in the Ottoman dominions.¹³ Their descendants today form a diaspora of one or two millions, mainly in Turkey and the Middle East.¹⁴ Many of those who stayed were forced to move from their settlements in the highest mountains to the slopes, where they were easier to control.

Russian revolution and civil war

The Russian revolution of 1917 gave rise to new hopes for independence. Already in May that year mountaineers of the North Caucasus and Terek Cossacks united to elect a temporary Terek-Dagestan Government for a free independent state. After the Bolshevik victory in the Russian centres the government declared its secession from Russia, signed an alliance with Turkey and was formally recognized by the Central Powers. Simultaneously left wing Osset radicals together with socialists from other minorities established a Soviet Terek Republic which was soon overthrown by Terek Cossacks. The military-political movement of the government's White voluntary army under Anton Ivanovich Denikin was initiated by Cossack units from the North Caucasus. Once again *auls* were burnt to the ground and North Caucasians were forced to fight. Denikin was unacceptable to the leaders of both governmental structures due to his overt Russian-nationalist policies.

During 1919 the fighting continued, and by the end of the year the mountainous part of Dagestan, Chechnia, Ossetia and Kabarda once again was declared an independent state – The North Caucasian Emirate – under the conservative sheikh Uzun-Hadzhi. Caught between the anti-religious Red and nationalist White armies, he coopted with the Bolsheviks, who promised full autonomy. After severe fighting, which brought Red and White in turn to power, Lenin's party was victorious in September 1921 and the Communist Party of Russia immediately abolished the Emirate. The situation was far from well-defined as there was no unanimity among Communist Party individuals or organizations.¹⁵ A parallel Caucasian Revolutionary Committee was established in Vladikavkaz in 1920 which came to be the core of a Soviet Mountain Republic.¹⁶

It was Stalin himself who visited the region to control the process of change. In the name of his government he suggested, or rather demanded, a Soviet Republic of all Caucasian Mountaineers. Those in charge agreed to recognize Soviet power on condition that *shariat* and *adat* were the sole legal foundations of the new autonomous republic. This claim as well as a claim to return territories which had been given to Cossacks during and after the Russian conquest, were accepted, and Cossacks were forced to leave the North Caucasus. This was convenient for the new Russian leadership who saw Cossacks as a major enemy. Seventy thousand Cossacks are said to have been forcibly deported from their settlements or *stanitzas* to the other side of the Ural mountains.¹⁷

The Autonomous Soviet Mountain Republic, including Ingush, Kabard, Balkar, Karachai, Chechen and Osset districts, and the Autonomous Soviet Republic of Dagestan, were founded in January 1921 on the basis of multi-ethnic territorial self-determination.¹⁸

National fragmentation

The Mountaineers' Republic existed in full only for a very short time. Already in 1922 all mountaineer groups had been disarmed and the republic dissolved step by step into districts within the Russian Federation. After a year, only Chechen, Ingush, and North Ossetes were left in the Mountain Republic, and another year on the Chechen had to content themselves with an autonomous district. In 1924 the remaining Ingush and North Ossetes were split up. Their common capital Vladikavkaz remained with the Ossetes, depriving the Ingush of the only urban centre with educational institutions and industry. This split is still a bone of contention. With national fragmentation in many places the system of schools and the infrastructure of the districts deteriorated significantly. Local party leaders reported to the party headquarters about the arbitrary and insufficient nature of the solution and about the patronizing and discriminating attitude of the Caucasian Committee, which was located in south Russia and was responsible for its development.¹⁹ By the mid-1920s a hierarchy of nationally (i.e. ethnically defined) autonomies had been established, headed by local socialist leaders. This meant that significant regional identity was discouraged, and without the peoples themselves being involved, specific groups were selected for further national-cultural development. Languages were standardized, and new alphabets in Latin script constructed, paving the way for further changes.

The national fragmentation policies were continued and all autonomies were taken out of the hands of Caucasian leaders.²⁰ The borders and names of the so-called autonomies were changed in connection with repeated instances of insurrection among several of the North Caucasian peoples. The insurrection was a result of the arbitrary fragmentation process and its effects on ethnic land tenure. In 1928-9 the Soviet programme of collectivization started, farming land was confiscated, the *shariat* was abolished, the population disarmed²¹ and the Caucasian political and intellectual leadership annihilated or deported, accused of bourgeois nationalism and pan-

Islamic policies. The former territorial and regional management was replaced by leaders sent from Moscow to represent the new centralized administration. The situation stabilized only in 1936 when the new Soviet constitution finalized a structure with the Autonomous Republics – Dagestan, North Ossetia, Kabardo-Balkaria, Chechen-Ingushia and Abkhazia; and the Autonomous Districts – South Ossetia, Karachai-Cherkessia and Adygea. Beginning in 1938-40 the newly created alphabets, which despite their positive effect also barred access to written sources and documents which had been produced earlier in history, were replaced by the Cyrillic alphabet.

Fragmentation of the Soviet Mountain Republic:

Mountain Republic reduced in January 1922:

12 January 1922 Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous District

16 January 1922 Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous District

27 January 1922 Adygean Autonomous District

July 1922 changed to Adygei-Cherkess Autonomous District

Mountain Republic reduced in November 1922:

Chechen Autonomous District

Mountain Republic dissolved in July 1924:

Ingush Autonomous District

North Osset Autonomous District

Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous District dissolved in January 1926:

Cherkess National Region

Karachai Autonomous District

Adygei-Cherkess Autonomous District dissolved in August 1928:

Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous District

Adygei Autonomous District

January 1934 Chechen and Ingush Autonomous District amalgamated

December 1936 changes of status:

Adygei Autonomous District

(part of Krasnodar Province)

Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous District

(part of Stavropol Province)

Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Republic

Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic

North Osset Autonomous Republic

Occupation and deportation

Caucasian peoples characterize events which happened during the Second World War as their third catastrophe – after the colonization and the destruction of the native elites. The German Army reached the Caucasus in 1942 on the way to the Caucasian oil fields in Maikop, Grozny and Baku. Parts of the Caucasus were occupied 1942-3²², but the mountain range barred further access. *Kolkhozes*, collective farms, were closed, mosques reopened in areas where the German Army arrived, and promises for sovereignty were given to those people who were willing to cooperate.

TABLE 1 **Deportations**²⁴

Date	Peoples	Total loaded on trains 1943-4	Total reported as deported ²⁵ 1944-6	Total of whom were children
Nov. 1943	Karachai	69,267	60,139	32,557
Dec. 1943	Kalmyk	93,139	81,673	32,997
Feb. 1944	Chechen & Ingush ²⁶	478,479	400,478	191,100
	Chechen	387,229		
	Ingush	91,250		
Mar. 1944	Balkar	37,773	32,817	16,386

Following these events, came deportation – the worst period in history for the native peoples in the North Caucasus. Between November 1943 and March 1944, on decrees signed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, all Karachai, Ingush, Chechen and Balkar – to mention only the Caucasian peoples – were rounded up, loaded into tens of thousands of cattle waggons and transferred to Central Asia and Siberia in five rounds of deportation reported meticulously to Moscow. The violent deportations were carried out with extraordinary speed, on an admittedly mostly unfounded accusation of collaboration with the enemy.

The deportations, or repressions as the peoples themselves prefer to call them, can be said to be genuine genocides because ethnicity was the sole criteria for selection, and practically nobody from the selection was spared.²³ Some were taken not only from their national territory but also from other Soviet republics, and those at the front were deported after the war. All deportees came under severe surveillance, with up to 20 years in labour camps if they left their assigned place of settlement. Wherever they settled, the local population was told that they were bandits, traitors and criminals, which resulted in their isolation and other additional hardships. They often lived in dugouts or in the open, under hard labour, had little food and many of the children had no schooling at all. One quarter of the Chechen and one third of the Karachai died during transport or deportations.

The former republics of the deported peoples were dissolved and the territory given to other republics or groups. New inhabitants moved into the houses of the deported, others fell into decay. Graveyards and national monuments were destroyed and the names of the collectively punished peoples were deleted from maps, streets, documents and public memory. It was forbidden to enquire on their fate. It was only during *Perestroika* that the first article on details of the deportations was published in the Soviet Union.²⁷ The first book containing personal recollections was published in 1993.²⁸ This experience has left its mark on the peoples of the Caucasus, comparable only to the memories of those who survived the Holocaust in the Second World War.

Return

After Stalin's death, some of the deported people began to return to their former homelands even before the official rehabilitation in 1957. Soon after the official rehabilitation 50,000 families returned and claimed their land. The first violent clashes with new Russian settlers were reported as early as 1956.²⁹ After the official rehabilitation, the Republics of Checheno-Ingushia and Kabardino-Balkaria and the District of Karachai-Cherkessia were reestablished, although not all the former areas were returned. Areas which remained with Dagestan and North Ossetia, and partly with Russia and Georgia, have caused severe disputes on the issue of land ownership. In all the republics the return of the deportees repeatedly evoked tensions. Among others, new Russian settlers inaugurated a three day *pogrom* or massacre against returning Ingush and Chechen in 1958. In 1970 the Ingush once again claimed their former habitat by demonstrating in the disputed Prigorodny (a suburban district in North Ossetia), but were driven out. Ten years later violence repeated itself, and the Ingush were explicitly forbidden from taking residence in North Ossetia. With the fading out of the Soviet period new hopes for autonomy and rehabilitation were awakened. In Dagestan, returning Chechen found their villages occupied by Lak who had been forcibly moved from their own settlements in the high mountains into the houses of the deported Akki-Chechen.

Post-communism

In autumn 1990 all autonomies in the North Caucasus declared themselves sovereign republics, claiming the same status as the Transcaucasian republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, in Georgia, the status of autonomy for South Ossetia and Abkhazia was abolished. When the Soviet Union fell apart after the coup in August 1991 against President Mikhail Gorbachev, the Transcaucasian republics were recognized as independent states. The status of the republics was ratified for all former autonomous districts and autonomous republics in the Russian Federation. Chechnia has refused to accept this and insists on an independent status. Chechnia left her long time partnership with Ingushia in 1992. With the new Russian constitution of December 1993 the status of the republics is no longer characterized as 'sovereign' but as

equal to that of the Russian Regions. With the transition to a new political system some severe conflicts have arisen.

In accordance with Soviet ideology, all means of production, including soil and natural resources, were collectively owned and distributed by the state. After the introduction of the market economy, with land reform and privatization as new guiding principles, the need to define, for the first time ever, the right to land tenure is thought by many to be likely to lead to conflict. In an atmosphere of misinformation and anxiety people are discussing whether individuals, peoples or republics are to become owners of the land. Soviet ideology, policy and economic planning are difficult legacies in times of transition. This is true for the entire territory of the former USSR but is particularly important for large parts of the impoverished, multi-ethnic North Caucasus, which until recently were closed to foreigners. Some of the mountainous parts of the region, especially in North Ossetia, Stavropol Province and Kabardino-Balkaria were well developed tourist resorts and spas receiving visitors from all over the Soviet Union. They are now largely deserted due to the overall economic situation, to armed conflicts in the region and to general anti-Caucasian sentiment among Russians.

Industrial plants are also in difficulties due to a lack of investment and the overall dependency on imports and subsidies. Maintenance of technological installations such as the 1.1 megawatt hydroelectric power plant in Cherke³⁰, is also of great concern to leading engineers. The military complex is still owned by the Russian centre, and important harbour installations in the ports of Dagestan for instance cannot be exploited by the Republic. Unemployment is increasing steadily, and many Caucasians engage in petty trade all over Russia. The new possibilities on the free market have also produced an emerging upper class which is backed by the traditional Caucasian networks with a reputation of indulging in mafia activities.³¹

The administrative-territorial units

While the Soviet Union still existed, central State policies aimed at creating a common Soviet identity through the dissemination of a standardized educational system, the promotion of heavy industry, the free movement of labour, and the abolition of religious and local ties with sanctions for disobedience. Simultaneously, a hierarchy of

TABLE 2 The territorial units in the North Caucasus in alphabetical order¹

Name of unit	Size in km ²	Inhabitants	Capital	Major groups in %
ABKHAZIA ²	8,600	524,000	Sukhum	Georgians: 46, Abkhaz: 17, Armenians: 15, Russians: 14
ADYGEA	7,600	432,000	Maikop	Adygei: 22, Russians: 68
CHECHENO-INGUSHIA ³	19,300	1,271,000	Grozny	Chechen: 58, Russians: 23, Ingush: 13
DAGESTAN	50,300	1,802,000	Makhachkala	Avar: 28, Dargin: 16, Kumyk: 13, Lezgi: 11, Russians: 9, Lak: 5
KABARDINO-BALKARIA	12,500	754,000	Nalchik	Kabard: 48, Russians: 32, Balkar: 10
KALMYKIA	75,900	323,000	Elista	Kalmyk: 45, Russians: 38, Dargin: 4
KARACHAI-CHERKESSIA	14,100	415,000	Cherkessk	Russians: 42, Karachai: 31, Cherkess: 10, Abaza: 7
NORTH OSSETIA ⁴	8,000	632,000	Vladikavkaz	Ossetes: 53, Russians: 30, Ingush: 5
SOUTH OSSETIA ⁵	3,900	99,000	Tskhinval	Ossetes: 66, Georgians: 29

¹ Figures based on 1989 census. In many cases they no longer apply (for reasons described in the report and in the following notes). A general feature is the out-migration of Russians (Slavs), most markedly from Chechnia and Ossetia.

² In connection with the Georgian-Abkhaz war all Georgians and many other non Abkhaz have left, at least temporarily.

³ After the 1991-2 partition of Checheno-Ingushia into two republics, Chechnia's capital is Grozny, a territory of 17,300km² and Ingushia's capital is Nazran, a territory of 2,000km². Chechen and Ingush make up 80-90 per cent of the inhabitants in their respective new republics. From 1994 Chechnia's own official name is 'Noxcijn Respublika Ickeriy', i.e. Chechen Republic Ichkeria.

⁴ 1989 figures are distorted (e.g. 30,000 Ingush living unregistered in North Ossetia). Furthermore, the share of each people in the republic has since changed: all Ingush have left, and approximately 120,000 refugees came from South Ossetia.

⁵ Due to war, many Ossetes and Georgians have left the republic.

territorial administrative units defined in ethnic terms, was created, which allowed for a certain degree of autonomy and national development within the limits of the primary aim. This hierarchy was of utmost importance for the development or non-development of national identities in the region.

The highest degree of self-government was delegated to the fifteen Socialist Republics, all of which are now sovereign states recognized by the international community. The North Caucasus lies today at the crossroads of three of these newly independent states: the Russian Federation, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The status of Union Republic implied that members of the titular nation participated in high ranking positions in the authoritative Communist Party and in the republic's government, that the native language of the titular nation had – although not always good, but – better chances of usage in the education system and media and that due to this degree of 'sovereignty' republics could to a certain degree decide on internal structures and opportunities for minority participation. Azerbaijan thus never became a federation like Georgia, although the number of people belonging to minorities was probably much the same.

Within the republics, at a lower hierarchical level, were the autonomous republics (20 in the entire Soviet Union, five of them in the North Caucasus): Abkhazia, Dagestan, Checheno-Ingushia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia. When Georgia adopted a new constitution, Abkhazia was no longer mentioned as an Autonomous Republic. As a consequence Abkhazia in her own new constitution unilaterally reinstated her earlier status of Union Republic. Since the demise of the Soviet Union Abkhazia has been fighting a war to retain its autonomy – and is supported in this war by other North Caucasians.³² Chechen and Ingush terminated their long time partnership in Checheno-Ingushia and now constitute two separate republics, Chechnia and Ingushia, both in the Russian Federation. Chechnia declared itself an independent state and no longer participates in the political structures of Russia, however Russia and the international community have not recognized this claim. Ingushia and North Ossetia are fighting a cruel war over disputed border territory. The Soviet legacy of autonomy has undoubtedly fuelled a desire for a new order of self-determination for the peoples of the region. Dagestan is an exception as no one ethnic group is 'titular'. But the entire concept also holds here: some of the most important groups wish to unite with their kin outside the republic and form new ethnically defined units.

Adygea, Karachai-Cherkessia and South Ossetia were three out of eight Soviet Autonomous Provinces (*Oblasti*). When Georgia abolished the autonomy of South Ossetia, after independence this former Autonomous Republic became involved in a war of resistance and had much of her territory destroyed and the larger part of the population driven out of the country. With their low level autonomy status, the titular groups in Adygea and Karachai-Cherkessia only constituted small minorities within their own Province, and had little schooling or materials in their own languages.

After the demise of the Soviet state in 1991, whilst Georgia opted for the status of a nation state and disregarded her autonomies, Russia converted all former Autonomous Republics and Districts into Federal Republics within the Russian Federation. With the new Russian constitution of December 1993, these Republics lost much of their specific status and were transformed into administrative units on a par with other Russian regions.³³ They are known formally as 'Subjects of the Russian Federation'. Chechnia, pleading for independence, has not acknowledged this status.

The North Caucasus, as interpreted by the peoples themselves, consists of nine Republics: Abkhazia and South Ossetia (not recognized) in Georgia, and Adygea, Karachai-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Chechnia, Ingushia, North Ossetia, and Dagestan in the Russian Federation.

Apart from these primary North Caucasian entities, other areas, adjacent to the republics of the Caucasus mountain range, can reasonably be included in the region here, due to their very close proximity to the republics and to their own Caucasian minorities: the two Russian Provinces Krasnodar and Stavropol, the Republic of Kalmykia – north of Dagestan, and the northernmost part of Azerbaijan, locally known as Lezgian.

TABLE 3 The North Caucasian peoples and minorities in order of size¹

Ethnic group	Number in region	Language group	Major religion	% of group resident in republic
CHECHEN	957,000	Caucasian	Muslim	77 in Chechnia
AVAR	601,000	Caucasian	Muslim	82 in Dagestan
OSSETES	598,000	Iranian	Christian/Muslim	67 in North and South Ossetia ²
LEZGI	466,000	Caucasian	Muslim	44 in Dagestan, 50 in Azerbaijan
KABARDS	391,000	Caucasian	Muslim	93 in Kabardino-Balkaria
DARGIN	365,000	Caucasian	Muslim	77 in Dagestan
KUMYK	282,000	Turkic	Muslim	82 in Dagestan
INGUSH	273,000	Caucasian	Muslim	71 in Ingushia ³
KARACHAI	156,000	Turkic	Muslim	82 in Karachai-Cherkessia
ADYGEI	125,000	Caucasian	Muslim	76 in Adygea
LAK	118,000	Caucasian	Muslim	77 in Dagestan
ABKHAZ	105,000	Caucasian	Muslim/Christian	85 in Abkhazia
TABASARAN	98,000	Caucasian	Muslim	78 in Dagestan
BALKAR	85,000	Turkic	Muslim	89 in Kabardino-Balkaria
NOGAI	75,000	Turkic	Muslim	37 in Dagestan, 18 in Kabardino-Balkaria
ABAZA	33,000	Caucasian	Muslim	88 in Karachai-Cherkessia
RUTUL	20,000	Caucasian	Muslim	72 in Dagestan
TSAKHUR	20,000	Caucasian	Muslim	26 in Dagestan, 65 in Azerbaijan
AGUL	19,000	Caucasian	Muslim	69 in Dagestan
MOUNTAIN JEWS	18,000	Iranian	Mosaic	50 in Kabardino-Balkaria, 20 in Dagestan ⁴

¹ Figures according to 1989 Soviet census. The largest non-Caucasian minorities in the Caucasus are Russians (approximately 1.5 million in the seven republics in the Russian Federation), and Armenians (approximately 150,000 dispersed in the region. This number has increased with refugees from the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan), and Azeri (approximately 75,000 in Dagestan).

² Due to refugee movements the exact distribution between north and south cannot be given.

³ The current percentage includes Ingush from former Checheno-Ingushia and North Ossetia and constitutes up to 90 per cent.

⁴ Only those registered as Mountain Jews. Others were registered differently, e.g. as Tat and are not included. Many have emigrated.

Diversity

Ethnic groups

The numbers given for distinct ethnic groups in the North Caucasus vary greatly – from 20 to 80. This is due to rather ambiguous criteria of distinctiveness, to conflicting interpretations of the results of assimilation and to the interests of the counting authorities. The highest numbers of ethnic groups were defined earlier this century by ethnographers and linguists who described the Caucasus as the ‘Mountains of Diversity’ or the ‘Refuge of Peoples’. Since then natural and artificial processes of assimilation, separation and of reassessment have taken place. Today approximately 40 groups living in the North Caucasus are believed to still have a distinct ethnic identity.

The most artificial process has been the categorization of the peoples by the authorities. Just to give a few examples: the Cherkess (or Circassians or Adygè) were registered as two different groups in Soviet censuses to justify the establishment of two autonomies: Adygea and Cherkessia. This instance of separation was not successful however. In addition, early this century, all groups of Turkish tongue

were collectively called Tatars.³⁴ They were then reassessed, probably due to a strong pan-Turkic movement which was perceived as threatening the Soviet state. Today, Balkar, Karachai, Kumyk and Nogai perceive themselves as distinct groups. A similar process took place in South Dagestan, where the Lezgi were once the dominating group, while earlier sub-groups, e.g. the Avar and the Dargin today have distinct identities – the Avar being the dominating group in Dagestan, while the Lezgi have been divided by the state border between Russia and Azerbaijan, and many smaller, formerly distinct groups, are no longer registered separately.

Soviet policies of ethnic engineering, played an important role in the processes of ethnification and de-ethnification, both by standardizing and promoting a selected number of local languages and by creating autonomies for a number of selected peoples. Groups with their own written language or their own territory have found it easier to maintain their ethnic identity or develop a national identity than others. Ethnification, though, is not an exclusively Soviet enterprise: when, for example, Russia began to conquer the Caucasus, Ingush settlements were incorporated much earlier than what later became known as the

Chechen settlement area. Living under very different conditions for this long period in history resulted in distinct ethnic identifications. Ethnicity, therefore, like nationality, in the Caucasus as in anywhere else, is the result of history and not a static or biological concept. Distinctions were then made between the mountain peoples proper and the inhabitants of the plains.

One of the primary ways that ethnic awareness has been preserved is as a consequence of ethnic registration since the 1920s. This identity was supported by the implementation of few but explicit collective cultural rights for certain groups and territorial rights for those who gave their name to autonomies. Also punishment was given collectively to ethnic groups, as was the case with the deportations of the Balkar, Karachai, Ingush and Chechen. Forty groups are mentioned explicitly in this report. The omission of others is due only to their size, their role or lack of information.

Some of the groups are related either by religion, language or way of life, others are not. Although there are many cultural traits that most of the Caucasus peoples share, at least those who have lived in the mountains for centuries, the astonishing diversity is often ascribed to a time in history when people lived geographically isolated from each other in far off places in the mountains where by their languages and their way of life developed in different directions. Alternative explanation stress other factors: local settlements – or *auls* as they are called in many places – have fostered quasi-ethnic loyalties to different chieftains and princes. This is thought to have been enforced by the fact, that settlements in the high mountains were family-organized. Only after moving to larger settlements and bigger farms in the lower woodlands and plains were the first collective territorial identities encouraged and new social structures evolved around two or three neighbouring *auls*. They are sometimes called clan loyalties by outsiders, *taip* in Chechnia and Ingushia and *tukhum* by Dagestani peoples. They are the basis of these strong quasi-attachments. These social structures determined who could get married or trade with whom, who was friend and who was foe. Before national identities began to emerge in the Soviet period, coherent identities of belonging to extended families were strongest, together with a common regional identity, and all have survived.

In today's atmosphere of claiming national and territorial rights, Caucasian peoples sometimes make a distinction between indigenous peoples and newcomers, stressing the natives' legitimate right to be there. Indigenous, as the word is used in these cases, relates to the Caucasian peoples proper, i.e. those whose native tongue belongs to the Caucasian languages.

Language

When speaking of relatedness among the peoples of the North Caucasus, the relationship is nearly always measured in terms of native languages, and Soviet registration of nationality regularly included one or more groups under a single linguistically motivated designation. When

first investigated and described, many of the languages in the Caucasus could not be placed within known language groups. They had no resemblance to any other languages. They were categorized as Caucasian, and their speakers as indigenous in the region. Although the criteria for relationship have been altered through the history of linguistics, the Caucasian languages are still seen as linguistically related, although many of them are incomprehensible to other Caucasian language speakers and are clearly different languages.³⁵ Except for native Russian speakers, speakers of Caucasian languages make up the biggest group (3 to 4 million) within the North Caucasus. The Caucasian languages belong to two major language groups, the North Eastern branch: (Lak, Avar and Dargin in Central Dagestan; Lezgi, Tabasaran and Rutul in Southern Dagestan; Chechen and Ingush in their respective republics) and the North Western branch: (Circassian languages – Kabard and Adygei or Cherkess – and Abkhaz, including Abaza).

Others speak Turkic languages, especially Western Turki or Kipchak (Nogai, Kumyk and Karachai-Balkar). These languages were brought by Turkic nomads who first came to live in the region centuries ago. In Dagestan one also finds an Azeri minority, cut off from neighbouring Azerbaijan by state borders. Their language belongs to the Oghuz branch of the Turkic language family.

Indo-European languages are spoken by two very different groups: Osset and Tat belonging to the Iranian branch and Russian and Ukrainian as languages are from the Slavic branch. Russians, including Cossacks, have lived in the region since it was incorporated into Russia. However, the largest immigration of Russians took place during the Soviet era. Despite extensive out-migration since the demise of the USSR, Russians still have a strong presence in the region, mainly in the cities and industrial centres.

Most people in the North Caucasus are bilingual in their native language and Russian. Earlier in history it was quite

TABLE 4
Relationship between the languages spoken in the North Caucasus^a

North Caucasian		Turkic	Iranian
North West	North East ³⁵		
1 Abkhaz Abaza	1 Nakh Chechen	1 West Kumyk	1 North East Ossetian
2 Circassian Adyg Kabard	Ingush 2 Dagestan a Avar Andi Dido b Lak c Lezgi Tabasaran	Karachai- Balkar 2 Central Nogai 3 South Azeri Dargwa	Iron Digor Tual 2 South West Tat

common for Caucasians to be bilingual with a Turkic language, often Kumyk, as the main language of trade and inter-group communication. Also Arabic was widespread as a second language, and most local languages developing written standards used the Arab alphabet. Today, people remember that their parents, born before the Second World War, never became literate in any other alphabet. In the 1920s and 1930s Soviet authorities encouraged new standardizations for many of the North Caucasian languages, constructed new alphabets (in Latin script) and published newspapers, political literature and schoolbooks in them. It was only in the 1940s that the Russian alphabet was introduced. In the 1970s and 1980s most educational institutions and all administration was Russianized. Many of the local languages have been preserved to a high degree in everyday oral communication. Today most people in the Caucasus want to reinstall their own language in the official sphere, and some are preparing for a change of script. However, newspapers and other publications which are currently published in native languages have few readers and it is becoming common to publish texts in Russian with native language headings.³⁶

Religion

During the Soviet period, practised religion did not play an important role in society, at least not overtly. But it has always been an integral part of the peoples' identity. Today, the impact of religion as a factor of distinction is on the increase in the North Caucasus. It is also used for articulating ethnic identity on the political scene. This notwithstanding it must be pointed out explicitly, that conflicts in the North Caucasus are not religious conflicts. Religion is an integrated factor of the cultures, yet does not form the basis for hostility between groups, even though the media, particular Western media, regularly describe them as Christian-Muslim conflicts. There is, on the other hand, a growing tendency to identify opponents in internal conflicts in terms of religious stereotypes when this is applicable.³⁹

In the North Caucasus three major religions can be identified in the individuals' search for identity as well as in the groups' expression of culture – Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The North Caucasus is known as one of Russia's Muslim regions. Islam, in its scholarly variety, came to Dagestan when part of the region was under Persian rule. It was also the religion of the Turkic tribes coming from the northern steppes. But more important, Islam, in its *Sufi* variety, played a unifying role during the long War of Independence against Russian colonization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The heroes of the resistance, Sheikh Mansur and Imam Shamil, both religious and political leaders gave rise to an ethnic and regional revival of the *Sufi* tradition. Both traditions have been revived, particularly in the eastern republics and in Dagestan, for example, the importance of the Imam in political life is growing.

The Chechen revived the tradition of Sufism, which was so strong during the holy war against Russia and as a force for ethnic networking during the years of deportation in Central Asia. Today it is regaining its strength. Two major

tariqat (movements or brotherhoods towards the right way to God), are prevailing, the *Naqshbandia* and the *Qadiri*. Both developed from revivalist movements of Muslim mystics into radical North Caucasian political movements, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively, the first being more philosophical, the second more militant, although these are very superficial generalizations.⁴⁰ Both survived underground during Soviet anti-religious campaigns and strengthened during the years of deportation. Membership of one of the *tariqat* is in principle subject to an individual's free choice, but is in practice often linked to traditional clan loyalties. The various *tariqat* are clearly distinguished by content, symbolized by distinct rituals and dances, the *zikr* which regularly are evoked as mobilizing forces.⁴¹ When President Dudaev was inaugurated he swore on the Koran – in Russian, and when he declared Chechnia independent, the Friday was chosen as the official day off. Dagestani's sometimes express dissatisfaction with the fact, that they cannot freely choose their holidays or educational system in accordance with their own cultural mores as long as they prefer to stay within Russia – which they do. The western republics have taken a much more secularized attitude to religious rituals and symbols to date. Their Muslim identity is predominantly cultural. Religious emissaries from various countries and congregations have visited all the republics in the North Caucasus and mosques and Islam institutes have opened in several places, e.g. Dagestan, Chechnia, Ingushia and Karachai-Cherkessia. However, Islamic fundamentalism has little hearing on the situation so far.

The other great religion is Christianity in its Orthodox version. It once was the predominant religion in the region, especially after the final Russian conquest in 1864, when hundreds of thousands of Muslim Caucasians left Russia for the Ottoman Empire and Christians settled in the deserted areas, among them Armenians, Georgians and Russians. This has for instance set its mark on the Abkhaz. This is in contrast to many other groups where the tendency was for societies to be transformed from Christian to Muslim of *Sufi* observancy as part and parcel of the organized resistance against conquest.

Ossetes, living amidst a Muslim environment, have transformed the Christian religion into an important part of their national and political identity. This stresses a line of demarcation with their Muslim neighbours, and adds an element of cohesion with the Russians; with Ossetes participating with Russians in the International Conferences of Orthodox Churches. This does not mean that all Ossetes are Christian, or that all are observing Christians. It appears primarily to be a cultural and political concept. There is a Muslim minority among the Ossetes, primarily in Digor, and although many Muslim Ossetes themselves tend to stress their religious distinctiveness, they are frequently left out of official Osset publications. Orthodox Christianity is also an important element of Cossacks' identity, being the Russians most closely tied to the region.

The third religious influence comes from the Caucasian Jews who except for religion and language, live the same cultural life as the rest of the Caucasian peoples. In the beginning of the century, communities of Caucasian Jews

were numerous and synagogues and rabbinical seminars widespread. Today, the centre of the community is in Nalchik, capital of Kabardino-Balkaria. The most probable explanation for the Jewish presence in the North Caucasus is Jewish immigration in connection with early Persian rule at the turn of the first millennium AD. They played an important role in mediating between the Persian Empire and the Empire of the Khazars, which officially adopted Judaism at that time. As many as two thirds of all Caucasian Jews are said to have emigrated to Israel since the 1970s, but the wave of emigration has been explosive since the beginning of the 1990s.

Buddhism is the main religion of the Kalmyk, living close to but not within the region described. It is a fact of distinction between the Kalmyk and their Muslim neighbours but has had no cultural impact on them. Also Paganism is a factor to be considered. Few of the peoples are religious in a traditional ritual sense, and most remember, live or revive traditions from a pre-Christian and pre-Muslim period. The traditions live alongside each other in a non-antagonistic fashion. Anthropologists on field work in the region describe rituals and holidays as locally based, often very much alike for Christians, Muslims and Jews and with clear roots in history. Syncretisms of Pagan and different religious rituals are the more rule than the exception. Pagan traditions are also upheld as proof of ancient rights to the region.

Throughout Caucasian history, travellers have reported on the peaceful coexistence of Jews, Christians and Muslims living in the same towns. Mutual support was a part of everyday life in periods when either Muslims or Jews were persecuted.⁴² One important factor to be considered is the number of mixed marriages among all religious groups. Although no reliable statistics seem to exist, people on site report on specific patterns of adaptation, e.g. of Christians adapting to Muslim traditions among the Digor, and of Muslims adapting to Jewish traditions. They also report on the specific difficulties of having to choose in today's atmosphere of ethnification.

An overview of the North Caucasian peoples

ABAZA (own name: Abaza)

See under Abkhaz

ABKHAZ (own name: Apsua)

Indigenous North West Caucasian people, some 90,000 to 100,000 of whom live in Abkhazia in Georgia. According to Abkhaz sources, half a million Abkhaz live in exile in Turkey and the Middle East, where they constitute part of the Çerkez diaspora.

Abkhaz are closely related to Abaza, who moved eastwards between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, where they took to Islam under the influence of their new

neighbours. They now live in Karachai-Cherkessia. Until the 1860s they were seen as one people living at the eastern coast of the Black Sea. Abkhaz territory came under Russian rule in 1864, and Abaz in the early nineteenth century. Both peoples are absolute minorities in their republics. Many, particularly Muslim Abkhaz, fell victim to a comprehensive population transfer programme between Turkey and Russia. When they left their land was given to Christians.

ADYGEI AND CHERKESS (own name: Adygè)

see also under Kabard

While Cherkess, Adygei and Kabard today are considered distinct peoples by outsiders, they were originally one indigenous North West Caucasian people. They call themselves Adgei, while Cherkess is Turkish. In English they are known under the collective name Circassians. When, from the fourteenth to the fifteenth centuries onwards, the Circassians expanded their habitat from the Black Sea Coast to the south and east, the Kabard broke away (see under Kabard). The Adgei converted to Islam in the sixteenth century under influence from Crimean Tatars but Islam never became deeply rooted. They formed a hierarchically structured feudal society with an aristocracy, free farmers and captured slaves. They fought wars with Russia from the second half of the eighteenth century, but did not support the Shamil uprising due to its non-feudal, more democratic traditions and the fanaticism of the movement. In 1864 the Cherkess and Adygei finally came under Russian rule and their social structure was destroyed. A mass exodus of up to 90 per cent of the Adgei to the Ottoman Empire followed. Today a diaspora of more than a million Adgei lives in Turkey, the Middle East and the USA.

Today, at least officially, Cherkess and Adygei are seen as two different peoples. Slightly more than half of the Russian Circassians live as Adygei in Adygea, approximately one quarter as Cherkess in Karachai-Cherkessia, with the remainder primarily in the Russian Provinces Krasnodar and Stavropol, where they mostly constitute a rural population. Both groups are absolute minorities in their respective republics and regions.

The closely related Shapsug still live at the coast of the Black Sea. Their name derives from their original way of income – horse-breeding.

AGUL

see under Lezgi

ANDI (own name: Andi)

See also under Avar.

The Andi group consists of Andi, Akhvakh, Bagulal, Botlikh, Chamalal, Godoberi, Karata and Tindi. They have not been registered in domestic censuses since 1926. According to a 1954 estimate there were approximately 50,000 persons belonging to the Andi group then.⁴³

AVAR (own name: Maarulal)

An East Caucasian mountain people of nearly 600,000 living primarily in the highest mountains in the west of the Dagestan Republic. The Avar are the largest ethnic group in Dagestan constituting a relative majority of approximately 27 per cent. Avar elites dominate many political structures in Dagestan both in government and in the new Islamic movement.

Avar claim descendency from nomadic Avars, who reached the region in the first centuries AD. They became Muslim before the eleventh century through Arab influence, and in the thirteenth century were temporarily under the rule of the Golden Horde. They formed a Khanate in the high valleys of the Caucasus mountains, which by the end of the seventeenth century became the most powerful of all the Dagestan principalities. The Khanate became a Russian protectorate in 1803. Avar played an important and prestigious role in the Muridist movement against the Russian conquest by the Avar Shamil. Avar territory was finally incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1859. The Avar also participated in the 1920 anti-Bolshevik movement. Even after collectivization of Soviet agriculture, the Avar maintained their traditional village community, village assembly and council of elders.

Today, the Avar include 15 smaller peoples of the Andi and Dido language group which were earlier registered separately.

BALKAR (own name: Malkarli)

A Caucasian people, closely related to Karachai, who speak a Western Turki (Kipchak) language. Today they live in Kabardino-Balkaria, where they constitute an absolute minority of 10 per cent.

Ethnically descendent from a tribal mixture, maybe the Khazars, they have been known in the Caucasus region since the fourteenth century. Living in the high glacier regions, they were, until this century called Mountain Tatars or Mountain Kabards. Balkars turned to Islam in the eighteenth century under Nogai and Tatar influence, and were incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1827. On 8 March 1944 the entire Balkar population was deported and spread throughout the Kazak and Kirgiz republics. In 1957 they were permitted to return to their former republic, but not always their original homes. Originally a herding people, they were mainly settled in collective and state farms. Since their return they have felt discriminated against regarding admission to higher education.

In 1991 the First Congress of the Balkar People met with the aim of obtaining equal political participation and to restore their homeland, by demanding their territorial rights and full rehabilitation for losses during the years of deportation.

CHECHEN (own name: Noxcijn Republika Ickeriy)

A North Eastern indigenous Caucasian people numbering nearly a million, who together with Ingush form the Vajnakh group. The name Chechen was a Russian invention derived from the name of the first conquered settlement. Apart from diaspora Chechen in the Middle East, they live primarily in Chechnia. Approximately 60,000 Chechen live under the name of Akki in Dagestan, and up to 50,000 in Central Asia. The traditional non-hierarchical social structure of *taip*, i.e. clan formations centred around a fellowship of free equal people endures.

Originally a mountain people, many came under the influence of Christianity from Byzantium. They began to resettle in the lower slopes north of the mountains from the sixteenth century onwards and in the eighteenth century became familiar with the teachings of *Naqushbandia*-Islam through contact with neighbouring peoples, and gave strong support to the *Sufi* uprising against the Russian conquest through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. After the final incorporation of their territory into the Russian Empire many sought exile in the Ottoman Empire. The main part of the Chechen diaspora today lives in Turkey and the Middle East. The Chechen who stayed in Russia retained their opposition to Russianization, and later, under Soviet power, to collectivization. They fell victim to massive political purges. On 23 February 1944 the entire Chechen population was deported to Kazakstan. Their republic was dissolved and their land given away to new settlers, mainly Russians. In the part which was given to Dagestan, Lak were forcibly moved into Chechen settlements. From 1957 the Chechen were permitted to return but there were serious limitations regarding land and work permits. The Akki Chechen could not return to their villages because of the Lak having been settled there. Dagestan is attempting to solve the problem peacefully by building new Lak settlements and resettling Chechen to their former houses.

Chechen' history after the first encounter with the Russian army, can be described as one long struggle towards independence. Chechnia declared itself an independent state in 1991 but this has not been recognized. Today all governmental and power structures are Chechen and in 1994 the name of the Chechen Republic was changed to Chechen Republic Ichkeria.

CIRCASSIANS, CHERKESS (own name: Adygè)

See under Adygei and Cherkess.

COSSACKS (own name: Kazaki)

Kazak is an originally Turko-Tatar word for a free warrior. The Cossack movement originates from the mid-fifteenth century but turned into a mass movement a century later due to worsening living conditions for the peasants. Many fled and joined Tatar Cossack groups at the fringes of Muscovy. They formed independent, self-governing military communes along the river valleys of the steppe, beyond the borders. Cossacks repeatedly supported peasant uprisings but also participated in military campaigns of the Russian army, where they played a major role in the expansion of the Russian Empire and the protection of her borders.⁴⁴ Some of the largest Cossack formations

were located in the Don and the Terek basins, and later the Kuban, close to the Caucasus, and they became strongly involved in the Russian conquest of the Caucasus region. All capitals of the North Caucasian Republics were founded as Cossack fortifications, and following the conquest Cossacks settled on soil earlier inhabited by Caucasian people. After the Russian Revolution, Cossacks of the North Caucasus formed the core of Denikin's White Voluntary Army and established a Terek Cossack Republic. When the Bolshevik regained the region in 1921, some 70,000 Cossacks were deported from their settlements in the North Caucasus to Siberia.

Orthodox Christianity and traditional values such as a democratic but military form of organization still characterize the Cossacks of the region. Yet in many ways they have adapted to Caucasian ways of life. They cooperate with other Caucasian peoples on certain issues such as the rehabilitation of repressed peoples while on other issues, such as land claims, they are opposed to those of the North Caucasians. Many Russians have lately affiliated with the Cossacks. Two groups are important to the region today: Terek Cossacks in the east, and Kuban Cossacks in the West. No numbers can be given as they were never included in Soviet census data. Cossacks themselves give their number in the millions, although this is questionable.⁴⁵

DARGIN (own name: Dargua)

An indigenous North East Caucasian people of slightly less than 350,000 living mostly in Central Dagestan. They constitute the second largest group in this republic. Dargin turned to Islam in the eighth century under Arab influence. Dargin territory came under Russian rule in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Like the Avar, the Dargin – traditionally a trading people – have widely maintained their traditional extended family structures, village assembly and council of elders.

Dargin today also include the Kaidak and the Kubachi whose languages are distinct from each other as well as from Dargin, but both have disappeared from official censuses.

DIDO (own name: Dido)

see also under Avar.

The Dido group consists of Archi, Bezheta, Dido, Ginukh, Hunzal, Kapuchi and Khvarshi. They have not been registered in domestic censuses since 1926. According to a 1954 estimate there were approximately 18,000 persons of the Dido group then.⁴⁶

INGUSH (own name: Ghalghai)

An indigenous Caucasian people of some 230,000. Today most live in the Ingush Republic which was established in 1992. The Ingush became Christians in the eleventh century. After 1700 many converted to Islam but only by the end of the nineteenth century did Islam spread universally through Ingushia, brought in by Qadiri missionaries.

Ingush territory in the plains of the rivers Terek and Sunzha was relatively easy to conquer. The northernmost part came under Russian rule in 1780, the rest in 1810. Thus the Ingush did not participate in Shamil's uprising. It was during this period that Ingush were finally divided from Chechen and gradually resettled from the mountains into the lower lands. After the conquest Terek Cossacks settled in the Sunzha region, and many Ingush had to leave. Since 1860 Ingush-Cossack land disputes have repeatedly been raised. After the Bolshevik came to power thousands of Cossacks were forced to leave for Siberia. From 1921-4 Ingush territory was part of the Caucasian Mountaineers' Republic. From 1924-34 Ingush had their own autonomous territory, and from 1934-44 Ingushia and Chechnia shared – on a decision from Moscow – one autonomy. In February 1944 all Ingush were deported to Kazakstan and Kirgizia. Their houses and their land were given away. From 1957 onwards the Ingush were permitted to return but resettlement was slow due to tensions with the new settlers. The part of their former territory which had been given to North Ossetia, was not returned and they were repeatedly forbidden to settle there. Mass demonstrations and major clashes on the issue of land claims have taken place in the 1970s, 1980s and violently in the 1990s.

When the Chechen in 1991 unilaterally declared their Republic an independent state, the Ingush voted for an Ingush Republic within the Russian Federation in order to develop their economy and culture and to regain lost territory. After severe clashes in late 1992 by and large all Ingush were driven out of North Ossetia and into refugee camps in the new Ingush Republic. The great majority of Ingush live in rural dwellings, as urbanization is very low. The urban dwellers and intellectuals still live in Grozny, the capital of the formerly shared Chechen-Ingush Republic, while others have not yet returned from their places of deportation.

KABARD (own name: Kebertei)

The eastern branch of Adygè. Slightly less than 400,000, most of whom live in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, where they constitute a majority, approximately 50 per cent of the population.

Originally half-nomads in the Kuban region, their territory came under the rule of the Golden Horde in the thirteenth century. Moving eastwards towards the Terek river after the dissolution of the Golden Horde under the chieftainship of Kebertei, they left the Adygè tribal fellowship and formed a strong empire based on feudal aristocracy. It lasted until the incorporation of the Kabarda into Russia in 1774. In the sixteenth century, the Kabard fell under the control of the Crimean Tatars, who introduced Islam. The Kabard Prince sought alliance with the expanding Russian Empire and married his daughter to Tsar Ivan the Fourth. Owing to good court relations, the Kabard retained a certain autonomy for some time. In the aftermath of the Caucasian War which changed the structure and living conditions in the entire region, the Kabard participated in several uprisings and revolts. After the

Russian revolution the Kabard was heavily involved in the civil war involving nationalist parties, foreign interventionists, Bolsheviks, and the White Voluntary Army. In 1921 a Kabard Autonomous District was formed. It was merged with the Balkar a year later and transformed into an Autonomous Republic in 1936. In the years of Balkar deportation 1944-57 the Kabard were once again the sole titular nation of their republic.

Today Kabard constitute almost 50 per cent of the population in their republic and oppose a fifty-fifty share of power with the Balkar who constitute 10 per cent of the population. There is a rising national self-consciousness among the Kabard.

KARACHAI (own name: Karachai)

A Caucasian people of 150,000, closely related to Balkar, who speak a western Turkic (Kipchak) language. They live in Karachai-Cherkessia and are the second largest group in the republic, with Russians constituting the absolute majority.

Ethnically descendent from Turkic tribes who migrated to the Caucasus in the fifteenth century, the Karachai were pressed up into the mountains by Cherkess and Kabard and mixed with indigenous Caucasians. In 1926 a Karachai Autonomous District was formed. Karachaya was occupied by the German Army from August 1942 to January 1943. In November that year the entire Karachai population was deported to Central Asia and the Autonomous District dissolved. Part of their homeland was then given to Georgia, but was returned, and in 1957 they were permitted to return to a now combined Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous District. Karachai-Cherkessia became a Republic in 1991.

Today the main claims are for more rehabilitation and improved conditions for their language and culture in their republic, where they constitute 26 per cent. There are also disputes over land with the local Cossacks.

KUMYK (own name: Kumuk)

A Caucasian people of the west-Turkic (Kipchak) language group, almost all of whom live in the lowlands of North Eastern Dagestan. Kumyks see themselves as indigenous descendants of the Kipchak and Khazar Tribal Federation who once dominated the North East of the region. Kumyk became Muslim in the eleventh century. In the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries the realm of the Kumyk Prince, the Shamkhal, head of a rigid feudal pyramid, was a dominating power in the eastern part of the North Caucasus. Kumyk used to be a second language and common means of communication for many of the peoples in the region. It is now Russian. Kumykia came under Russian influence in the beginning of the nineteenth century, their Khanate was finally abolished in 1847. In the beginning of the twentieth century Kumyk started to develop a trading middle class and intellectuals. Both were destroyed after the Russian revolution. A special complaint of the Kumyk is the destruction of agricul-

ture through collectivization and of their entire settlement pattern through the forced resettlement of Mountain Peoples to Kumyk territory in the lowlands. They claim to have been deprived of half of their arable land and to have been transformed into a minority within their traditional habitat.

Compared to other peoples of Dagestan, Kumyk have retained their traditional pastoral societal structures to a lesser degree. They constitute a relatively large proportion of the industrial workers, especially in the ports of Dagestan.⁴⁷ In 1989 Kumyk formed a Popular Movement, which opted for a democratic Autonomous Kumyk Republik the following year, based on self-determination in the region where they constituted the majority in 1921. They are active members of the Assembly of Turkic-Speaking Peoples and have discussed models of cooperation with the Balkar and the Karachai.⁴⁸

LAK (own name: Lak, earlier: Ghazi-Qumuq)

An indigenous North East Caucasian people of some 120,000 who live primarily on pastoral land in mid-Dagestan, with a third of their number in the capital Makhachkala. Approximately 10 per cent are seasonal and migrant workers in Kazakstan and Central Asia. Traditionally, the Lak worked as traders and artisans in semi-urban settlements with market places and mosques in the mountains.

Beginning in the fourteenth century the Ghazi-Qumuq Khanate was a relatively independent Islamic centre of high cultural and religious prestige. It weakened considerably and finally dissolved during the seventeenth century, when it became the subject of the Turkic-Persian-Russian contest for supremacy in the region. Lak territory came under Russian rule in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Lak were first voluntarily and then forcibly moved from the high mountains to the pasture lands of mid-Dagestan. In 1944, following the deportation of the Chechen, part of Chechnia was given to Dagestan and the Lak were moved into the houses deserted by the Chechen. In order to prevent a violent conflict over the question of rehabilitation, the Dagestan government has decided to offer new settlements to this group of Lak, close to Makhachkala, in an area claimed by the Kumyk.

LEZGI (own name: Lezgi, earlier: Kyurin)

A Caucasian Mountain people, approximately half of whom live in Dagestan, and the other half in the newly independent Republic of Azerbaijan on both sides of the Samur river. In 1989 their total number was officially given as 171,395 in Azerbaijan and 204,370 in Dagestan but today it is estimated to be a million. Lezgi estimates talk of some additional 2 million 'hidden' or assimilated Lezgi. In older books and maps Lezgi are described as the biggest group in the area.⁴⁹ These maps and descriptions show Tsakhur, Rutul, Tabasaran, Lak and Dargin, and many others who have now disappeared, which represents the entire group of Dagestani peoples speaking Caucasian languages. Today, only one of the former tribes is called

Lezgi.

Islam became the dominant religion following the Arab invasion in the eighth century. The Lezgi then joined in a free tribal union, while individual tribes in turn came under Armenian and Georgian Christian influence. Attempts to convert the Lezgi to Christianity failed. In the fourteenth century they sought protection from the Mongol invaders, under which rule Islam assumed its definite consolidation. In the sixteenth century they in turn came under Ottoman and Persian rule. After a revolt against Turkey and Persia in 1707, they experienced regular shifts between independence and dependency on Russia, Persia and the Turks. In 1802-4 they opted for Russia. When the Russian Empire reorganized her internal administrative structure in 1860, Lezgistan was divided along the river Samur between the Provinces (*gubernii*) of Derbent and Baku, a partition which was taken over by the Soviet system of republics: former Derbent Guberniya became Dagestan, former Baku Guberniya – Azerbaijan. Although there were great differences in the assimilation pressure and the possibilities for cultural development and participation of Lezgi in the two republics the partition has become a serious political issue as the area known as Lezgistan has become an international border between independent Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

While Dagestani Lezgi had the right to cultural development and political participation, Azerbaijani Lezgi were increasingly forced to assimilate from the year 1930. The first movement for a reunion of all Lezgi and guarantees for their rights was formed in Dagestan in 1959. The Communist Party then issued a 1963 decree on Lezgi cultural rights (native language schools and newspapers) but never implemented this decree. Since 1965 Lezgi have claimed a reunited and autonomous Lezgistan. 1990 saw the foundation of Sadval (Unity), a Lezgi democratic movement for a unified Lezgistan with territorial indigenous rights in a federated Dagestan. In 1992 tens of thousands of Lezgi rallied against the new state border with its customs control and visa requirements. The Lezgi see border agreements between Dagestan and Azerbaijan without their involvement as a violation of their rights, although they have so far secured an open border.

The closely related Agul (some 15,000 thousand in 21 villages) and Tsakhur (13 villages) live mostly in high isolated mountain regions in Southern Dagestan, the latter together with the Rutul (22 villages) partly in Azerbaijan.⁵⁰ The 80,000 Tabasaran are also closely related but were singled out, when they withstood the fifteenth century pressure from Persians and Turks and formed a small but strong regional power due to the strategic location at the passage south of Derbent.

MOUNTAIN JEWS or TAT (own name: Djuhur or Chufut)

A Caucasian people who live primarily in the urban centres of Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria. Since the 1970s two thirds of all Mountain Jews have emigrated, nearly all

to Israel. The wave of emigration has accelerated since the borders were opened in 1991. The name Tat derives from the language spoken, and Soviet and Russian statistics regularly enumerated both Jewish and Muslim Tat in one group. The designation Mountain Jews derives from the fact that they, contrary to the other Jews, live among the mountaineers of the Caucasus. The names Djuhur and Chufut are two local varieties, Western and Eastern respectively, probably derived – through Turkish – from an Arab version of Jahud, i.e. Jew, or from an Iranian word for people of different faith.

Mountain Jews probably descend from Jews who immigrated or were transferred to the region from Persia in the fifth or sixth centuries, with the objective of forming military colonies and defending the Transcaucasus against raids of nomads from the North.⁵¹ They assimilated linguistically to Tat, a southwestern Iranian language. Many assimilated with the ruling Islamic classes in the North Caucasus. Others retained their religion, and until the Russian conquest contact with other Persian Jews was regular. Djuhur adapted themselves in many aspects to the cultures of their environment and were an integral part of Caucasian life.

NOGAI (own name: Nogai)

A Caucasian people of the west-Turkic (Kipchak) language group who live partly in North Dagestan (some 30,000 Qara or Black Nogai) and partly in the Russian Province of Stavropol some 30,000 Aq or White Nogai), the first former nomadic cattle-breeders, the latter originally farmers.

The Nogai separated from the Golden Horde in the fourteenth century. Until the sixteenth century their nomadic pastures were located east of the Volga when they came under territorial pressure from Kalmyks and Russians. They came under the rule of the Crimean Tatars, and in the eighteenth century were finally pressured into the Caucasus region by Kuban Cossacks. Some of their summer pasturelands are located in the mountainous border region in Kalmykia which has resulted in disputes over land rights. The Kalmyk and Dagestan governments have attempted to solve the conflict but have had little success. Another concern of the Nogai is their unequal possibilities for cultural development in Dagestan and Stavropol.

OSSETES (own names: Iron, Digoron, Tualläg)

A Caucasian people of the North Iranian language group, the majority of whom live in the Republic of North Ossetia (Ironston), where they constitute an absolute majority. Until recently 15 per cent lived in Georgia, but many have fled to North Ossetia due to the abolishment of their autonomy in South Ossetia and the war with Georgia.

Originally descendants of Iranian speaking tribal federations of mixed origin, the Alans, who came from Central Asia in the fourth century moved further westwards. They formed a strong state-like alliance from the ninth to the

twelfth centuries and became a leading force south of the Don river during the Middle Ages. The Ossetes became Christians early on. Under Mongol rule, they were pushed towards and over the Caucasus mountains, where they mixed with other Caucasian groups and successively formed three territorial entities each with different developments. Digor in the west came under Kabard and Islamic influence. Tualläg in the southernmost region became part of what is now Georgia, and Iron, the northernmost group, came under Russian rule after 1767, which strengthened Orthodox Christianity considerably. Most Ossetes today are Christians. Russia developed the mining industry in the mountains of Ossetia and the urban centre of Vladikavkaz. Ossetes were strongly involved in the civil war 1918-20.

In the North, Ossetes became part of the Mountaineers' Republic 1920-4, when they received their own Autonomous District, the status of which was upgraded to Autonomous Republic in 1936. Ossetian language schools existed until the late 1960s. In the south, Ossetes received an Autonomous District within Georgia in 1922. Since 1965 Russian has been the only administrative language.

Two major conflicts ravage Ossetes. In 1989 the South Ossetian Popular Front, Ademon Nykhas, opted for a reunion with North Ossetia due to increasing threats of Georgianization. This led to the first case of martial law and bloodshed. Georgia abolished Ossetian autonomy. During the following armed conflict, most South Ossete villages were burnt down turning the population into refugees in North Ossetia. Many moved to the areas where the Ingush minority of North Ossetia was settled. North Ossetia had received part of Ingush territory in 1944 after the Ingush had been deported, and many Ossetes were forcibly moved from the high mountains to this area. Since the return of the Ingush, conflicts over the right of residence have been on the agenda. In 1992 Ingush had to leave Ossetia after severe clashes. This dispute is in the process of arbitration.

SHAPSUG

See under Adygei and Cherkess.

RUTUL, TABASARAN AND TSAKHUR

See under Lezgi.

CURRENT ISSUES, CLAIMS AND CONFLICTS

Introduction

In the process of democratization in the successor states of the former Soviet Union, more blood has been shed than during the previous 40 years. The North Caucasus has not been exempt from this process. Numerous casualties and expatriations have left the region in turmoil, with tens of thousands of refugees and large stockpiles of arms. The most widely reported armed conflicts to date are those between South Ossetia and Georgia, Abkhazia and Georgia and North Ossetia and Ingushia. These conflicts are due to minority populations' territorial, political and cultural claims being neglected by the new centres, i.e. the governmental capitals in the newly re-established states of Russia and Georgia. Many more burning claims and issues are at stake.

Although they emanate from people's search for new identities in an era of decisive structural, and supposedly democratic, changes in their countries of residence, they affect all levels of interrelations, including: relations between groups within each territorial unit; relations between neighbouring republics; regional relations; relations with the centres of power; and international relations.

As all conflicts in the North Caucasus are interdependent, they have to be analyzed at all levels in order to reach an understanding and prevent worst case scenarios from developing. To support this view, the disastrous war between Georgia and Abkhazia is just one example. The UN had been informed of the situation and still, the international community and the media were taken aback by a rather small, hardly known minority being capable of holding its stand in the 1992-3 war.

The following passage outlining the issues, claims and conflicts of the minorities in the North Caucasus focuses primarily on the nine North Caucasian units⁵², and it is these units to which the minorities themselves relate, organize themselves within and direct their claims towards. With this focus, three main levels will be investigated: today's relations to Russia and Russians, new regional organizations and movements, and the main issues of the minorities and republics.

The republics are ethnically defined, with either one or more 'titular nations'. Most of the minorities are settled within their titular republics, which they usually consider to be their homeland. Just as Russia is concerned about Russians living as minorities in non-Russian republics, the titular nations of the North Caucasus are concerned about their peoples living as minorities in other republics. No minority is, of course, an homogeneous social entity. Various sub-groups within each minority have differing claims, but as the conflict escalates, these subgroups tend to develop a collective loyalty towards their own ethnic group. Political movements and their leaders seem intu-

itively aware of this fact, and are ready to exploit it. However, several levels of loyalty can coexist. Before the revolution in 1917 clan loyalties were strong among most North Caucasian minorities and in many places have survived the Soviet period. Today new ethnic loyalties have arisen, partly as a result of the Soviet policy of establishing administrative units along ethnic lines.

As a precondition for presenting particular issues, claims and conflicts of importance to the minorities and their republics, one has to look at some general issues, which are shared by all minorities and their republics and are often beyond their power of influence. Of special importance in this respect are relations to the Russian (and Georgian) centres of power and the Russian impact in the North Caucasus region. Common to the entire North Caucasus, and probably decisive in its future development, are certain demographic processes, and initiatives for regional cooperation.

Ongoing demographic changes have been transforming the population structure in the North Caucasus since the return of the deported peoples at the end of the 1950s. One of the most striking features is the diminishing number of Russians. This is due to out-migration in the last decades, especially in the easternmost republics, which will be considered separately. Even more striking are current changes in birth rates and urbanization. After decades of an extensive population decrease due to genocide and deportations, birth rates among most of the predominantly rural North Caucasian peoples increased, a trend that could be seen from Soviet censuses of 1979 and 1989. Today places left by Russians are being taken over by North Caucasians, who are becoming more urbanized, and birth rates are apparently falling.⁵³

The numbers of refugees and immigrants are a major concern to many North Caucasian republics, with employment, housing and goods in short supply. Apart from those who are displaced as a consequence of conflicts in the region itself, refugees have come from the wars in the Transcaucasus, especially Armenia. Some fear the Armenians will buy the best land and change the demographic composition of the republics once privatization is implemented. In turn the Russians leaving the North Caucasus are leading to similar fears in the adjacent provinces of Krasnodar and Stavropol.

Most nationalities in the North Caucasus have diasporas in the Middle East, Turkey and Western Europe. The Adygei and Abkhaz in the North Caucasus are even minorities compared with those living outside their country of origin. After *perestroika* and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, contacts with the diaspora, which had been prohibited for decades, have increased heavily, and diaspora Caucasians have begun to revive their Caucasian identities and form support organizations. But the expected repatriation and financial support from abroad have not materialized. There seems to be no real motivation for people to return as long as Russia is in economic crisis and political transition. Many have come to visit, and some have bought *dachas*, yet bureaucracy, a legal vacuum and unresolved regulations of ownership prevent a return for good.

The relations between local government structures and the centre in Moscow on the one hand and the relations between the local governmental structures and the movements on the other hand are changing rapidly, thus no general judgement is possible. In some cases the movements become part of local parliaments, in others they are an outside opposition. Even though the republics are subject to the Russian Federation according to the constitution, they often act as if they were independent.

Relations to Russia and Russians

It is beyond any doubt, that Russia and the Russians have had a great impact on the development and the fate of the North Caucasian peoples and region. The Russian Federation, still a great power, is developing into a nation state, in which the North Caucasus is perceived as both marginal and dangerous, and the North Caucasian minorities are ruled without too high a regard to their rights. Much attention is given to the Russians living in the North Caucasus, the Russian provinces, adjacent to the North Caucasus republics, and the Cossacks for whom the North Caucasus has been a homeland since the colonization started, and are caught between Russian and Caucasian loyalties.

The Russian Federation's attitude

Since Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Russian Federation rose as separate states from the ashes of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Caucasus region has become Russia's new southern border. The military border district has been moved here, at least temporarily until new Commonwealth Independent States (CIS) arrangements on defence and security are finalized.

In the first years after 1991 the political centre of the Russian Federation was relatively weak, and the provinces and republics had strong positions in the power struggle. Although the process of regionalization is continuing, the central authorities in Moscow have been gathering political strength since the beginning of 1994, not so much because of improvements in the economic situation but because the military has gained strength.⁵⁴ The elections of December 1993 brought Russian nationalism and chauvinism back onto the agenda. Both pose pressures on border regions and the former USSR republics, and both help express Russia's clear interest in the 'near abroad'. Neither NATO nor the UN oppose these new geopolitical interests.

Today, the North Caucasus has the highest concentration of troops in the entire Russian Federation, and some Russian political and military circles have expressed a desire to enlarge the number of troops and arms on account of the unstable situation in the Transcaucasian republics, e.g. Nagorno-Karabakh.⁵⁵ Pressures have resulted in Georgia and Azerbaijan joining the CIS in 1993-4. The re-establishment of the Caucasus region in its historical role, i.e. belonging to the Russian geopolitical sphere of interest, has consequences for the position of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and others. It could mean that any desire

for independence and nation building which the North Caucasian republics might wish to voice, could be rapidly halted. To some observers the large number of Russian troops in the region and its adjacent provinces, and the fact that political and military leaders in Moscow state that their presence is needed because of the unstable situation, in the three Transcaucasian republics, is reminiscent of old imperial ways of thinking. Ethnic turmoil in the Caucasus region is being used by the military and the lobby of the military industrial complex as arguments against cuts in the military budget.

The reappearance of traditional Russian nationalism also threatens the rights of the North Caucasian minorities to develop in accordance with their aspirations for equality and recognition. The renewed Russian interest in their own minorities abroad is not coupled with a similar interest in the welfare of minorities within the borders of the Russian Federation. There is also a rise in Russian anti-Caucasian racism and propaganda. 'A person of Caucasian nationality' is a new Russian euphemism for hostile sentiments, frequently voiced in official Russian political debates.⁵⁶ Following the October coup in 1993, tens of thousands of Caucasians living and working in Moscow were expelled by force on the official grounds that they had no residence permit. The decree of the Mayor of Moscow did not explicitly mention Caucasians, but the police and municipal council admitted that Caucasians were singled out in raids by virtue of their appearance, and they attempted to justify this action due to their 'participation in crimes'.⁵⁷ The Russian and Western media regularly mention Caucasians in connection with criminal acts and mafia activities. Such undisguised racism might in the long term impact on Russians living in Caucasian republics.

In December 1993, the new constitution of the Russian Federation was adopted. It is highly significant that the word 'sovereign' has been removed in relation to the status of republics. This change was received with widespread protests and threats of boycott in the North Caucasian republics. President Yeltsin visited the North Caucasus to meet with local leaders and secure their support, which was reluctantly promised under the condition of special transitional measures in connection with local land reforms and privatization. These are important issues in the North Caucasian republics. Local leaders fear that ownership of land and the distribution of it will inevitably lead to ethnic conflicts. In turn, local leaders are often called conservative and anti-reformist, but violent clashes have already shown that their concerns are well founded. The population density in the region is high and it is feared that affluent people from outside the region will buy the most valuable recreational areas in the mountains and along the seashore. In some republics where more than one minority share the power, there is a fear that one group could be economically disadvantaged by another and the vulnerable balance of power could be threatened. Another constitutional issue imposed on the region by the centre is causing concern. After the elections in December 1993, each republic could elect one person to the Upper Chamber of the new Russian parliament, the Federal Assembly. It was rather predictable that this would lead to ethnic tension in the multi-ethnic North

Caucasian republics. The short notice of the elections gave only limited time to form political parties and movements, and in the North Caucasus most were formed along ethnic lines. In this way Moscow pushed the process of regional ethnification further ahead. Where the elections were not boycotted, a majority voted against the new constitution.

The Russian Federation has inherited many of the structural and ideological problems of Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union: the republics; their ethnic composition; disputes over borders and land, and in some instances, struggles for independence. Most of the minorities share a deeply rooted anger over the intense Russification and oppression of more than a century. Claims for rehabilitation, and even revenge, are an important ingredient in today's debate. 'The hand of Moscow', accusations against Russia for unofficially exploiting the regional conflicts, is a frequent explanation for the escalation in the conflict.⁵⁸

The political leaders' preoccupation with the country's economic and political crisis and a general lack of interest in minority issues enlarges the mental distance between the North Caucasus and the centre on an almost daily basis.

Russians in the North Caucasian republics

There are two kinds of Russians in the North Caucasian republics: Russians who have immigrated during the last decades and who live primarily in the cities and industrial centres, and Cossacks, who as descendants of the conquerors, often have long family traditions in the region, and who mostly live in their own villages, the Cossack *stanitzas*. Caucasians sometimes accuse Russians of fifth column activities because they rarely support local endeavours for more autonomy.⁵⁹ The fact that Russians seldom speak the local languages – which are used more and more in local public life – adds to their feelings of anxiety, and to their alienation.

Beginning in the 1930s, and especially after the Second World War, Russians came to dominate most of the bigger cities and industrial centres in the North Caucasus, either as administrative leaders or as part of the labour force. Since the deported peoples' return from forced exile, the republics (especially those in the east) have experienced an out-migration of Russians. In the western republics where there is less conflict the status quo remains. This indicates that the Russians are the first to move when ethnic turmoil arises.⁶⁰

If the Russian exodus continues or increases, many of the industrial complexes will experience problems due to lack of skilled workers and technicians. Because of the great differences from republic to republic, this will be dealt with further in the section National Mobilization: Minorities and Republics.

The Cossacks

The situation is somewhat different for the Cossacks. Two groups of Cossacks prevail in the North Caucasian republics: Terek Cossacks in the middle and eastern parts, and Kuban Cossacks in the west. Their positions within the republics are generally weak, they are dispersed, and lack a powerful class or intelligentsia. Their search for identity is often expressed in terms of a longing for ethnic purity. As today's process of ethnic purification often results in chain reactions, where the weakest part is forced to leave, it is the Cossack population who often falls victim. But there are still a number of thriving Terek Cossack *stanitzas* left in Dagestan, Chechnia, Ingushia and North Ossetia, and Kuban Cossack settlements in Karachai-Cherkessia and Adygea.

In general both Cossack movements claim rehabilitation after the anti-Cossack purges, massacres and deportations following the Bolshevik Revolution,⁶¹ re-establishment of Cossack villages with collective ownership of land, and a reintroduction of Cossack units in the Russian military forces, preferably with the Cossacks' traditional function as border guards.

The Terek Cossacks, who have their headquarters in Vladikavkaz, the capital of North Ossetia, claim a membership of more than 500,000, most of whom live in the provinces adjacent to the North Caucasian republics. They wish to regain their land and villages which existed before 1917. Sometimes they voice a wish to re-establish a Terek Republic of their own, but they are generally hesitant in expressing concrete territorial claims. The Kuban Cossacks have similar aspirations, but seem to have stronger support from the Kuban Cossack movements in the Krasnodar province. As with the North Caucasian minorities, land reform is a major issue among Cossacks. The relation between Cossacks and Caucasians are somewhat ambiguous. In times of conflict they have been enemies, however, in times of peace, they have had and still have many contacts and interests in common which is reflected in attempts at regional cooperation.

In 1991, the Russian Supreme Soviet adopted a Law on the Rehabilitation of the Repressed People, which explicitly mentioned the Cossacks. It has not yet been implemented. In March 1993 a Presidential Decree gave the Cossacks certain rights to form quasi-military formations.⁶² The effect of this decree remains to be seen, but it has caused some anxiety among the North Caucasian minorities, especially those living in areas with high numbers of Cossacks. The newly elected parliament is likely to take initiatives to meet some of the Cossack claims. A restoration of Cossack districts with specified rights to cultural autonomy is one of the possible decisions. If this restoration also includes territorial autonomy – as claimed by some Cossack groups – this is likely to lead to conflict with the indigenous Caucasian minorities.

Russians often articulate positive sentiments towards the Cossack movements, particularly with rising nationalism in Russia, however some doubt that the Cossacks can be trusted. The Cossacks are badly organized with many different coexisting organizations, some of which stress the military

aspects of their claims, while others are very conservative and are dominated by former communists. Many of the Cossack ideals, such as collective land ownership, originate from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and they are often opposed to privatization, reforms and capitalism in general. One of the problems Cossacks face, is a widespread uncertainty as to whether they constitute a Russian sub-race, a social class or an ethnic group of their own. In accordance with the new processes of getting legitimacy through ethnicity they claim to be a people, while still maintaining such close relations with Russians that this argument is unconvincing. Today it is difficult to determine exactly who is a Cossack and also who can become one.⁶³

The adjacent Stavropol and Krasnodar provinces

The majority population in these provinces, which are close neighbours to the North Caucasian republics, is Russian, but with minority enclaves of North Caucasian peoples. In the ongoing process of regionalization the two provinces, have opted on several occasions for the Caucasus region against Moscow. Stavropol Krai has broken the economic blockade against Chechnia, imposed by Moscow and made separate trade agreements, and Krasnodar Krai has cut their supplies of food products to the rest of Russia.

This tendency is in parallel to the rising use of xenophobia against North Caucasians in political movements. As neighbours to the Transcaucasus and the North Caucasus, Stavropol and Krasnodar Krai have received hundreds of thousands of refugees, especially Armenians and Russians.⁶⁴ This is creating further tension as the number of unemployed rises as a consequence of the transition to a market economy. In June 1992 the two provinces had more than 100,000 refugees, of which only a small number had a job.⁶⁵ However, they were allowed to get a *propiska* – a local residence permit.⁶⁶ The Cossacks, who number more than 2 million in these provinces, have used this as a means of gaining influence. In the autumn of 1993 Krasnodar imposed her own restrictive migration policies. Now only those who have relatives in the province can get a *propiska*.⁶⁷ Because of the Cossacks and the ethnic composition of Krasnodar and Stavropol, resistance to land reforms and privatization is widespread in both provinces.

Regional mobilization: cooperation of North Caucasian peoples

The following is a selection of the cross-border organizations in the North Caucasus. Many new organizations are established, and many will disappear again. The ones chosen here are some of the more important and influential, and are likely to remain; at least until the current problems are solved. The process of ethnification that is sweeping over all of the former Soviet Union, cannot stand alone in multi-ethnic areas like the North Caucasus. There is an obvious need for cross-minority cooperation.⁶⁸

The Confederation of the Peoples of the Caucasus (CPC)

The CPC was started in 1989 by members of six national movements in the North Caucasus as a kind of parallel parliament, the Assembly of Caucasian Mountain Peoples. The initiative came from Abkhaz who felt threatened by the nationalist sentiments in Georgia and wanted outside support. In spring 1994 the CPC had members from 16 minorities and nationalities: Abaza, Abkhaz, Akki, Adygei, Avar, Chechen, Cherkess, Dargin, Ingush, Kabard, Lak, Lezgi, North Ossetes, Rutul, Shapsug and South Ossetes. Another four are participating as observers: Karachai, Nogai, Kumyk and Cossacks. With the participation of the latter three, the word 'Mountain' has been removed from the name of the CPC. The CPC's parliament has three members from each group. Delegates often represent circles close to the republican governments, in single cases the government itself.

Today, the CPC is acknowledged as a unifying political force in the North Caucasus, mainly as a consequence of the Abkhaz victory in the war against Georgia. CPC organized North Caucasian volunteers as soon as the fighting began, and this immediate action was probably of significant importance for the course of the war. Furthermore, the CPC collected money (and possibly weapons) to support the Abkhaz. In 1993 CPC opened a permanent representation in Abkhazia. The new and strengthened confidence of the CPC has resulted in warnings that the CPC will call for an immediate mobilization in the case of new aggressions by Georgia against South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

In relation to Russia, the main objective of the CPC is to avoid a premature privatization of land due to fears that new conflicts will arise in the densely populated area and that the *nouveau riche* will buy up the land. CPC has also urged the leaders of the North Caucasian republics not to implement the new Russian constitution because the word 'sovereignty' was deleted from the definition of republics. This act was interpreted by the North Caucasian peoples as implying less control over their own cultural institutions, which caused fears for further russification, dominance from Moscow and forced assimilation.

The CPC enjoys widespread support among the peoples of the North Caucasus, however, the question is whether the CPC will hold together after its coordinated action in the Abkhaz-Georgian war. The number of potential internal conflicts among the minorities participating in the CPC is considerable and the overall attitude of the CPC with regard to these internal conflicts has apparently been hesitant. Yet a committee working on solutions to the Ingush-North Ossetian conflict and the suggestion for a joint North Caucasian peace keeping force headed by the CPC (to replace the Russian military administration and peace keeping troops) has wide support in the region.⁶⁹ If the CPC cannot play an active part in the solution of this conflict, the organization might experience a credibility setback in the eyes of many North Caucasians. The fact that the members of the CPC are predominantly Muslim, also seems to make some, especially Ossetes and Cossacks, cautious, but so far religion has played a minor

role in matters discussed by the CPC.⁷⁰ In 1994 the CPC seems more pragmatic in relation to Russia, has tempered its anti-Russian rhetoric and is, so it seems, looking for a common future with Russia. There is undoubtedly a Russian anxiety about the CPC's potential to become an integrating force for regional political independence.

The Confederation of Repressed Peoples (CRP)

The CRP has members from all over the former Soviet Union. CRP was established in November 1990, with a collective membership and is registered as a representative non governmental organization on behalf of the 10 member peoples. Its main aim is to support claims for the final rehabilitation of all the peoples who had been repressed in the Stalin era, especially those who were collectively deported on the sole ground that they belonged to a certain minority. The CRP has claimed a state guarantee from Russia on the implementation of the law of rehabilitation from 26 April 1991, and wants central rather than local authorities to carry out the implementation. CRP has supported the Ingush claims for territory in neighbouring North Ossetia.⁷¹ The North Caucasus is primarily represented through its deported peoples, the Chechen, Ingush, Karachai and Balkar. It was the deported peoples from the North Caucasus who initiated the establishment of the CRP, and Karachaevsk, the main urban centre of the Karachai has been chosen for the CRP headquarters.

Circassian organizations

An issue of utmost importance for most Circassians, i.e. Cherkess, Adygei, Shapsug and Kabards, is to promote a repatriation of the large Circassian diaspora.

The main objective of the All-World Circassian Association is to secure contacts between the diaspora in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, USA and elsewhere and Circassians living in their country of origin, i.e. the North Caucasus, and promote their repatriation.

Adyge Haza is an organization working nationally and independently in each of the North Caucasian republics with Circassians populations. It is strongest in Kabardino-Balkaria where the largest concentration of Circassians in the North Caucasus is to be found. Cooperation between the different Adyge Haza groups is limited. Leaders from various Adyge Haza participated in the creation of the CPC. In the beginning, during the *perestroika* years, the main objective of the Adyge Haza was to secure the survival of the Circassian language and culture, but since then the activities have expanded, and quite a few of the various informal congresses and political parties in Circassian populated republics have actually emanated from the organization. As with the CPC, the main issue since 1992 has been support for Abkhazia: coordinating volunteers; providing weapons; organizing humanitarian aid, returning home the corpses, and lobbying in Russia and the North Caucasian republics. Another important objective for Adyge Haza is to promote and support dias-

pora repatriates by assisting with the provision of housing, language education and guidance through the Russian bureaucracy.

The Assembly of Turkish Peoples (ATP)

The ATP is a newly formed worldwide organization of Turkish-speaking peoples, with the majority of the members coming from the former Soviet Union. The organization is backing the claims of these peoples especially regarding language, media, cultural institutions etc. Members from the North Caucasus are the Karachai, Balkar, Kumyk and Nogai. Turkey has been supporting a plan for all Turkish languages in the former USSR to transform their script from the Cyrillic alphabet to Latin.

The ATP is divided into several sections. All North Caucasus members are together with Azerbaijan part of the Caucasian-Black Sea section of the ATP. There is hope, that Azerbaijan, through the ATP, might support Nogai and Kumyk claims for autonomy within the Russian Federation. The Nogai and the Kumyk on their side want, through the ATP, to exert their influence on Azerbaijan to solve the critical issue of the Lezgi minority in Azerbaijan, thereby helping to avoid one of the potential minority conflicts from erupting.

The Assembly of Democratic Forces of Northern Caucasus

The Assembly has members from more than 70 so-called democratic organizations (local non governmental organizations) within the region, including Kalmykia. The representatives from Kalmykia in particular, have made use of this organization as a platform for peace initiatives in the North Caucasus.⁷² So far the Assembly's attempts to encourage representatives from Ingushia and North Ossetia to meet have been unsuccessful, even though they stress their local affinity by stating that any possible solutions must take account of mountain traditions. The Assembly has also backed Lezgi claims towards Azerbaijan.

National mobilization: minorities and republics

No minority constitutes a homogeneous group. Within each minority there are a variety of political attitudes. Ethnic movements began to emerge as 'popular fronts' by most minorities in the late 1980s, but in the course of development they often split into several groups each guided by different political aims. Despite differing aims and solutions the core ethnic loyalty remains. Many claims originate from one ethnic group or minority feeling themselves disenfranchised by the other group(s) sharing in power. With the exceptions of Chechnia, Abkhazia and partly South Ossetia, parliaments and governments in the North Caucasian republics are governed by people who also were part of the political leadership in the Soviet era.

Republics with more than one group sharing in power

Dagestan

The territory of Dagestan covers 50,300 square km and has 1,802,159 inhabitants, 28 per cent Avar, 16 per cent Dargin, 13 per cent Kumyk, 11 per cent Lezgi, 9 per cent Russian, 5 per cent Lak, 4 per cent Tabasaran, 4 per cent Azeri, 2 per cent Nogai and others (1989). Rural population: Avar 69 per cent, Dargin 69 per cent, Kumyk 54 per cent, Lezgi 52 per cent, Lak 34 per cent, Tabasaran 63 per cent, Nogai 81 per cent and Rutul 69 per cent (1989).

Dagestan is the largest republic in the region with almost two million people. It is a highly multi-ethnic republic with 10 groups sharing power. Although Dagestan has the least number of Russian immigrants, the republic has been strongly russianized in terms of language. Many of the smaller peoples have been assimilated by bigger ones. This has happened mainly through lack of official recognition in terms of official registration as well as in terms of language. Dagestan still has a strong Islamic identity of the more conservative kind, and the clan (*Tukhum*) structure is still functioning and is the foundation for today's ethnic structure. Birth rates are high – the population has doubled in the last 30 years – and there is an increasing pressure on land. During the Soviet period many peoples were resettled from the mountains to the plains. For example, the Avar were resettled in the northern plains, traditionally the habitat of Kumyk. Today the Kumyk are a minority in their 'own' districts, and therefore feel their language and culture to be threatened. Kumyk movements are attempting to transform Dagestan into a federation. Nogai and Lezgi are backing the idea because half of their population lives outside Dagestan under conditions that are far less favourable than those in Dagestan, where they share in power and have their own newspapers. The government and most of the other minorities reject this concept since it would split up the republic into ethnically defined territories. They fear that new borders might create more problems than they solve.

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Lezgi were divided by the new Russian-Azerbaijan border. After much protest the two countries have agreed to keep the border open. However, the Lezgi are fearful for future contact with their kin across the border, because the political situation in Azerbaijan as well as in Russia is unstable. The Lezgi movement claims the establishment of a free Lezgistan that encompasses both groups of Lezgi. Conflicts arise because Lezgi in Azerbaijan are not recognized as a minority. They are threatened by forced assimilation, drafted against their will to the Azerbaijan army in the war against Armenia, and those Lezgi who agitate for a free Lezgistan are imprisoned. In Dagestan, where Lezgi participate in the administration and the media, lately it has been difficult, if not prohibited, to publish information about this conflict of interest with the government arguing that this might provoke a conflict of arms.⁷³ Dagestan also has to solve a territorial issue concerning the deported peoples. When the Chechen were collectively removed to Central Asia, Dagestan like Ossetia was given

part of their territory, which was never returned. Unlike Ossetia, where the issue led to armed conflict, Dagestan is attempting to solve the issue peacefully. The returning Dagestani Chechen – registered as a specific ethnic group, the Akki – found their settlements inhabited by Lak who had been moved to these places from the high mountains. The Dagestani government has promised to build new houses for the Lak close to other Laks in the vicinity of Makhachkala, and let the Akki Chechen settle in their *auls* of old. Obviously, such a solution needs funding.

Representatives from government and parliament report that they are often accused of being conservative communist old-timers, but as inter-ethnic violence and bloodshed have been avoided so far, their cautiousness might be well considered.⁷⁴ The multi-ethnicity of Dagestan calls for a difficult balance, and there is a strong awareness among all peoples concerning a potential dominance by the largest ethnic group, the Avar. The sensitive balance is threatened by Moscow's insistence on privatization and on the introduction of a presidency which could support one group over the others. There are claims for the establishment of an ethnic representative parliamentary chamber in order to avoid a president, representing one people, obtaining too much power. Also, the Dagestani government has expressed its anxiety about the abolishment of 'sovereignty' from its constitution.

Kabardino-Balkaria

Kabardino-Balkaria covers 12,500 square km and has 753,531 inhabitants, 49 per cent Kabard, 32 per cent Russian and 11 per cent Balkar (1989). Rural population: Kabard 55 per cent, Balkar 41 per cent (1989).

Kabards make up half of the republic's population, but since the titular peoples have a higher growth rate than the Russians, the number of Kabards in 1994 might exceed 50 per cent. The Balkars fear that this will worsen their political opportunities. This, together with anxieties due to a lack of rehabilitation after their return from deportation, has been a major incitement for the Balkar national movements and political parties, who wish to regain their pre-deportation territorial districts and transform the republic into a federation. This could lead to territorial conflict between the two titular nationalities. Both have published maps which lay claim to disputed areas and arouse strong negative sentiments. The Russian parliament passed a law in March 1994 promising financial support to cultural, but not territorial, rehabilitation of the Balkar.⁷⁵ On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the deportations, the President of the republic has offered the re-establishment of former Balkar territorial districts.

The primary claim of the Kabard national movements and political parties is an increase of political rights. For many years the Kabard had to share all political posts and political influence with the Balkar on a one-to-one basis, although they are more than four times as many. In addition to this they claim more political independence from Moscow in order to be able to redress the strong russification of their culture since colonization.

The Russians in Kabardino-Balkaria are mainly urban and

the number of Cossacks is insignificant. As the second largest group in the republic, Russians have significant political influence even though they are rather successfully kept from leading political posts. This has been possible because the rivalry between the more radical parts of the two titular nationalities has usually resulted in political compromises. The prudent policies of government and parliament have given rise to accusations of conservatism and being against economic reforms. But fear for the consequences of land privatization is as evident here as elsewhere in the North Caucasus. If a further radicalization of political life in the republic can be avoided, the Russians might stay – unlike in many of the other republics.

Karachai-Cherkessia

Karachai-Cherkessia covers 14,100 square km and has 414,970 inhabitants, 42 per cent Russian, 32 per cent Karachai, 9 per cent Cherkess and 7 per cent Abaza (1989). Rural population: Karachai 67 per cent, Cherkess 62 per cent (1989).

With 40 per cent of the population being Russian and an administrative status as subordinated as the Russian Stavropol Province and the lowest possible level of autonomy until 1991, russification is strong in Karachai-Cherkessia. About one third of the Russians are considered Cossacks according to non-Russian sources, while the figure given from the Cossacks themselves is 60 per cent.⁷⁶ The fact that the 28,000 Abaza lack all the privileges of a titular nation, which the 40,000 Cherkess share in power with the much larger group of Karachai, is a clear example of the arbitrary nature of the Soviet construction of double titular nationality republics and its consequences. Formal power-sharing notwithstanding, Russians have dominated political life in the new Karachai-Cherkess republic. This might change if the experience of neighbouring Kabardino-Balkaria, with a similar make up, can serve as a model for development.

National movements in the republic, especially among the Karachai and the Cossacks, claim countering territorial rights. In addition, the Karachai claim full rehabilitation after the deportations. More radical Karachai movements insist on territorial expansion and autonomy, or even a separate Karachai republic, in accordance with the situation prior to the deportations. Cossacks have voiced claims of seceding from the republic to join the Kuban Cossacks in the neighbouring Krasnodar district. Still, a poll held in 1993 resulted in 78.6 per cent wanting to preserve the Karachai-Cherkess republic as one undivided unit, so it seems that most people fear the consequences of claims made by the radical groups.⁷⁷ The Karachai urban centre Karachaevsk, has been selected by the Confederation of Repressed Peoples as the location for their main office.

Republics led by one titular group

Chechnia

Chechnia covers about 17,300 square km in 1994. In 1989 the number of Chechen was 775,980, 293,771 were Russians.⁷⁸ Rural population: 72 per cent (1989).

With about one million people, the Chechen are the most numerous ethnic group in the North Caucasus. They are also the most industrious in their struggle against Russia with the aim to be accepted as a fully independent state. As a titular nationality amounting to nearly 90 per cent of the republic's population, the problems of Chechnia are significantly different from those of other republics. A few decades ago the share of Russians in the Chechen-Ingush republic was about one third (mainly due to oil deposits in the republic). Today there does not seem to be much oil left, the production technology is worn out, and large investments are needed. The Chechen leadership demands that Moscow make reparations for their colonial exploitation of Chechen oil, gas and other natural resources which went on for over a century.⁷⁹ More than other peoples and republics in the region, the Chechens stress the need for a process of decolonization – it is in this light that much of the Chechen strive for independence must be seen.

Since the war of independence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,⁸⁰ and throughout Soviet history, the Chechen have kept alive the strongest opposition to Russia compared to all the other groups in the North Caucasus. They refused to exploit any possibilities for participation in the Soviet political-administrative system or industry, thereby giving place to a relatively powerful urban Russian-speaking minority for many years. But since the Chechen returned from deportation, the Russian share in the population has declined, and with the Chechen unilateral declaration of independence after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, this process has accelerated. Also Cossacks, who lived in large parts of the present Chechen territory for more than 130 years, are now deserting the republic. More than half of the Russians have left Chechnia since 1989, and if the present rate of Russian out-migration continues, all the Russians will have left the republic by the turn of the century.⁸¹ The enmity between the two peoples seems rooted.⁸² It is official Chechen policy to try and make Russians stay, particularly because they are needed to maintain what remains of industry and manufacturing. As anti-Russian and anti-Chechen sentiments are growing, this Chechen policy becomes more difficult to implement.

After the Moscow coup in August 1991, a former general in the Soviet Air Force, Dzhokhar Dudaev, came to power as the leader of the Chechen National Congress, in a relatively undramatic manner. At this point the Yeltsin government encouraged any attempt to overthrow local communist leaders. But Moscow changed its attitude after Chechnia declared her independence and elected Dudaev as President. President Yeltsin declared the republic in a state of emergency and sent in special units. They were

neutralized by the Chechen National Guard and had to leave, and consequently there are no longer Russian troops in Chechnia. Likewise regarding other organs of power, there is a tendency to abolish all symbols of Soviet and Russian power.⁸³

Unofficially Russia is trying to force Chechnia back into the Russian Federation by means of an economic blockade. This policy has led to a desperate situation in Chechnia – leaving many without salaries, pensions or heating during the winter, and creating a heyday for organized crime. Whatever the future brings for Chechnia, it will take time to get the economy normalized again. While Russia is implementing a blockade, other North Caucasian republics, lately including the Russian province Stavropol, defy the economic blockade decreed by Moscow and still trade with Chechnia.

Russia's hope to destabilize president Dudaev's political position, and pave the way for a Russia-friendly opposition, has so far failed. Due to the difficult economic situation and to Dudaev's rather authoritarian regime, which does not allow for critique, an opposition has emerged. When a majority of the Chechen parliament in June 1993 tried to carry through a plebiscite expressing distrust in President Dudaev's uncompromising policy, the parliament was abolished after violent incidents, with several casualties and imprisonments. Newspapers criticizing Dudaev have been closed down.⁸⁴ The activities were seen as undemocratic and created an opposition. Russia then launched a spate of anti-Chechen propaganda in Moscow and other Russian centres and expelled thousands of Chechen.

During the summer of 1994 new tensions arose between the Dudaev government and new opposition forces, some located in Moscow and others located in the northwestern region of Nadterechny, which they apparently control.⁸⁵ Some violent clashes have taken place, and Moscow has renewed its anti-Chechnia and anti-Chechen media campaign.⁸⁶ But if the economic crisis deepens, the opposition might intensify, and some official forces in Russia might try to exploit the situation in its own interests. So far the opposition forces seem scattered and are without a unifying leader or a common goal. If they should succeed in removing Dudaev from power, the risk of internal warfare is high. If on the other hand Russia intervenes, Chechen forces might again reunite against a common outside enemy.

The new Russian constitution still mentions Chechnia as a subject of the Russian Federation although Moscow acknowledged that Chechnia boycotted the first free elections in Russia in December 1993.⁸⁷ So far no country has recognized Chechen independence, and the relations between Russia and Chechnia are in a deadlock. The Russian leadership will not go into talks with the Chechen leadership as long as they maintain their claim for sovereignty, and the Chechen leadership will not negotiate with the Russian leadership on these terms. Considering the present economic crisis, the future looks grave for the Chechen people. Until the summer of 1994 Dudaev seemed relatively unchallenged as President. Government and most of the opposition, with the excep-

tion of the Moscow-friendly, unite in their claim for independence. Political movements promote what they call the 'Caucasian revolution' in revenge for the humiliations of colonization and unjustified deportation. Chechnia seems prepared for a new long term war of independence, if necessary in guerrilla warfare and 'holy war'.⁸⁸

The role of Islam in Chechnia is difficult to define. When President Dudaev came to power he took an oath on the Koran, and Friday has been declared an official holiday. In the conflict with Moscow religion is of no great importance – it is primarily a point of identification for the Chechen people. But Islam is gaining in strength as Chechnia becomes more and more pressurized. Clan – and *taip* – loyalties could be a decisive influence in a possible future showdown between President Dudaev and opposition forces.

Ingushia

Ingushia covers about 2,000 square km in 1994. The 1989 census had 214,200 Ingush in the Chechen-Ingush republic and 32,800 in North Ossetia,⁸⁹ and the number of Russians are small. Rural population: 59 per cent (1989).

Following the Chechen declaration of independence Ingushia was allowed to leave the double-titular Chechen-Ingush Republic and establish her own republic within the Russian Federation. Thus, Ingushia is the most recently established republic in the North Caucasus. Two reasons were decisive in this choice. Firstly, Ingushia is involved in an extremely difficult conflict with neighbouring North Ossetia about the territory of 'Prigorodny', i.e. the suburb, and parts of the North-Ossetian capital Vladikavkaz, which had been given to North Ossetia while the entire Ingush people lived in forced exile in Central Asia. It is thought that more than 60,000 Ingush are said to have lived in the disputed area. (Official Soviet accounts, counting only those with an official permit of residence, gave the number at 32,800 in 1989.) The Ingush had hoped that by not following Chechnia into independence, Russia would probably assist them in regaining their former habitat, particularly after President Yeltsin issued the law on rehabilitation, which includes territorial rehabilitation. In the summer of 1992 President Yeltsin by presidential decree issued a general moratorium on boundary changes in the Caucasus.⁹⁰ Secondly, as a minority and a predominantly rural people they felt absolutely disadvantaged in Chechnia. Due to some disagreements on the Cossack-inhabited Sunzha district, the border between Chechnia and Ingushia has still not been finally drawn in order to avoid conflict. Depending on the future for the North Caucasus – a solution of the conflicts or long-term violence – Chechen and Ingush might reunite one day, as they are closely related, their languages fully comprehensible and some clans consist of both Ingush and Chechen families, the clan/*taip* relations still being very much alive.⁹¹

As a former rural province within the Chechen-Ingush Republic, an urban centre with the necessary institutions and structures still has to be established. Nazran, the new capital is primarily a rural centre. While the Russian Federation generally is in a deep economic crisis, the cri-

sis in Ingushia is overwhelmingly due to heavy fighting in Prigorodny and a subsequent flood of refugees living in freight containers. The number of Russians in the republic, mainly those living in Cossack *stanitzas*, is approximately 20,000. This low number, if correct, is apparently a result of a marked out-migration of Russians in the last decade. As in Chechnia it seems likely that more Russians, including Cossacks, might leave Ingushia, although this part of the North Caucasus has been their homeland for more than a century. Some of the 10,000 or more Ingush left in Central Asia have begun to return to their homeland after it has become a republic of its own.⁹²

The territorial conflict between Ingushia and North Ossetia increased, ending in severe armed clashes in October 1992, resulting in the mass flight. Ingushia has criticized the role of Moscow in the conflict. Russia declared the district in a state of emergency, and sent in troops to disarm the fighting groups. Ingushia is accusing these troops of siding with the Ossetes, since all Ingush were driven out while the Russian troops were present. Moscow established a temporary military administration in the disputed republics, which has had seven leaders in one year, mostly Russian vice-premiers, without reaching any solutions. Agreements negotiated between Ingush, Ossetes and Russians to let the refugees return have still not been carried out. In 1944 the Ingush president offered to give up all claims concerning Prigorodny, on condition that all refugees would be allowed to return, while North Ossetia will only accept those who did not take part in the fighting. Only a limited number of Ingush have returned to five villages under the protection of Russian army units. One of the solutions being considered is the resettlement of the displaced Ingush in other locations for security reasons. This appears so far to be an inadequate solution because of the Ingush' very strong feelings for their own land.

North Ossetia

North Ossetia covers 8,000 square km and has 632,428 inhabitants, 61 per cent Ossetes, 30 per cent Russians and 10-15 per cent Ingush, most of whom have fled for Ingushia (1989). Rural population: Ossetes: 34 per cent (1989).

Refugees are also a major issue in North Ossetia, including both Ingush leaving North Ossetia for Ingushia and Ossetes leaving South Ossetia and Georgia for North Ossetia. More than 100,000 refugees in a republic with a total of 600,000 to 700,000 inhabitants necessarily constitute an extraordinary economic problem, particularly with regard to the provision of jobs in times of crisis. On a short term, housing is less of a problem than in Ingushia, because North Ossetia has large numbers of sanatoria and has, for the time being, very few tourists.⁹³ Refugees from South Ossetia were settled in the unstable Prigorodny district with predominantly Ingush settlements, which was one of the causes of the violent clashes.⁹⁴

Yet no solution to the problems in South Ossetia is in sight. South Ossetes feel heavily repressed in Georgia and demand the reunion of their abolished republic with the republic of North Ossetia. They took an active part in the

fight against the Ingush, thereby marking their solidarity with North Ossetia. Also, claims for a reunion within the Russian Federation are voiced from traditionally Moscow-friendly Ossetian politicians. The political leadership in North Ossetia is – as in most of the North Caucasus – conservative out of a fear that changes might imply new conflicts. There is a dilemma between continuing the Moscow-friendly line and working actively for an integration of the North Caucasus. Much will depend on Russia's role in finding a solution to the Prigorodny dispute, and on whether Russia will allow Georgia to reintegrate South Ossetia or vice versa.

As outlined in the presentation of Ingushia's claims to North Ossetia, the question of Ingush territory within the borders of North Ossetia has not been solved either. Ossetia received the territory when the Ingush were deported and has been reluctant to accept their resettlement in their former homeland. Ossetia even adopted a law in 1982 prohibiting residence permits for the Ingush minority. This had the effect, among others, of the number of Ingush living without *propiska* in North Ossetia equalling the number of official residents. Promises of territorial rehabilitation were seen as interference in their internal affairs. In the course of peace talks, Ossetia suggested swapping populations: Ingushia should accept the loss of Prigorodny and formerly Ingush inhabited parts of Vladikavkaz, and in return Ossetia would accept Cossacks from Ingushia and Chechnia to Prigorodny. This suggestion has so far proved unrealistic as neither Ingush nor Cossacks appear to be interested.

The capital Vladikavkaz was the first Russian centre that was established in the North Caucasus during the Russian conquest. Ossetes have the lowest annual population increase (approximately 1 per cent from 1979-89) in the North Caucasus and the highest degree of urbanization. Compared to the Chechen and the Ingush the Ossetes are by far the most russianized and integrated into the Russian political and administrative system. North Ossetia is still a Russian stronghold in the North Caucasus with large concentrations of troops. With the Georgian military highway, the main overland road over the Caucasus range to the Georgian capital Tbilisi, the Republic has a strategically important geographical location.

Adygea

Adygea covers 7,600 square km and has 432,046 inhabitants, 68 per cent Russians and 22 per cent Adygei (1989). Rural population of Adygei is 58 per cent (1989).

Russification is a major problem for the Adygei who are a numerical minority of only one fourth of the population in their own republic. The remainder are predominantly Russians or Russian-speakers – a significant part of them Cossacks. Adygea is an enclave within Krasnodar Krai; her area has been tripled since 1922, which partly explains the low share of Adygei. The expansion has been into Russian populated areas, and more than 30,000 Adygei live outside the republic. In the urban centre Maikop the Adygei share is even as low as 10 per cent. This naturally fosters problems with the survival of language and culture, although special measurements have been guaranteed for

the Adygei, due to their status of titular nation: Adygei therefore take up 45 out of 97 seats in the local parliament. The Adygei national and political movements are calling for 50 per cent representation in order to reach a satisfactory level of self-determination and prevent further assimilation. This fate for a small, dispersed minority, which they share with the closely related Cherkess and Shapsug appears to be an important factor for their main claim: the largest possible repatriation of diaspora Adygei. However, they have not been successful to date.

North Caucasian peoples in Georgia

During the Soviet period Abkhaz as well as South Ossetes regularly had disagreements with the Georgian leadership in Tbilisi. The two minorities felt subjected to georgianization, especially concerning their languages, which were subordinate to Georgian and Russian. In 1989 the Georgian government strengthened the role of the Georgian language in public affairs, in schools and universities, which was treated as a provocation by the republic's minorities, many of whom speak poor Georgian.⁹⁵ In 1991 Zviad Gamzakhurdia was the first freely elected Georgian President. He emphasized that Georgia was a nation state for Georgians. Autonomies were abolished and armed conflicts appeared increasingly inevitable. Paradoxically, it was only after Edvard Shevardnadze came to power after a coup and Georgia was recognized by the international community, that severe suppression and military action against the Abkhaz and the Ossetes started. Since then Georgia has been forced to admit its dependency on Russia and has joined the CIS. The Russian geopolitical re-entry into the Caucasus is emphasized by a Georgian-Russian Treaty of February 1994 confirming the territorial integrity of Georgia and the placement of Russian troops in Georgia. How this treaty will affect the *de facto* independent status which the South Ossetes and the Abkhaz have fought for and attained remains to be seen.⁹⁶

Abkhazia

Abkhazia covers 8,600 square km and had 525,061 inhabitants in 1989, 44 per cent Georgian (Kartvelian), 17 per cent Abkhazian, 16 per cent Russian and 15 per cent Armenian. Rural population among the Abkhaz: 52 per cent (1989).

The Abkhaz, numbering no more than 100,000, are a minority both in Georgia and in their own titular republic. The 1989 Soviet census gives the share of Abkhaz in Abkhazia as 17 per cent. The largest group in the Republic were Georgians, and the rest primarily Russians and Armenians.⁹⁷ As mentioned earlier the situation has not always been like that. A Russian census from 1886 gives an Abkhaz figure of 59,000 – constituting more than 85 per cent of the population in Abkhazia. In 1823 there were as many as 321,000 Abkhaz according to Abkhaz figures. Various sources agree that the population was at least halved after the final Russian colonization of the North Caucasus in 1864 – a fate similar to that of the related Circassians further north.⁹⁸

The group of Abkhaz *émigrés* consisted mostly of Muslims, which is the main reason why today's Abkhaz are more than 70 per cent Christian. The exodus paved the way for an active Russian settlement policy that succeeded in increasing the number of Georgians and Russians in Abkhazia more than 50 times during 100 years.

The above-mentioned demographic processes are closely related to the major issues and claims of the Abkhaz minority: the repatriation of their diaspora, and the strengthening of Abkhaz language and culture after many years of Georgian and Russian influence and repression.

The recent conflict in Abkhazia escalated after Shevardnadze came to power in 1992 and the Georgian parliament decided to reinstall the Georgian constitution of 1921, which does not mention Abkhaz. The Abkhaz parliament reacted to this humiliation by reinstalling their constitution from 1925 when Abkhazia was a Soviet republic. Abkhaz invitations to talks were ignored by the political leadership in Tbilisi until Georgia had the army occupy Sukhum and the southern part of Abkhazia in August 1992.

However, the Abkhaz mobilized and were able to stop the Georgian advance with the aid of North Caucasian volunteers. After 13 months of war the Georgian troops were driven out of Abkhazia in September 1993.

During the war the Abkhaz were supported not only by the North Caucasian minorities but by local Armenians and Russians. Also volunteers from the diaspora supported Abkhazia, mainly by providing financial support and lobbying for international understanding. It was Russia's role which has raised the most concern. Cossacks and volunteers from the Russian army took part in the fighting, and weapons and other materials were delivered from the backdoors of Russian army depots. Russian fighter planes were also spotted over Abkhazia. But whether Russia – or maybe the Russian army acting on its own – has taken an active part in the war has still to be confirmed.

The UN became involved, and negotiations between Georgian and Abkhaz leaders began. In June 1994 Russian peace keeping troops on behalf of CIS, and approved and observed by the UN, entered the border zone between the Georgian and the Abkhaz armies. It will be a major function of peace keeping arrangements to secure a safe return of the Georgian refugees.⁹⁹ Most of the Georgians, who represented almost half of Abkhazia's population before the war, fled. Abkhazia has so far refused to let Georgians who participated in the fighting return. Abkhazia, once a flourishing tourist resort, is today physically and economically exhausted. Many cultural items and symbols of Abkhaz history, such as the National Archives have been destroyed. Many items of value, historical artefacts as well as computers and other modern technology, have reportedly been transferred to Tbilisi.¹⁰⁰

South Ossetia

South Ossetia covers 3,900 square km and in 1989 had 99,000 inhabitants, 66 per cent Ossetes and 29 per cent Georgians. Rural population among Ossetes: 34 per cent (1989).

The Georgian government's nationalist policies resulted in clashes in 1991-2. During the fighting, South Ossetia was drained of a large part of her population. It is difficult to estimate the number of inhabitants in today's South Ossetia: most Georgians who lived in the republic left for Georgia proper, and only a few small enclaves in South Ossetia are still inhabited by Georgians. More than 100,000 Ossetes fled from Georgia and South Ossetia to North Ossetia.

The fighting ended in July 1992 when a ceasefire, at the initiative of Russian President Yeltsin, was agreed and a peace keeping force of Ossetes, Georgians and Russians was set up. The agreement is being observed by the CSCE in Tbilisi. But since then little progress has been made. South Ossetia is in a situation of permanent economic crisis and there is a lack of almost everything including jobs, clothes, food, heating and electricity. Schools and universities are closed because of lack of heating and books. The situation is worsened by Georgia cutting electricity supplies, which has led to North Ossetia running an electric cable from Russia through the mountain range.

The conflict has resulted in increasing South Ossete claims for a reunification with North Ossetia and for a stronger affiliation with the North Caucasian ethnic groups and republics. In 1990-1, when the South Ossete parliament was still dominated by leaders from the Soviet period, the main claim was still to become part of the Russian Federation. After elections of a new leadership in 1993 and 1994 and because of unsatisfactory support from Moscow the trends have changed towards regional integration. These claims are supported by North Ossetia and by the Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus. The Confederation, after the success in the Abkhaz war, threatened Georgia with war if she repeats military action against South Ossetia.

South Ossete leaders are watching the results of the Georgian-Abkhaz negotiations at the UN as these solutions might set a precedent for South Ossetia.

A SUMMARY OF MAJOR TRENDS

The process of restructuring the former USSR has led to tensions and conflicts in many places, also – or specifically – the North Caucasus. Individuals, minorities, nationalities and nations are searching for ways to redefine their identities, their legitimacy and their territories. This process is a question of who am I, who are we and who are the others – friends as well as foe – and to secure political participation and cultural, social and economic development on the basis of the peoples' own resources. The dynamics of this process as either cooperation or fragmentation is very much determined by the degree of trust or distrust, i.e. historically motivated anxieties and internal hierarchies of stereotypes between the groups, who are conceived as either minorities or majorities. While the major focus in this report is on the North Caucasus region within the Russian Federation, similar patterns of trust-distrust and hierarchies exist in the neighbouring states of Georgia and Azerbaijan on the one hand and between the North Caucasus region and the world at large, e.g. relations to Turkey, Iran and Western Europe. Looking at the North Caucasus, two major tendencies can be seen:

– to secure development and participation through regional cooperation as opposed to the dominating power structures in the majority society.

– to secure the rights of each group by linking ethnicity to a territory (either by creating new self-determining units, through strengthening or federalizing old ones; and either based on a single group or in cooperation with related peoples), i.e. a focus on internal relationships between regional and local majorities and minorities.

Both tendencies create cooperation as well as opposition. The following major trends to strengthen North Caucasian identities and loyalties can be singled out.

Creating ethnic republics

Many groups in the Caucasus tend in their political arguments, towards claiming territories defined on the basis of ethnicity. For some, especially the deported peoples who were deprived of their lands for decades, this claim is part of a claim for restitution. This is true not only for those formally recognized as deported, but also for those groups which were forcibly removed from their settlements after colonization. Many have very close emotional ties to the places where their ancestors are buried but also to the land they had to leave. The needs of cultural survival and also Soviet policies of registering the Soviet population along ethnic lines have also led to this situation. Adding to this the Soviet policies of establishing autonomies with titular nationalities, explains the trend to some extent. Most effective in fostering it has however been the ignorance towards the claims of the peoples, and in some places oppression of minorities by old and new majorities. The new Russian constitution's claim for presidencies in republics, and the

new Russian parliament's structure with single delegates from republics can tip internal balances within republics where more than one ethnic group share in power.

Groups sharing in power within one republic are challenging the status quo. Ingushia and Chechnia have already parted due to diverting policies and formed ethnically defined republics. Under certain circumstances similar solutions might be claimed or implemented in Karachai-Cherkessia and in Kabardino-Balkaria if other viable solutions cannot be found. This is not currently an acute problem, nor in Dagestan either, where 11 peoples share in power while 20 more constitute indigenous minorities. But some of the people, such as the Kumyk, the Lezgi and the Nogai, are claiming ethnically defined territories or at least wish to unite with their kin outside Dagestan. Also, some Cossacks claim the re-establishment of their former Terek Republic. Ossetes claim a reunion with their southern kin in Georgia. Any such attempt at reordering internal borders along ethnic lines, or even international borders as is the case with Ossetes, will have to solve insurmountable territorial disputes, as the armed clashes between Ingushia and North Ossetia already show. After decades of life under Soviet control all the territories are ethnically mixed, and territorial claims risk leading to war. There are also many families who are ethnically mixed who would fall victim in a scenario of creating ethnic territories.

Creating ethnic unions

Related to the trend of ethnic territories is a trend towards uniting culturally related minorities in separate units. Balkars and Karachai, both living in republics with ethnically unrelated groups, have discussed the possibilities of uniting together. Kumyk have suggested a union of all Turkic-speaking peoples. Such a union could consist of Karachai, Balkar, Nogai and Kumyk. Also the reunion of all Cherkess peoples into one republic is a theoretical possibility. This would include the Cherkess proper, the Adygei, and the Kabard. Like ethnic republics, ethnic unions seem doomed unless peaceful solutions can be found in time.

Federalizing existing republics

The double republics of Karachai-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria could change their internal structures into a federation similar to that of Switzerland. In Dagestan, some representatives of national groups have suggested a federation of Kumyk, Dargin and Avar, others of Kumyk, Nogai and Lezgi. This federal solution reflects the deeply rooted idea of a correlation between ethnicity and territory, one of the legacies of the Soviet state.

Internal hierarchies

The Soviet legacy as well as historical experiences have contributed to creating ethno-national hierarchies throughout the North Caucasus region. These hierarchies are the focus of anxiety and discussions expressed in publications and declarations of national movements and organizations.

At the highest level of the hierarchy is the fear of all groups of what they call 'the hand of Moscow' or 'the hand of Tbilisi', i.e. the dominance by the centralized state authorities through military action (intervention, administration, threats, etc.), judicial decisions (constitution, privatization decrees, non-recognition of autonomy or sovereignty, etc.) or economic interference (blockades, subsidies, etc.).

At the regional level, a pyramid is created by numerical majorities in the different republics, by political dominance through an alleged preference of one people by the authorities, by perceived strength, by the position created through the system of titular nations, etc. Thus Kumyk fear Avar dominance, Adygei fear Cossack dominance, Lezgi fear Azerbaijan dominance, and Ingush fear Ossetian dominance. A similar trend can be observed in most of the republics: with Balkar complaints about Kabard dominance, Cherkess about Karachai, etc.

At the individual level, there is an anxiety that privatization might attract non-indigenous investment or favour individuals and result in the local population losing their homes, their land and other traditional sources of basic income. Armenians and the former Soviet party bosses are those most often mentioned.

These hierarchies of prejudice are expressions of intermingled majority-minority relations. They add to the very concrete political and economic difficulties already existing.

Cooperating in a transnational regional union

There is also a trend to unite the region on the basis of historical regional cooperation and the necessity to overcome dominance by strong states which do not respect the claims and rights of the peoples of the North Caucasus. This trend is based on a common regional identity and is opposed to ethnic cleansing of any kind. It could be implemented peacefully if the states in question were to respect the claims of the North Caucasians and they were given all the necessary guarantees for independent development. Any other scenario could lead to a new war of independence.

Three suggestions have come forward so far; a unification of all Muslim peoples in the region; a re-establishment of the Mountain Republic that existed after the Bolshevik Revolution, including all republics except Adygea and Dagestan. The third suggestion, with the backing of the Assembly of the Peoples of the Caucasus, put forward by almost all groups in the Assembly, is a confederation of the peoples in the North Caucasus in a new independent state-like formation. Such an arrangement has been suggested in order to prevent the atrocities of ethnic cleansing but if this aspiration leads to war, it also might result in renewed fragmentations.

Opposing Russian integration

While the peoples of the North Caucasus discuss possible scenarios for their future, they also express fears that Russia might once again wish to forcibly re-integrate the peoples in a centralized state and combat dissatisfaction with military means. Several republics, such as Dagestan, are deeply concerned about changes in the new Russian constitution which have diminished constitutional rights to national self-determination for the republics by abolishing the term 'sovereign', thereby changing their privileged status to one equal to other administrative units such as regions. Chechnia is disturbed by the Russians ignoring their claim for independence and the economic blockade imposed on them. Ingushia has protested at the Russian army's one sided conduct in their conflict with South Ossetia. And all Caucasian peoples have seen the sign on the wall when Moscow, in 1993, decided not to allow people from the Caucasus to settle or trade in the Russian centre and expelled more than 30,000. If Russia and its Russian majority population, intended to create a multi-ethnic state with equal opportunities for all minorities within its territory, one might argue that the fears of the North Caucasian peoples were unjustified. The problem is that Russia insists on the non-national and non-sovereign character of its republics, while simultaneously promoting a Russian nation state. Symptoms of this intent are the special concern for ethnic Russians, the expulsion of non-Russians from Russian cities and a transparent neglect of minority issues.

PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

The demise of the Soviet Union has left many regions and peoples in political, social and economic vulnerability. Despite changes in political structures, the basic needs for dignity and integrity remain. New opportunities to voice grievances are met with a desire for change. In many instances this has led to conflicting claims. The North Caucasus is afflicted heavily and is dangerously exposed. It is of paramount importance for the European and International Community not to neglect the needs of the region and its peoples. The resources needed to promote and secure minority rights and peaceful development will be minimal compared to the cost of armed conflict. In the short term the main issue must be to solve current conflicts and avoid more bloodshed. In the longer term the main issues concern the implementation of human and minority rights standards with regard to religious, linguistic and cultural identity, and to social and economic development.

Concerning confidence building

Information on existing standards

Existing human rights commitments, conventions and resolutions concerning minority and indigenous rights, genocide, migrants and land, self-determination, *inter alia* could be translated into Russian and distributed directly to local authorities, non governmental organizations and the local media. In addition seminars on relevant international standards could be held in the region, with the peoples concerned, and descriptions of good practice in the Council of Europe and CSCE could be disseminated. Furthermore, discussions on how the UN, the Council of Europe, the CSCE, the media and NGOs can obtain reliable information on the situation of the minorities through their own channels should be held.

Research and documentation on the history of Caucasian peoples

The most disastrous legacy from the Soviet period is the unwritten history of peoples and regions. Too many blank spots in history create myths and unscientific claims, and therefore further research and analysis is required.

It is recommended that a history commission, with the participation of international expertise, should be established, preferably in the region in order to compile an accurate objective description of the history of the peoples and the region, and identify different perceptions of history.

Rehabilitation of repressed peoples

Most peoples of the North Caucasus have been subjected to forced resettlement in the course of history. These issues will have to be investigated in the long term, and the question of culpability established. The most urgent issue, however, is the rehabilitation of the deported peoples. The new Russian government needs to take up the

responsibility for this investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution.

It is recommended that an international tribunal should be established on deportations. This tribunal may be under the auspices of the UN or the CSCE, but should collate data through a documentation centre, hold a public tribunal and seek ways of making recommendations solving the consequences of deportations. Its participants may include researchers and independent experts nominated by the UN and also by the Association of Repressed Peoples.

Anti-Caucasian sentiments in Russia

Anti-Caucasian sentiments are increasing in Russian public life. They are sometimes purely racist. 'A person of Caucasian nationality' is a widespread discriminatory expression in Russia. These attitudes together with attempts at subduing Caucasian calls for autonomy in turn increase existing anti-Russian sentiments in the Caucasus.

Dialogue should therefore be encouraged between the peoples. There is a positive role for non governmental organizations to play here with their expertise in conflict resolution. In addition, the media and international organizations should seek information about the situation from unbiased sources, because most of the information is currently Moscow-based.

Furthermore, nationality or ethnic affiliation should be made an individuals own choice and not be compulsorily included in official documents. This has too often been used for discriminatory purposes.

It is recommended that governmental programmes should be initiated to combat prejudice and discrimination and eliminate stereotyping and labelling in all official statements at all levels. The Russian Federation and the countries in the Transcaucasus should implement carefully the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965.

Concerning border and status disagreements

Borders to the new independent states concerned

There is a need to secure the implementation of minorities' rights to be in contact with their kin across borders as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

International arbitration in solving armed conflicts in Azerbaijan and Georgia should include pressure on both countries to secure cultural and language rights for all minorities not only those directly involved in armed conflicts.

It is recommended that minorities affected by the new international borders should be included as additional parties in all negotiations.

Borders within the Russian Federation

Implications of the new Russian constitution of 1993, and

inconsistencies with the Federal Treaty of 1991 and republic laws should be discussed widely and systematically in the republics, and between the republics and the authorities of the Russian Federation.

Whereas it is part of the Soviet legacy that certain minorities are guaranteed specific rights within their 'own' republics but not outside it, in order to prevent mass migration to titular republics, it is important to ensure that minority rights are included in the legislations of all republics and regions of the Federation and that these are implemented.

Furthermore, international organizations involved in the region should liaise not only with Moscow but also with the republics and peoples concerned, including minority groups.

It is recommended that the CSCE should mediate in internal conflicts caused by claims for ethno-territorial autonomy, while land claims should be investigated separately in every case. The High Commissioner on National Minorities should be asked to look into claims which may affect regional security including resettlements and border changes.

Prevention of forced migration

Everything should be done to diminish military administration by the central government, as well as states of emergency. In addition, prevention of discrimination and protection against mass expulsions should be included in the legislations of all republics and states of the former USSR.

Although internally displaced people do not hold refugee status according to international standards, they do so according to the Law of the Russian Federation on Forced Migration of 16 February 1993. International organizations could offer advice, assistance and funding in the region.

Concerning cultural and linguistic rights and economic development

Many of the languages spoken in the North Caucasus were promoted in the first phases of Soviet rule. However, during the last decades of Soviet administration most of the languages disappeared from the public domain. Institutionalized research and development of these languages and education programmes should be initiated and the possibilities of public funding investigated. In addition, thousands of historical documents written in Arabic from the pre-colonial period of the North Caucasus have been unattended to for decades due to anti-religious and oppressive attitudes of the regime. Many of them are of global interest, and international programmes to save these documents from further decay should be initiated. The Council of Europe could be an important agent in these efforts.

Religion was subjugated during most of the Soviet period, and public life was standardized on Russian models.

Russia, having formally accepted her multi-culturality should consider the possibility of decentralizing decisions concerning religious and cultural values.

As for economic development, the use of blockades as an instrument of controlling minorities should be prohibited and the redistribution of resources between state and republics (minerals, power plants, harbour installations, etc.) should be considered.

It is recommended that the use of minority languages be promoted and the possibilities of funding teaching and publication programmes as well as cultural institutions in the native languages in accordance with the Council of Europe's concern for lesser used languages in Europe, be considered, with the equal participation of all groups in the planning of such programmes.

Chechnia

Chechnia's claim for independence and the Russian Federation's opposition to this claim is a source of conflict. This controversial issue must be discussed constructively if a long term guerrilla war is to be prevented. No other nation among the peoples of the former USSR has demonstrated their desire for independence as consistently and vehemently as Chechnia. A new referendum on Chechnia's status may help if it is conducted with the participation of international observers.

Inter-governmental organizations could help mediate by bringing the conflicting parties together for private talks within the framework of democratic institutions and basic human rights for all.

NOTES

- 1 Numbers given vary greatly — from 20 to 80. This will be dealt with later in the report.
- 2 International Alert states that no other area on the Russian periphery today is more turbulent and potentially volatile than the North Caucasus. (Introductory Statement in *Chechnia, a Report of an International Fact-finding Mission*, International Alert, London, November 1992, p. 2.
- 3 One example of hierarchical ethno-territorial conceptual thinking is Ibragimov, Kh., *Kontsepciya Federalizatsii Dagestana*, in Kulchik, Yu., *Dagestan: Kumykskiy Etnos*, Moscow, 1993, pp. 90-101. Ibragimov suggests the following status distinctions for the peoples of Dagestan- Nations: Avar, Dargin, Kumyk, Lezgi, Lak, Tabasaran, Azer, Nogai and Terek-Cossacks; Small Peoples: Akki, Rutul, Tsakhur; National Minorities: Russians, Tat, Jews, etc. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- 4 Statement of M.A. Lebedev, official representative of the Russian Federation at the CSCE HD Seminar on Case Studies on National Minorities Issues: Positive Results, Warsaw, 24-28 May 1993, p. 2. Examples are added by the authors of this report.
- 5 'Russian Speaking Population' is a commonly used designation for those citizens of the former Soviet Union who live dispersed in the non-Russian Republics, i.e. Russians as well as Ukrainians, Armenians, etc. who settled outside their own 'Motherland' in the course of Soviet migration policies and who use Russian as their first language.
- 6 Ethnic identification is considered an indispensable element of a person's identity a par with personal names and birth dates and is registered in official documents. The concept was first introduced on the basis of free choice in 1926 with the objective to secure equal rights and was from 1932 onwards included in documents on a hereditary basis and has given foundation for discriminatory and arbitrary practices. Registration takes place at the age of 16.
- 7 For example, Ossetians in Ossetia as rendered in *Atlas Narodov Miora*, Moscow, 1964, which also is the major background source for the map provided in this report.
- 8 Classical portraits were given by the great Russian writers Pushkin and Lermontov. Historical self-portraits published by Caucasian authors during the last years expressed these traits, and are used when Caucasians today wish to explain their cultural values as distinct from Europeans, including Russian.
- 9 Thus 90 per cent of the national income of Dagestan and Checheno-Ingushia came from Moscow.
- 10 The Autonomous District of South Ossetia has been abolished by Georgia, while the status and territory of the Abkhaz Republic is disputed. Both autonomies have been subject to armed conflict.
- 11 Georgia is also known as Gruzia, the Russian name. In Georgian the name of the country is Zakartvelo. Historically the country was made up of various kingdoms with different names. Georgia's forerunner became officially christian under Byzantium in the fourth century, and the name derives from Georgia's patron saint.
- 12 A Russian word meaning 'possess or control the Caucasus', currently the capital of North Ossetia.
- 13 According to McCarthy, J., *The Fate of the Muslims*, forthcoming, cited from Henze, Paul B., 'Circassian Resistance to Russia', in Bennigsen Broxup, M. (ed.), *The North Caucasus Barrier, The Russian Advance Towards the Muslim World*, Hurst and Company, London, 1992, p. 104.
- 14 It is difficult to estimate the number of diaspora Caucasians as well as their ethnic affiliation. Although there is an internal distinction between Chechen and Adygè groups, most of them describe themselves collectively with the Turkish name Çerkez. The numbers are increasing due to a rising awareness of Caucasian roots. Numbers of diaspora Çerkez are in some sources given as high as three to four million.
- 15 For a detailed analysis of internal dissent see Blank, Stephen, 'The Formation of the Soviet North Caucasus 1918-24', *Central Asian Survey*, 12(1), pp. 13-32.
- 16 According to Rieks Smeets, 'Circassia', manuscript prepared for a SOAS seminar, London, 1993, the Republic was established in January 1930. Several other sources, including local, mention 1921 as the founding year. Rieks Smeets suggests that Dagestan split off from the Mountain Republic in November 1920.
- 17 Alieva, Svetlana (ed.), *Tak eto bylo, Nacionalnye Repressii v SSSR — 1919-52 gody*, Insan, Moscow, 1993, vol. 1, p. 27.
- 18 This was in accordance with Lenin's nationality policy, which aimed at establishing a series of autonomies. Although Lenin showed great concern for the subjugated minorities of the former Russian Empire, he was opposed to linking cultural minority rights to the individual based on ethnicity as suggested by Austro-Marxist theoreticians. Also, he disagreed on issues concerning the 'nationality question' and self-determination with his first Peoples' Commissary-General, i.e. Minister for Nationalities, Joseph Stalin. The disagreement concerned primarily federalizations or autonomization. Lenin did not live long enough to influence the development decisively.

- 19** *Tajny natsionalnoi politiki CK RKP, Chetvertoe soveshchanie CK RKP s otvetstvennymi rabotnikami natsionalnykh respublik i oblastei v g. Moskve 9-12 ijunya 1923 g., Stenograficheskii otchet*, Insan, Moscow, 1992. [The original of June 1923 is classified 'strictly secret'.]
- 20** For a discussion of the disastrous results of the fragmentation for Dagestan and the Mountain Republic among high ranking Communist Party officials see *Tajny natsionalnoi politiki CK RKP*, op. cit., pp. 186-205.
- 21** The prohibition of wearing weapons, including daggers, was perceived as personally humiliating for the mountaineers for whom small arms were considered an indispensable part of clothing.
- 22** Karachai districts August 1942 to January 1943, Balkar districts, October 1942 to March 1943.
- 23** For example, Ternon, Yves, 'Reflections on Genocide', in Gérard Chaliand (ed.), *Minority Peoples In The Age Of Nation-States*, Pluto Press, London, 1989, p. 137. This is also clear from the discussion on genocide in MRG report: *International Action Against Genocide*.
- 24** Alieva, Svetlana (ed.), *Tak eto bylo, Natsionalnye Repressii v SSSR — 1919-52 gody*, vol. 1-3, Insan, Moscow, 1993.
- 25** From a NKVD (Peoples' Commissariat, i.e. Department of Internal Affairs) report on the registered result of resettlement. S. Alieva, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 293.
- 26** Chechen and Ingush were mostly not distinguished in official report. The total number loaded and the ethnic breakdown is from a report from Lavrentij Berija to Joseph Stalin of 1 March 1994, S. Alieva, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 82.
- 27** Bugaj, N.F., 'K voprosu o deportatsii narodov SSSR v 30-40 kh godakh', *Istorija SSSR*, 1989, vol. 6, pp. 135-44.
- 28** S. Alieva, op. cit., Moscow, 1993.
- 29** The fate of the deported people was first disclosed in Nikita Khrushchov's secret speech at the 20th Congress of the CP.
- 30** Oral communication with the head of the power plant.
- 31** Caucasians complain regularly about this stigmatizing reputation, which they feel is manipulated from Moscow. In this report a discussion of the Mafia is deliberately avoided as it is impossible for outsiders to judge, and the authors are guided by the wish to avoid stereotyping.
- 32** A provoking factor was the Georgian decision to introduce a Georgian language department at the University of Sukhum in Abkhazia and the consecutive Abkhaz fear for interference in her autonomy rights.
- 33** Republics of the Russian Federation are no longer characterized as 'sovereign' as was the case for Soviet Union Republics. The word 'sovereign' was an important element in pre-election of discussions of the Constitution Draft.
- 34** For example, in the first census of the Russian Empire 1987.
- 35** For a long time Indo-European languages were the best investigated by comparative linguistics. Other languages were either collectively bundled in allegedly related groups or seen as isolated. A more systematic approach was only undertaken, when ethnographically-minded linguists, in the 1920s and 1930s left the archives and began fieldwork outside the universities. Well-known examples are Edward Saphir's and Benjamin Worf's work on Indian languages and Nikolai Marr's work on Caucasian languages. Today languages are no longer grouped genetically but typologically. This has resulted in changed hypotheses on language relations.
- 36** Observations on location.
- 37** Classification according to Ruhlen, Merritt, *A Guide to the World's Languages*, Vol. 1: Classification, Edward Arnold, London-Melbourn-Auckland, 1991, pp. 324-8.
- 38** The relationship of North-East Caucasian languages is the most disputed of all. Most attempts of categorization contradict each other.
- 39** In the Osset-Ingush conflict local media have referred to the Muslim Ingush as fundamentalists and to the Christian Ossetes as Zionists.
- 40** For more detailed information see for instance Akaev, F.Kh. and Khusainov, S.A., 'O gnoseologicheskikh i npravstvennykh aspektakh sufizma', in Akaev, V.Kh. (otv.red.), *Iz istorii islama v Checheno-Ingushetii*, Grozny, 1992, p. 35-44.
- 41** Vakhid Akaev, Chechen scholar in the history and teachings of Sufism, in oral communication, Grozny, November 1993.
- 42** One source for incidents during the Soviet period is ESK, *Gazeta Evreev Severnogo Kavkaza*, the monthly newspaper of North Caucasian Jewry published in Nalchik.
- 43** Bennigsen, A and Wimbush, S. Enders, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire — A Guide*, London, 1985, p. 167.

- 44** The main source of the history of the Cossacks follows Stökl, Günther, *Russische Geschichte, Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Alfred Kröner Verlag, Stuttgart, 1990.
- 45** See also the chapter on the history of the region in this report.
- 46** Bennigsen, A and Wimbush, S. Enders, *op. cit.*, p. 167.
- 47** Bennigsen, Alexandre and Wimbush, S. Enders, *op. cit.*, p.170.
- 48** Kulchik, Yu. and Dzhabrailov, Kh., 'Kumyjskij etnos: poisk sobstvennogo mesta v mnogonatsional'noi respublike', in Kulchik, Yuriy (ed.), *Dagestan: Kumyjskij Etnos*, Institut Gumanitarno-politicheskikh Issledovaniy, Moscow, 1993, pp. 55-8.
- 49** For example, von Erckert, R., *Der Kaukasus und seine Völker*, Verlag von Eduard Baldamus, Leipzig, 1888.
- 50** Bennigsen, A and Wimbush, S. Enders, *op. cit.*, p. 169.
- 51** Lemerrier-Quellejey, Chantal, 'Co-optation of the Elites of Kabarda and Daghestan in the sixteenth century', in Bennigsen Broxup, Marie (ed.), *The North Caucasus Barrier, The Russian Advance Towards the Muslim World*, Hurt and Company, London, 1992, p. 43.
- 52** There are seven republics in the Russian Federation and two units in Georgia with disputed status..
- 53** To our knowledge, no substantial statistics exist to prove this.
- 54** The new military doctrine declares the successor states of the USSR as belonging to a Russian zone of interest, and was declared after the military supported president Yeltsin at the October 1993 coup in Moscow. See *New Times*, no. 4 and 5, Moscow, 1994.
- 55** Defence minister P. Grachev wants to relocate 9,000 officers from the Baltic states and Germany to the North Caucasian military district: Russia 'must create a combat district [in the North Caucasus] before 1995. If there is any danger, it is coming from the south'. *RFE/RL News Briefs*, 22-26 February 1993, p. 7.
- 56** Gussejnov, G., *Materialen zu einem Russischen gesellschafts-politischen Wörterbuch*, Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen, Bremen, 1994, p. 136.
- 57** Many sources back this information, see for instance *The Moscow Times*, 13 October 1993, p. 1.
- 58** Many Caucasians state that some military leaders in Moscow wanted a violent conflict between Ossetes and Ingush to stress the need for their presence in the region.
- 59** Personal communication in the region, Autumn 1993.
- 60** Dzadziev, Aleksandr, *Russkoe naselenie respublik severnogo kavkaza: Faktory vynuzhdennoj migratsij*, Unpublished article, Vladikavkaz, 1992.
- 61** By 17 April 1921, 70,000 Terek Cossacks were deported to Kazakstan, and this continued throughout the 1920s and the 1930s when thousands of the North Caucasian Cossacks were deported. Alieva, S.(ed.), *Tak eto bylo*, vol. 1, p. 27.
- 62** Alieva, S. (ed.), *Tak eto bylo*, vol. 3, pp. 263-5.
- 63** The more Russians that are accepted as local Cossacks, the more the loyalty will change from being local to being Moscow-oriented. Personal communication in the region 1993.
- 64** In June 1992 the two provinces together with North Ossetia had 70 per cent of all refugees in the Russian Federation. See Zdravomyslov, A.G. (ed.), *Bezhtentsy*, p. 21.
- 65** The Law on Forced Migration of the Russian Federation differs from other countries because it covers not only refugees but also internally displaced, i.e. involuntary resettlers who have not crossed a border.
- 66** *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 67** Rose, F., 'Local patriots set the tone in Krasnodar territory', *New Times*, vol. 50, 1993.
- 68** The Ossetes and the Vainakh (Chechen and Ingush) also have cross-border organizations and cooperation, but as the most important actions here take place in relation to the republics' governmental structures, they will be mentioned in the following section on Minorities and republics — relations between groups within the North Caucasian units.
- 69** The Russian government set up a temporary military administration with headquarters in Vladikavkaz in North Ossetia after the clashes between Ingush and Ossetes in October and November 1992.
- 70** Personal communications with leaders from the CPC in the region, November 1993.
- 71** Aliev, S. (ed.), *Tak eto bylo*, pp. 328-32.
- 72** The Kalmykian Republic sent humanitarian aid to Ingushia and North Ossetia after the clashes in the autumn of 1992, *Moscow News*, 3 September 1993.

- 73** Fuller, Elizabeth, 'Caucasus: The Lezgin Campaign for Autonomy', *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol. 1, no. 41, 1992.
- 74** Recorded interviews, Makhachkala, November 1993.
- 75** *RFE/RL New Briefs*, 28 February to 4 March 1994, p. 6.
- 76** A commonly held view from interviews in the region, November 1993.
- 77** Leontyeva, L., 'Karachai-Cherkess Republic has been preserved' in *Moscow News*.
- 78** Chechen-Ingushia had 1,280,429 inhabitants, 241,200 of whom were Ingush. No data is available after the breakup of the Chechen-Ingush republic in 1991.
- 79** Interviews in Chechnia, November 1993.
- 80** Led respectively by Sheikh Mansur and Imam Shamil, today national heroes of Chechnia. See also the section on the region and its people: Russian conquest and Caucasian resistance.
- 81** Interviews in Chechnia, November 1993.
- 82** See among others: *Chechnia — Report of an International Alert Fact-finding Mission*, International Alert, London, 1992, p. 29.
- 83** Official Soviet history claimed that Chechnia voluntarily entered the Russian Empire. In Chechnia this annexation is regarded as illegal as the Soviet annexation of the Baltic republics after the Second World War.
- 84** The regime is an authoritarian, militant presidential-regime, without a parliament. The president was elected by the people. The president claims to strive for independence with Estonia as a role model.
- 85** Also two other districts of Chechnia are reportedly controlled by opposition leaders and their private militia's. The former leader of the Russian parliament, Ruslan Khasbulatov, is supporting some of the opposition forces.
- 86** Apparently there are two kinds of opposition: a Moscow-friendly and a non-Moscow-friendly. Not much is known about the size and significance of both.
- 87** The new constitution allows no possibility for republics to be sovereign, but Moscow has made an agreement with the republic Tatarstan, which contradicts the federal constitution on several points. Moscow is hoping to copy this solution regarding Chechnia.
- 88** Interview with President Dudaev, Groznyj, 7 November 1993, and *Moscow News*, no. 34, 26 August 1994.
- 89** It is not known how many Ingush remain in the Chechen republic.
- 90** Birch, J., *Ossetia*, Paper presented at SOAS-seminar, London, April 1993, p. 23.
- 91** Omrod, p. 456, says that the Ingush and the Chechen languages are mutually unintelligible, but most linguists agrees that the relationship is close
- 92** In the new Central Asian states the local titular-languages have become more dominant in public life and education, which is difficult for minorities like the Ingush, who use the Russian language. Also, nationalist tendencies urge minorities to leave.
- 93** North Ossetia has a relatively well developed infrastructure, including tourism, as the area gained importance in the Russian Empire some two hundred years ago as the road to Georgia and the rest of Transcaucasus. The health resorts and sanatoria are a special feature of the Northern Caucasus, especially in North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia and the southern part of the Stavropol Province, because of its mineral springs. The resort areas had a high status in the Russian Empire and likewise during the Soviet period.
- 94** According to Zdravomyslov, A.G. (ed.), Bechentsy, North Ossetia had more than a third of all the refugees in the Russian Federation (116,500 out of 315,100) in June 1992.
- 95** Hewitt, G., *Language, Nationalism and the West's Response*, Paper prepared for SSEES' 75th Anniversary Conference, December 1990.
- 96** When official Russian sources refer to the North Caucasus, the Abkhaz and the South Ossetes are not included, but the other North Caucasian peoples always include them as North Caucasian.
- 97** Due to population movements during the war these figures are no longer reliable.
- 98** Among others: Hewitt, G., *The North West Caucasus*, and Colarusso, J., *Abkhazia*. Both papers presented at a SOAS-seminar in London, April 1993. And Chervonnaya, S.M., *Abkhazia-1992: Postkommunisticheskaya Vandeya*, Mosgorpechat, Moscow, 1993, p. 37.
- 99** At the time of writing negotiations concerning the return of the refugees between the two parties, Russia and the UN, are still going on.
- 100** According to many sources in Abkhazia and the North Caucasus, communications on site, 1993.

FURTHER READING

Russian History and Society

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