

MUSLIM RESISTANCE TO THE TSAR

Shamil and the Conquest of
Chechnia and Daghestan



MOSHE GAMMER

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Shamil (*an artist's impression*)

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Chechnia and Daghestan

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FRANK CASS

First published 1994 in Great Britain by
FRANK CASS & CO. LTD.

Reprinted 2004 by Frank Cass
2 Park Square, Milton Park,
Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Transferred to Digital Printing 2005

Frank Cass is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Gammer, Moshe
Muslim resistance to the tsar: Shamil and the
conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan.
I. Title
947.900882971

ISBN 0-7146-8141-5 (paperback)
ISBN 0-7146-5099-4 (hardback)
ISBN 9-781-1-35308-988 (ebk)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gammer, M.
Muslim resistance to the tsar: Shamil and the conquest of
Chechnia and Daghestan/Moshe Gammer.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-7146-3431-X
1. Shāmīl, Imām, 1798-1871. 2. Muslims—Russian S.F.S.R.—
Caucasus, Northern—Political activity. I. Title.
DK511.C2G28 1993
947'.00882971—dc20

91-23436
CIP

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Phototypeset by Intype, London

Printed and bound by Antony Rowe Ltd, Eastbourne

*Jacket illustration: Shamil rallying his troops
before battle (painting by a later artist)*

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To Li-Ling

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Acknowledgements

This book is based on a PhD thesis submitted at the London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London. First of all, I am grateful to my teachers and masters – my supervisors Professor E. Kedourie and Dr D. C. B. Lieven – who with infinite patience guided, helped and encouraged me through this lengthy research. I always found their doors open and them more than willing to answer my queries and assist me in overcoming difficulties. No PhD student could have had better and more helpful and responsible supervisors.

I consider myself very lucky indeed to have enjoyed the help, co-operation and encouragement of so many friends and colleagues. Marie Broxup and Dr Paul Henze were a constant source of help and encouragement. Professor Osmo Jussila and Dr Hary Halén assisted me in Helsinki. Professors Michel Lesure and Alexandre Popovic extended a helping hand in Paris. In İstanbul I benefited from the friendship and help of Professor Mehmet Saray and Dr Nâdir Devlet and their assistants. In Israel I enjoyed the advice, encouragement and help of Professor Michael Zand of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and of all my friends and colleagues at the Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University. Dr Butrus Abu Manneh of Haifa University shared with me his vast knowledge of the Naqshbandiyya-Khālidiyya. Dr Maarten Maartinus van Bruinessen supplied me with information on the Nehrī Branch of that order. Daniel Dishon was kind enough to transcribe the Austrian consular reports from Gothic to Latin script in addition to his important comments on the first draft. Massi Torfeh helped me with Persian. A Pakistani friend, who prefers not to be named, helped me with Urdu. Dr Stephen Jones helped me with Georgian and Dr Simon Crisp helped me with Avar. Michael Harpke, who is writing a PhD dissertation on a closely related subject at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, kindly exchanged with me notes and thoughts. Finally, this is the place

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

to pay tribute to the late Professor Alexandre Benningsen, who encouraged me in my research.

This study could not have been done without the assistance of the staff of all the archives and libraries I used. Specifically, I am grateful to Jarmo Suonsyrjä and the staff of the Slaavilainen Kyrjasto in Helsinki, who showed me that librarians in a national library can be friendly and helpful beyond the call of duty or any expectation. Dr Eric Ormsby supplied me with copies of his own photocopies of two letters by Shamil now in the possession of Princeton University Library, after the librarians there had been unable to locate them. Dr Ernst Petritsch of the Haus-, Hoff- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna took the trouble of locating, photocopying, and sending to me the relevant documents. Mr Mathews and Mr Higgins, the librarian and deputy librarian of the London Library, generously allowed me to use the material bequeathed to the Library by J. F. Baddeley. Mr and Mrs Humphrey Brook allowed me to use the Benckendorf archive, and Dr Fr. Hiller von Gaertringen, as an historian himself, allowed me the use of the papers of Leutnant Hiller von Gaertringen, and even took it upon himself to photocopy and mail all the documents I required.

Finally, I am indebted to Eileen Roberts and the other librarians at the inter-library loans department of the British Library of Political and Economic Science (the London School of Economics and Political Science), who performed miracles in getting me from all over the world all those publications with unpronounceable titles in strange languages. My thanks are due also to Jane Pugh and Gary Llewellyn of the cartography unit at the Geography Department of the London School of Economics and Political Science, who taught and helped me to draw the maps.

Financially, this research could not have been undertaken without an Argov studentship from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Further assistance was extended by the School, by the Anglo-Jewish Association and by the Leo Baeck (London) Lodge of B'nai B'rith. My two stays in Helsinki were financed by a Jewish fund which prefers to remain anonymous. My stay in İstanbul was financed by the Society for Central Asian Studies, as was the typing of the thesis. I am especially grateful to Mr Djanogly, who contributed personally towards my research in the archives in İstanbul. Since, unfortunately, this research did not materialise, the money was returned without diminishing my gratitude for this act of personal trust and generosity.

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As ever, I am grateful to my friends, Debbie and David Arbiser and Eliezer Yemini, for their constant friendship and support.

Note on Transliteration and Calendar

Since this book deals with people who wrote Arabic, it was deemed proper to use throughout it the Arabic form of personal and place-names rather than the Russian form of these names. (The Russian form is used only in a few cases in which the Arabic is unknown.) However, the first time each place, and some of the names, are mentioned, their Russian form is given in square brackets. The Arabic alphabet used in the Caucasus included several additional letters to signify sounds specific to local languages. The transliteration system from Arabic is as follows:

أ - 'A	چ - Ch/Zh	ر - R	ض - D	ق - Q	ط - Tl
ب - B	ح - H	ز - Z	س - S	قي - Qi	م - M
پ - P	خ - Kh	ژ - Ts	ش - Sh	ك - K	ن - N
ت - T	ع - Kh	ط - T	ع - 'E	ك - G	ه - H
ث - Th/Ts	د - D	ظ - Z	غ - Gh	ل - L	و - W/V
ج - J	ذ - Dh	ص - S	ف - F/P	ل - L	ي - Y

Russian places and names, with the exception of a few well-established ones like Moscow or Nicholas, are rendered in transliteration from the modern orthography. The transliteration system from Russian is as follows:

А - A	Е - E	Л - L	Р - R	Х - Kh	Ъ - "
Б - B	Ж - Zh	М - M	С - S	Ц - Ts	Ы - Y
В - V	З - Z	Н - N	Т - T	Ч - Ch	Ь - 'E
Г - G/H	И - I	О - O	У - U	Ш - Sh	Э - E
Д - D	К - K	П - P	Ф - F	Щ - Shch	Ю - Iu
					Я - Ia

Names of Russian officials written originally in Western languages (Polish, German, French), are spelled in their Latin form,

with the Russian form given in square brackets at their first appearance. Georgian names are transliterated from their Russian form. Their Georgian form is rendered in normal brackets the first time they appear. Transliteration from Georgian is in accordance with the system used in D. M. Lang, *The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy* (New York, 1957).

Turkish names and places are written according to the modern Turkish orthography. Whenever both an Arabic and a Turkish form exist, the Turkish is used for the areas now in the Turkish Republic and the Arabic for areas now in the Caucasus, or the Arab Middle East. On such occasions, the other form is given in normal brackets on its first mention.

All dates in the text are in the Gregorian calendar, unless stated otherwise. In the notes the dates are given in the original – i.e. Julian ('Old Style'), *Hijri* (Muslim), etc. – with the corresponding Gregorian date following in square brackets. Names, places and dates within quotations were changed wherever necessary, for the sake of uniformity. In the notes some places appear in at least three different spellings, Erzurum, for example, is rendered Erzeroum (English), Erzeroum (French) and Erzerum (German). Also for the sake of uniformity, titles of sources, regardless of their language, have been capitalised as in English.

Preface

The so-called '*Murīd* movement' was but one of a series of similar phenomena, grouped by Bernard Lewis under the title 'The Revolt of Islam'.¹ Indeed, Shamil's struggle has often been compared with that of 'Abd al-Qādir in Algeria,² with that of al-Sayyid Aḥmad Barelvī in India,³ and with the Ache War in Sumatra.⁴ One can further liken it to a series of other fundamentalist Muslim resistance movements to Western encroachment in Asia and Africa.⁵ In addition to all their shared characteristics, one common denominator can be found in most of them: with one or two exceptions, none of them has been studied thoroughly. In the case of Shamil and his movement, much has been published, mainly by Soviet and Caucasian expatriate authors, but the best study is still one written at the beginning of this century.⁶

The aim of this book is to be a thorough study of the '*Murīd* movement' and of its main leader, Shamil. However, by no means does it attempt to be a 'definitive' study. In history, as in the humanities in general, there are not, and could not be, definitive studies. Even the most intensively researched subject is always open to revision and reinterpretation, and this book aims at such a reinterpretation. As well as being a thorough study of the subject, it seeks to open the field for further research and to raise further questions.

One such area for further research could be the pursuit of new sources. Until very recently Soviet archives have been practically closed to historians writing on this subject. The prospect of their opening to research raises the possibility of further important information being released. In this context the collection of Arabic manuscripts in Makhachqala, the capital city of the Daghestani ASSR, is of special importance and interest. Other interesting sources might be found in Polish archives and libraries, which have never been thoroughly scrutinised. Turkish,

Egyptian and Iranian archives might add to our knowledge of Shamil's foreign relations.

Fortunately, however, the closure of Soviet archives is to a great extent compensated for by the published material. The centrality of the subject in pre-revolutionary Russian, as well as Soviet, historiography resulted in the publication of thousands of documents and letters, and dozens of diaries, memoirs, notes, travellers' accounts and, most important, detailed summaries of the events based on the archives in Tiflis (Tbilisi). These are especially valuable because they contain very little interpretation and are, therefore, the next best thing to the archives themselves. All these sources, together with contemporary newspaper reports and Western archival material, form a solid and extensive base for the reconstruction of the events and for their reinterpretation.

Finally, it has been claimed that 'history is the verdict of the lucky on the unlucky, of those who weren't there on those who were'.⁷ These facts cannot be changed when one deals with events which took place long before one's birth. One can only try not to be smug.

Chronology

1829

December Ghāzī Muḥammad proclaimed *imām* of Daghestan.

1830

January Ghāzī Muḥammad proclaimed *imām* again. Occupies Harakān.

24 February Ghāzī Muḥammad checked at Khunzakh by Pakhu Bike.

March The Russians occupy Chārtalah; Ghāzī Muḥammad declares *jihād* on the Russians.

May ‘Abdallah al-‘Ashilī sent to Chechnia; Russian force seizes the herds of Hindāl.

September Shaykh Muḥammad al-Yarāghī declares *jihād* on the Russians.

September–October Ghāzī Muḥammad tours Chechnia.

1831

March–June Ghāzī Muḥammad’s campaign in Northern Daghestan.

10 May Paskiewicz leaves Tiflis for Poland.

May–July ‘Abdallah al-‘Ashilī’s and Ghāzī Muḥammad’s campaign in Chechnia.

26 June–11 July The siege of Vnezapnaia.

13 July Russian force defeated at Aghdash ‘Awkh.

August–September Ghāzī Muḥammad’s campaign in Southern Daghestan.

1–8 September Derbend besieged.

2 October Rosen arrives in Tiflis.

15–23 October Pankrat’ev’s campaign in Ṭabarsarān.

October–November Pankrat’ev’s and Vel’iaminov’s campaigns in Kunbut and ‘Awkh.

13 November Ghāzī Muḥammad’s raid on Qidhlār.

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13 December The Russians take by storm Ghāzī Muḥammad's position at Aghach Qal'a.

1832

April Ghāzī Muḥammad's raids in the vicinity of Naṣrān and Groznaia.

2-3 July Klugenau takes by storm Ghāzī Muḥammad's position at Yol-Sus-Tawh.

2 July-21 August Ḥamza Bek's campaign in Chārtalah.

24 July-5 August Rosen's campaign against the Galgay.

25 July-9 August Vel'iaminov's campaign against the Qarābulāq and Galasha.

15 August-6 October Rosen's campaign in Lesser and Greater Chechnia.

29 October Rosen storms Ghāzī Muḥammad's position at Gimrāh. The *imām* killed in battle.

November Ḥamza Bek proclaimed second *imām*.

1833

October Ḥamza Bek defeats the united forces of Aqūsha, the *shāmkhāl* and the *khān* of Mekhtulī at Girgil.

1834

25 August the annihilation of the Avār ruling house.

19 September Ḥamza Bek assassinated.

24 September Shamil proclaimed third *imām*.

26-27 September Lanskoi's attack on Gimrāh.

14 October-4 November Klugenau's expedition to Khunzakh.

1836

January The Chirqaṭa agreement between Shamil, Ḥājj Tāshō and Qibid Muḥammad.

2-6 August Réoute's 'patrol' to Irghin.

2-6 September Pullo's attack on Zandaq.

2-15 September Réoute's expedition to Khunzakh.

1837

4-12 February Faesy's campaign in Lesser Chechnia.

16 February-11 April Faesy's campaign in Greater Chechnia.

19 May-24 July Faesy's campaign in Daghestan.

17 July Faesy storms Ṭiliq and holds the upper half of the village.

CHRONOLOGY

- 18 July Agreement reached between Shamil and Faesy.
- 11 September Faesy arrests Shamil's nephew.
- 25 September–10 October Klugenu's negotiations with Shamil.
- 12 December Rosen replaced by Golovin.

1839

- 21–27 May Grabbe's campaign in Chechnia.
- 2 June–11 September Grabbe's campaign in Daghestan.
- 5 June The battle of Burtinah.
- 11–13 June The conquest of Irghin.
- 24 June–4 September Siege of Akhulgoḥ.
- 29 August Second storming of Akhulgoḥ; Shamil sends Jamāl al-Dīn as hostage to Grabbe.
- 2–4 September Final assault on Akhulgoḥ.
- 11 September End of resistance to the Russians.
- 15 September Russian force attacked at Chirkah.

1840

- 19 February The Circassians storm and destroy fort Lazarev.
- March The Chechens rise and ask Shamil to lead them.
- 11 October Akhbirdi Muḥammad's raid on Muzlik.
- 8–30 November Grabbe's campaign in Chechnia.
- 22 November Ḥajimurād escapes from the Russians.

1841

- January Ḥajimurād joins Shamil, nominated *nā'ib* of Avāristān.
- 17 February Bakunin killed during a failed attempt to storm Tselmes.
- May–October Golovin concentrates all his efforts on building fort Evgenievskoe.
- 27 October–13 November Grabbe's campaign in Chechnia.
- 30 October–4 November Shamil's first pincer attack on Avāristān.
- 23 November Shu'ayb's raid on Qidhlār.
- 29 November–7 December Shamil's second pincer attack on Avāristān.

1842

- 18 February–18 April Faesy's campaign in Daghestan.
- 2 April Shamil captures Ghāzī-Ghumuq.
- 11–13 June Grabbe's disastrous campaign in Ichkerī.

MUSLIM RESISTANCE TO THE TSAR

30 June Grabbe's attack on Ihali repulsed.
7 December Golovin replaced by Neidhardt.

1843

24 June Akhbirdi Muḥammad killed in attack on Shatil.
8 September–3 October Shamil's first offensive in Daghestan.
11–12 October Shamil's raid on Enderī
6–7 November Shamil's raid on Vnezapnaia.
9 November–28 December Shamil's second offensive in Daghestan.

1844

18 January Shu'ayb assassinated.
16 June–3 July Schwartz conquers and abolishes the sultanate of Iliṣū; Daniyāl escapes to Shamil.
18 June–15 July Neidhardt's offensive in Daghestan.
3 September–1 December Erection of fort Vozdvizhenskoe.

1845

8 January Neidhardt replaced by Vorontsov.
15 June–31 July Vorontsov's campaign against Darghiyya.
16 December–5 January (1846) Freytag clears forests along the Goyta.

1846

27 January–11 February Freytag clears forests along the Gekhi.
25 April–9 May Shamil's campaign in Ghabarṭa.
30 June–22 October Erection of fort Achkhi.
20–28 October Shamil's attack in Aqūsha.
25–26 December Ḥajimurād's raid on Jengutay.

1847

16 December (1846)–1 February Freytag's winter campaign in Lesser Chechnia.
13 May–9 June Daniyāl's offensive in Chārtalah.
13–20 June Vorontsov's attack on Girgil repulsed.
6 August–27 September Vorontsov's attack on Salṭah.
30 November–2 March (1848) Russian winter campaign in Lesser Chechnia.
18 December Freytag's raid on the hamlet of Sa'id 'Abdalla.

CHRONOLOGY

1848

- 17 June–30 July Argutinskii's attack on Girgil.
- 19 June–1 October Russian summer campaign in Lesser Chechnia; fort of Urus Martan established.
- 17 September–4 October Shamil's campaign in the upper Samur.

1849

- December (1848)–February Russian winter campaign in Chechnia.
- 17 July–4 September Argutinskii's siege of Chōkha.
- 21 July–14 August Vorontsov holds discussions with the tsar in St. Petersburg and Warsaw.
- 2–30 December Nesterov 'pacifies' Galasha and Qarābulāq.

1850

- January Sa'īd 'Abdalla's counteroffensive in Galasha.
- 22 January–7 March Nesterov's winter campaign in Greater Chechnia.
- February Hajimurad's counteroffensive in Galasha.
- 13 August–16 September Kozlowskii clears forests along the Michik.
- 9 September Sleptsov's raid on Shamil's fortifications in the forest of Shali.
- 13 October Russians finally seize control over lower Lesser Chechnia.

1851

- 30 December (1850)–8 February Sleptsov's winter campaign in Lesser Chechnia.
- 13 January–12 March Kozlowski's winter campaign in Greater Chechnia.
- 11 March Shamil's *niḡām*, used for the first (and last) time in pitched battle; dispersed by Bariatinskii.
- 12 July–6 August Hajimurād's campaign in Qaytāq and Ṭabarsarān.
- 25 November Hajimurād escapes to the Russians.

1852

- 11–30 January Buq Muḡammad's campaign in Qaytāq and Ṭabarsarān.

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- 17 January–17 March Bariatinskii's winter campaign in Greater Chechnia.
29–30 January Bariatinskii's and Vrevskii's double raid on the upper Goyta and Roshna.
29 February–1 March Bariatinskii's march across Greater Chechnia.
8 March Meller-Zakomelskii's raid on Talgik's village.
7 May Hajimurād killed in attempt to escape back into the mountains.
23 August Baklanov's attack on Gurdali.
26 August Young Vorontsov's attack on the Argun defile.

1853

- 15 December (1852)–27 April Vrevskii's winter campaign in Lesser Chechnia.
16 January–26 March Bariatinskii's winter campaign in Greater Chechnia.
5–18 September Shamil's campaign in Chārtalah.
5 October The Ottomans declare war on Russia.

1854

- March Vorontsov leaves; replaced temporarily by Read.
14 July–11 August Shamil's campaign in the Alazan valley.
September Shamil's attempt to effect a juncture with Muḥammad Amin.
11 December Murav'ev nominated viceroy.

1855

- 22 March Exchange of prisoners between Shamil and the Russians.

1856

- 30 March Peace treaty of Paris signed.
17 June Murav'ev resigns; replaced by Bariatinskii.

1857

- December (1856)–January Evdokimov's winter campaign in Greater Chechnia.
28 June–28 November Orbeliani's campaign in Salatawh.
14 July–3 September Vrevskii's campaign against Dido.

CHRONOLOGY

1858

- December (1857)–April Evdokimov's winter campaign.
28 January Evdokimov conquers the Argun defile.
31 May–31 July Wrangel's campaign in Lesser Chechnia.
June Shamil's campaign in Lesser Chechnia.
10 July–12 September Evdokimov's summer campaign.
August Shamil's campaign in Naşrān, following a local revolt.
22–25 December Shamil attempts a counteroffensive in Greater Chechnia.

1859

- 2 January–13 April Evdokimov's winter campaign.
27 January Evdokimov conquers Tawzen.
8 February Evdokimov takes 'Alisanji.
19–20 February Evdokimov invests New Darghiyya.
13 March–21 April Wrangel's campaign in 'Awkh.
26 July–6 September The final Russian assault.
27–28 July Wrangel crosses the 'Andī Koyşū.
21 August Ghunib invested by the Russians.
6 September (25 August, Old Style) Shamil's surrender to Bari-
atinskii.

Introduction: The Russian Conquest of Transcaucasia

Russian contacts with the Caucasus date back to the times of the principality of Kiev.¹ In the Muscovite and early Imperial periods these contacts, mainly with the Daghestanis and Chechens, took place through two separate channels: one was the gradual southward expansion of Russia through the independent activity of the Cossacks, who 'in the course of centuries added belt upon belt of fertile territory to their own possessions, and eventually to the Empire of the tsars.'²

The first Cossacks in the Northern Caucasus arrived during the sixteenth century in two separate groups. These settled in the Terek Delta and on the foothills of Chechnia and subsequently became known as the Terek [Terskie] and Grebenskie (or Grebentsy) Cossacks, respectively. The northward expansion of the Chechens pressed both the Grebentsy (in 1685) and the Terek Cossacks (in 1712) to move to the left (northern) bank of the Terek. Here they served as the beginning of what would more than a century later become known as the 'Caucasian Line'.

The second channel of Russia's engagement with the Caucasus was through contacts with Georgia. Surrounded by stronger Muslim neighbours, the Christian-Orthodox kings of Georgia turned to the rising Orthodox power in the north, which in turn was more than willing to intervene in the affairs of the Caucasus.

In 1586 Alexander II, king of Kakhet'i, asked for the assistance of Tsar Feodor (Theodor) against the *shāmkhāl* of Targhū [Tarki, Tarku]. Feodor sent in 1594 a force of 7,000 men under the *boiar* Khvorostin. This force was cut to pieces by the *shāmkhāl*, as were two forces sent ten years later by Boris Godunov.

These were the first engagements of Russian regular forces with the Daghestanis and they did not augur well for the Muscovites. More important, the Russian activity was met with strong displeasure on the part of the Ottomans and the Šafavids (then

ruling in Persia). Both powers were too strong for Moscow to compete with and for the following century and a half, though contacts with Georgia continued, Russia abstained from intervening on behalf of its co-religionists.

Russian offensive activity in the Caucasus was renewed by Peter the Great. This was part of his attempt to expand southward and open up a commercial route to India. Undeterred by the ill-fated expedition to Khīva in 1717,³ Peter seized upon the Afghan invasion of Persia to make another attempt southward.⁴ Immediately following the conclusion of the 'Northern War' with Sweden in 1721, the Russian emperor decided to lead a campaign in person in that direction. In 1722 a pretext for declaring war was found and the Russians seized Derbend, Targhū, Qubāh [Kuba] and Bāqū. By this time the Terek and Grebentsy Cossack 'armies' (*voiska*) had been fully integrated into the Russian state. During the 1722 campaign, Peter the Great settled Cossacks from the Don in the gap between the Terek Cossacks and the Grebensky. The newcomers were given the name Terskie-Semeinye (Terek family).

The Russians now controlled the littoral of the Caspian Sea as far as Astarābād, but did not penetrate the interior.⁵ In one attempt to do so a detachment of cavalry trying to occupy Enderī [Andreevskii] was beaten by the Chechens. 'This was the first time that Russian regular troops had come in contact with that tribe in their native forests, and the result was ominous of what was to take place on numerous occasions during the ensuing 130 years.'⁶

With Peter's death in 1725 his ambitions were abandoned for nearly half a century. In 1735 a fort was established in Qidhlār [Kizliar], 'which up to 1763 was, so to speak, the Russian capital of the Caucasus'.⁷ However, by that same year the Empress Anne had withdrawn all her forces to the northern bank of the Terek. It was Catherine the Great who renewed the southward expansion of the Russian Empire. She was also the first to combine the two above-mentioned channels of contact with the Caucasus.

In 1763, a year after Catherine's accession to power, the fortress of Muzlik [Mozdok] was established. This aggressive step led to a 14-year struggle with the Ghabartians (Kabardians) (1765–1779), during which the Caucasian Line was extended and a new Cossack regiment – the Mozdok Cossacks – was established and settled on the Ghabartians' land.

More importantly, this step contributed to the war with the Ottoman Empire (1768–1774), during which a Russian force, under Gottlieb Heinrich von Todtleben, was sent for the first time across the main range to Tiflis. Todtleben captured K'ut'aisi in 1770, but failed to storm P'ot'i and in 1772 the Russian force was recalled to the Line.⁸

The peace treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) 'established the River Kuban as the boundary between Russia and Turkey', but the Russians failed to 'put an end to Turkish domination in Imeret'i and Georgia.' On the contrary, owing to a Russian mistake, the treaty in fact established Ottoman suzerainty over both Imeret'i and K'art'lo-Kakhet'i.⁹

During the eight following years Russia's main preoccupation was to prepare for, and execute, the annexation of the Crimean Khanate – its main spoil of war.¹⁰ But the newly annexed territories north-west of the Caucasus were not neglected. 'By the united efforts' of Jacobi [Iakobi] and the celebrated Suvorov, 'Russia's position on the Western portion of the border-line was very much strengthened, and a solid foundation laid for future success against the tribes inhabiting the country between the Terek and the Black Sea coast.'¹¹

The Russians established the Lines along the Kuban and the Laba and erected the fortresses of Ekaterinograd, Georgievsk and Stavropol', which would later become the headquarters of the entire Line.

The process culminated in 1783 in Suvorov's 'merciless slaughter' of the Nogay nomads.¹² This left the area north of the Kuban open for colonisation by Russian state serfs,¹³ the same as in the Crimea, 'whence the Crimean-Tatars, panic-stricken at Russian methods of government, fled to Turkey in such numbers that to this day [1907] the peninsula has never recovered its former population.'

All this time Georgia, though left alone for the time being, was not forgotten in St. Petersburg. The empress, it seems, waited for an opportunity to intervene there, and such a pretext came her way in 1783. When 'Alī Murād Shāh demanded subjugation, Erekle II, king of K'art'lo-Kakhet'i, appealed for help to Russia. Catherine's reaction was swift: on 5 August a treaty was signed at Georgievsk under the terms of which a Russian protectorate was established over K'art'lo-Kakhet'i,¹⁴ and on 15 November two Russian battalions with four guns, commanded by Pavel Potemkin,¹⁵ entered Tiflis.

On his way to Tiflis, Potemkin established the fortress of Vladikavkaz at Burav, linking it to Muzlik by a chain of forts. He also converted the bridle path across the main chain through the Daryal pass into 'something in the nature of a road'.¹⁶ This would later be expanded and improved into what would become known as the Georgian-Military-Highway – Russia's lifeline to its possessions in Transcaucasia.

But this was all still in the future. The Russian troops were soon – in February 1784 – withdrawn from Tiflis, and in 1788 abandoned Vladikavkaz. 'In the absence of military protection the Empress's interference proved worse than useless; it helped to exasperate Persia and contributed thereby to the invasion of Āghā Muḥammad Khān.'¹⁷

The founder of the Qājār dynasty had demanded Erekle's submission in progressively menacing terms since the early 1780s. In the spring of 1795 Āghā Muḥammad Khān laid siege to Shūsha. On 23 May he suddenly appeared in front of Tiflis. On the following day he defeated Erekle's small forces and entered the city. Deciding to make an example of Tiflis, the Qājār leader let his warriors engage in 'barbarous and horrid excesses' of 'carnage and rapine'.¹⁸

Upon receiving the news of the 'monstrous' sack of Tiflis, Catherine declared war. The Russian forces conquered Derbend for the third time¹⁹ and Qubāh and Bāqū for the second. However, after Catherine's death that same year (1796), her successor Paul [Pavel], 'who bore no goodwill to his mother or her policy, made haste to relinquish Catherine's Persian conquests as completely as Anne had relinquished those of Peter.'²⁰

However, as in many similar cases throughout history, Paul's attempt at disengagement from the Caucasus and Georgia ended with a far greater involvement. In 1799, Fath 'Alī Shāh, Āghā Muḥammad's successor, demanded that Giorgi XII, Erekle's successor,²¹ send his son to Tehrān as hostage.²² Paul concentrated an expeditionary force on the 'Line' to counteract any attempt by Fath 'Alī Shāh on Georgia and informed Giorgi of his (Paul's) determination to protect him.²³ Indeed, the Russian force deterred the *shāh* from attacking Kakhet'i and beat off an invasion by 'Uma[r] Khān of Avāristān'.²⁴

Soon afterwards Giorgi XII, on his deathbed, appealed to the Russian emperor to accept direct authority over K'art'lo-Kakhet'i. On 30 December 1800 – just ten days before the king's death – Paul signed a manifesto in which he accepted Giorgi's

offer.²⁵ Alexander I, his successor, confirmed this manifesto after long hesitation and deliberations on 24 September 1801.²⁶

These two events were a watershed in the Russian involvement in the Caucasus. There is room for argument whether Paul was aware of the implications of his decision or not, but none with regard to Alexander. He moved on purpose from intervention to annexation and thus to aggression against the Muslim powers to the south of Georgia and the tribes to the north. This was inevitable, since K'art'li and Kakhet'i as well as the road from Vladikavkaz to Tiflis (rebuilt in 1799) were regarded as indefensible without further conquests and annexations. Thus began a process which would, after six and a half decades of war and struggle, put Russia in full control and possession of the Caucasus.

But at the moment the future of Russian rule in Georgia was uncertain. There had been opposition to the Russian protectorate before Paul's manifesto. Giorgi's brother Alexander, for example, had had pro-Qājār tendencies. In 1800 he fled to Tehrān, from where he continued to stir up his countrymen. The widow and sons of Giorgi, as well as others of the royal blood, were opposed to the protectorate and tried to undo it.

In addition, Paul chose to incorporate K'art'lo-Kakhet'i into the Russian Empire without leaving any role for the local dynasty, as Giorgi XII had originally requested. Alexander chose to adhere to his father's decision against the advice of some of his confidants and the expressed wishes of the Georgian negotiators.²⁷ This alienated many more among Georgia's nobility.

And as if that were not enough, the Russians had very soon become extremely unpopular in K'art'li and Kakhet'i because of the misconduct of their officials and officers headed by Karl Knorring, the commander of the forces in the Caucasus, and Petr Ivanovich Kovalenskii, the loathed ex-ambassador to Tiflis.²⁸

The result was that Russia's hold over Georgia remained insecure for decades to come. As late as 1832 a conspiracy was plotted against Russian rule.²⁹ In 1839–40 the population – Muslim and Christian alike – awaited the arrival of Ibrāhīm Pāshā (the son of Muḥammad 'Alī Pāshā of Egypt) as liberator,³⁰ and in 1841 a revolt broke out in Guria [Gurii].³¹

Alexander I, when deciding to confirm his father's manifesto, accepted also a suggested plan by Zubov 'to occupy the lands from the river Riani down the Kura (Mtkvari) and the Aras (Rakhs) to the Caspian Sea'.³² In August 1802 the emperor

recalled Knorring and Kovalenskii and nominated Prince Pavel Dmitrievich Tsitsianov (Tsitsishvili) as commander-in-chief of the Caucasian Line and chief administrator in Georgia, with vice-regal powers:

Acquainting him with Count Zubov's plan . . . , the emperor instructed him to bring clarity and order into the confused affairs of the country and to try by gentle, just, but at the same time firm, conduct to obtain trust in the [Russian] government *not only in Georgia but in the different neighbouring principalities*.³³

Alexander could not choose a man more eager for this. Tsitsianov 'enjoyed a deserved reputation as a valiant commander, and outstanding administrator, and on top of this he was a Georgian by origin'.³⁴ These qualities, and his 'extreme energy', were 'coupled with an aggressive over-bearing spirit' and 'a biting wit, freely expressed on all who roused his animosity or contempt'.³⁵ Acting 'with his usual promptitude and firmness',³⁶ he stabilised Russian rule in K'art'lo-Kakhet'i by exiling the late king's widow and sons to St. Petersburg.

He then turned immediately to execute the Zubov plan. Using the antagonism between Christians and Muslims,³⁷ he tried to convince the Christian-Georgian principalities to accept Russian suzerainty. In 1803 Mingrelia accepted a Russian protectorate. In 1804 Imeret'i and Guria followed suit. The Muslim neighbours were treated differently. In 1803 the Lesghian communities of Chārtalah and the *sulṭān* of Iliṣū [Elisu] were subdued. The following year Ganja was stormed (14 January 1804), its *khān* killed and the Khanate annexed to Russia and renamed Elizavet-pol'. In 1805 the *khāns* of Qarābāgh, Shirvān and Shekī swore allegiance to Russia.

These were Tsitsianov's last achievements. On 20 February 1806 he was treacherously murdered under the walls of Bāqū by its *khān*, Ḥusayn Qūlī, who had pretended to submit to Russian rule. Tsitsianov's head was cut off and sent to Tehrān to Fath 'Alī Shāh.³⁸

'During the three and a half years of his administration,' wrote a Russian author, 'Tsitsianov extended the borders of Russia's possessions from the Black to the Caspian Sea.'³⁹ But this rapid territorial expansion and aggressive policy led Russia into trouble: 'the two Great Muḥammadan Powers' – as well as Britain and France –

could not fail to take alarm at the rapid progress of Russia: moreover, Ganja and others of the Khanates were still counted as vassal states by the *shāh*, however shadowy his sovereignty may have become and as Turkey in the west, so Persia in the east soon saw that war with Russia was inevitable.⁴⁰

Indeed, by 1804 Russia was at war with the Qājārs and by 1807 with the Ottomans, in addition to its involvement in the Napoleonic Wars.

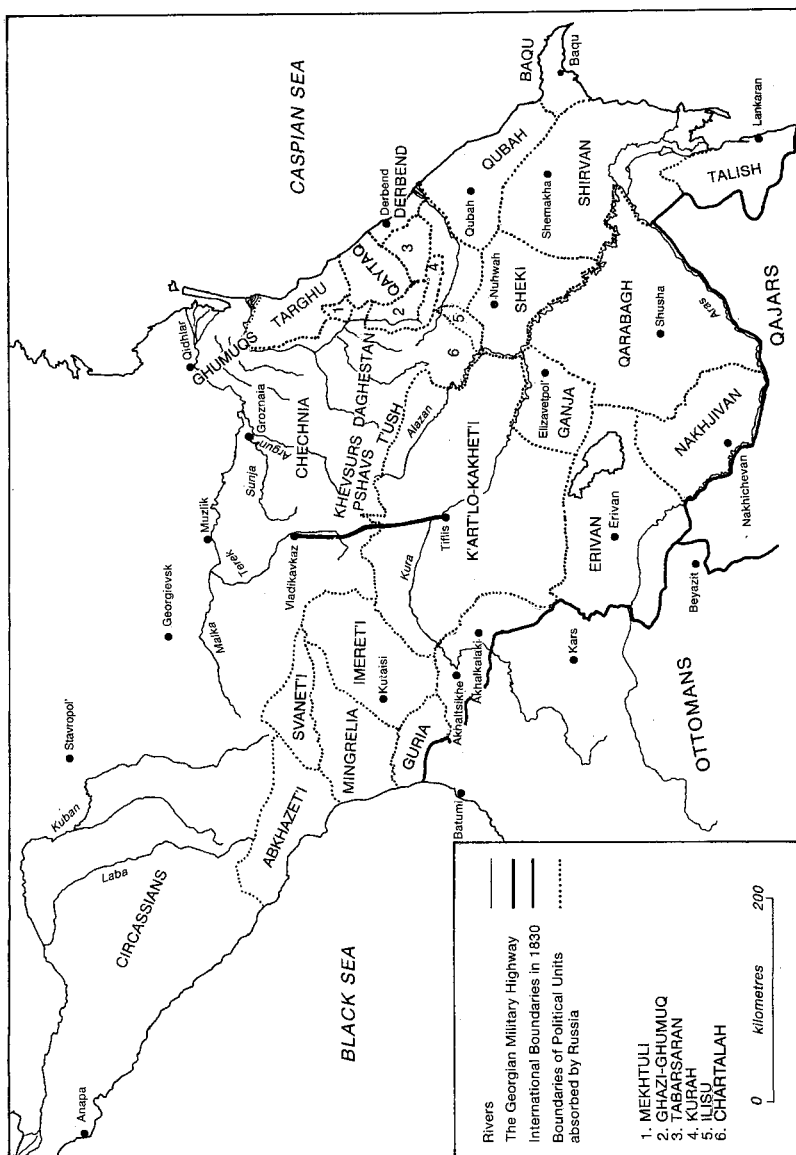
Thus, for the following eight years a succession of Russian governors in Georgia had to fight on two fronts simultaneously. They could rely only on their own resources and troops, whose dwindling number they had no hope to reinforce because 'the Napoleonic Wars imposed an immense strain on Russia's resources, and prevented the deployment of large forces in remote Caucasia'. Furthermore, they had to deal with uprisings by the local population – Christian and Muslim alike – 'resulting from the exactions of the [Russian] military commanders and the corrupt ways of tsarist officialdom'.⁴¹

In spite of such a desperate situation, Russia emerged victorious in both wars. The peace treaties of Bucharest with the Ottomans (1812)⁴² and of Gulistān with the Qājārs (1813)⁴³ confirmed Russian possession of, and Ottoman and Qājār disclaimers to, K'art'lo-Kakhet'i, Imeret'i (annexed in 1810), Mingrelia, Abkhazet'i (accepted protectorate again in 1810), and the Khanates of Ganja [Elizavetpol'], Qarābāgh (1805), Shekī (1805), Derbend (1806), Qubāh (1806), Bāqū (1806) and part of Ṭalīsh (1812). The Qājārs also renounced any claim to Daghestan.⁴⁴

These territorial gains were augmented in the second round of wars with the Qājārs (1826–28) and the Ottomans (1828–29).⁴⁵ The peace treaty of Turkumānchāy (1828)⁴⁶ added the rest of Ṭalīsh and the Khanates of Erivan and Nakhichevan (Nakhjivān) to Russia. In the peace treaty of Adrianople (1829),⁴⁷ Russia finally retained Anapa, Akhalk'alak'i and Akhaltsikhe, and the Ottomans renounced their sovereignty over the eastern coast of the Black Sea.⁴⁸

In between these two rounds of wars, the Russians turned towards the mountains to secure their rear and communications. However, before describing this, the geography and the nature of the two rivals – the Russian army in the Caucasus and the mountaineers – have to be considered.

MAP 1: RUSSIAN ADVANCE IN THE CAUCASUS 1800-1830



Part 1

The Setting

Chapter 1

The Theatre

The Caucasus Mountains have often been compared with the Pyrenées because of their asymmetry and steep southern slopes, their lofty deeply trenched eastern mass, their central ice-capped barrier bristling with high peaks, and their western division which gradually narrows and loses height, but gets more and more rain as it goes towards the sea. As in the Pyrenées, difficulties of communication, and the consequent isolation due to the relief explains the fact that the Caucasus region forms a veritable human patchwork. This isolation has resulted in a long-dated insecurity which is reflected in the form of dwelling and has made its conquest so difficult. Lastly, like the Pyrenées it is an almost impassable barrier, which has forced most migrating nations to go round the ends, and yet it does not separate peoples, for nearly all those found on one slope are represented on the other.¹

Usually regarded as the dividing line between Europe and Asia,² the Caucasus extends for over 1,100 kilometres between the Taman peninsula on the Black Sea in the northwest and the Apsheron peninsula on the Caspian Sea in the southeast.³ Its width ranges between 32 and 180 kilometres, and the highest point is Mount Elbrus, an extinct volcano, with twin peaks reaching 5,629 and 5,593 metres.

The backbone of the mountain system consists along most of its length of two parallel ranges 10 to 15 kilometres apart. The main [glavnyi] or water divide range [vodo-razdel'nyi khrebet] has an average elevation of 3,600 metres. The front [peredovoi] or side [bokovoi] range to the north is in many places higher than the main range.⁴ Both ranges tower above the permanent snow line, which rises from west (2,750 metres) to east (3,900 metres), 'due to the fact that the moisture comes from the west'.⁵ Hence their nickname of 'snow' or 'ice' mountains in Russian sources.

To the north of the front range lie much lower and gradually

decreasing ranges which do not reach the snow line. The two most notable are the rocky [skalisty] range (average elevation over 3,300 metres) and the 'black mountains' [chernye gory] (average elevation 2,300 metres), called so because of the dense forests that covered them. North of the line of the Kuban and Terek rivers lie the Ciscaucasian steppes, which are the continuation of the Russian steppes. The Manych depression 'marks the northern boundary of Ciscaucasia mainly by its man-repellent poverty'.⁶

To the south of the main range there are fewer ranges, which fall steeply into the depression of the Kura. In the area of Daghestan, the southern slope of the main range 'rises like a wall above the alluvial plains of the Alazān and Kura valleys'.⁷ The two main ranges, as well as the others, are connected to each other by cross ranges. 'These connections give rise to mountain basins, which have a relatively dry climate'.⁸

Chechnia and Daghestan form the northeastern part of the Caucasus. Chechnia – named after the people inhabiting the area – is a quadrangle between the Terek and Sunja rivers in the west and the north, the 'Andī range in the east (which separates it from Daghestan) and the main range in the south. In Russian sources Chechnia is divided along the Argūn River into Lesser to the west of it and Greater to the east'.⁹

Like other parts of the Caucasus, Chechnia is divided by parallel ranges, the northernmost of which are the Terek [Terekskii] and Sunja [Sundzhenskii], located in between the rivers after which they are named. The heartland of Chechnia – the lowland – lies between the Sunja range and river and the 'black mountains'. It is, in fact, the widest of the valleys situated in between the different ranges. It is crossed by the numerous tributaries of the Sunja, which cut through the mountain ranges in deep ravines and canyons. Their high water, as all over the Caucasus, occurs in the summer, when snow and ice melt in the higher altitudes.

Most of Chechnia is situated within the forest zone of the Caucasus. With the exception of the Terek and Sunja ranges – 'formed of rounded hills, bare of trees, though covered with luxuriant herbage to their summit' – and 'one or two spurs likewise denuded of trees', the country forms a 'vast succession of forest-clad hills rising wave behind wave to the mighty walls and bastions of the Jurassic limestone topped by the great mountains' of the two main ranges, 'affording in fine weather a glorious

panorama of snowy peaks and rocky ridges rising from a sea of verdure'.¹⁰

Daghestan (literally 'mountainland')¹¹ forms a triangle bounded by the main range in the southwest, the 'Andī range in the northwest and the Caspian Sea in the east. The inner heartland – Upper Daghestan – is completely surrounded by ranges 2,000–3,000 metres high, 'the only outlet for the water of the area [being] the deep and narrow ravine of the Šulāq'.¹² The area inside is composed of both 'asymmetric ranges with pointed crests and triangular cross sections' and 'high synclinal plateaus'.¹³ These fall in many cases in 'sheer high precipices, in most cases inaccessible, which add a wild rocky character to the country'.¹⁴

In addition, these ranges and plateaus are cut in many places by the four Koyşū rivers, which unite to form the Šulāq, and by their numerous tributaries. These rivers form canyons hundreds of metres deep.¹⁵

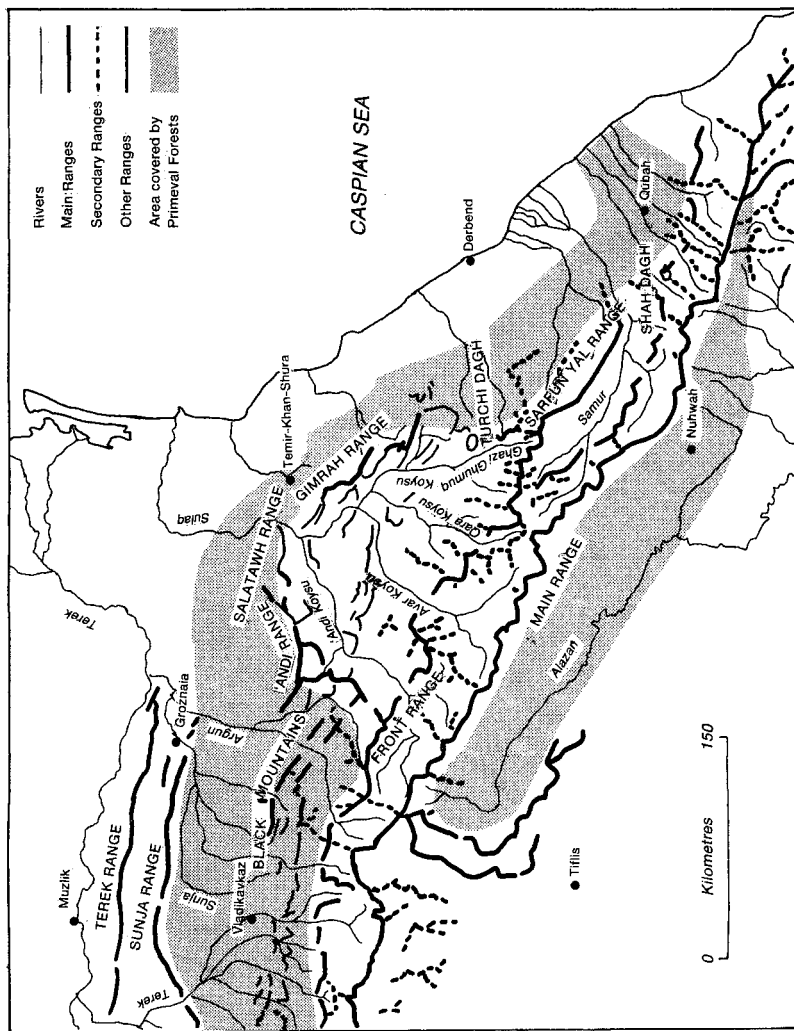
Usually, the river occupies the entire width of the bottom of such a canyon leaving no place for . . . a road. The headbreaking curly tracks either meander high above the river along the cornices of the slopes, or pass completely sideways from the river valleys, along the plateaus and the crests of the rivers . . . Here the valleys do not at all facilitate communications between the different parts of the country. Rather, they render [communications] more difficult by forcing the roads into numerous winding, steep descents and ascents.¹⁶

In Daghestan, remarked Marlinskii, 'the Minister of Ways and Communication must be the Devil himself'.¹⁷

Enclosed within such barriers, the interior of Upper Daghestan has a dry climate, which does not encourage the growth of forests. The sparse vegetation and the numerous rocky precipices create a desolate landscape. Inner Daghestan is thus

a chaos of mountains, its most characteristic natural feature the water-worn chasm; to which it may be added that man's handiwork . . . , was chiefly evidenced by paths that looked fitter for wild goats than for human beings; by terraces cut out of the mountain sides with infinite labour for the purpose of cultivation: by a system of irrigation devised and executed with astonishing skill and patience; and by clusters of low, flat-roofed dwellings built of stone and piled up tier above tier against the faces of the rocks, high above some river or mountain torrent.¹⁸

MAP 3: CHECHNIA AND DAGHESTAN : THE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS



Source: John F. Baddeley, *The Rugged Flanks of the Caucasus* (London, 1940).

The outer slopes of the ranges surrounding Inner Daghestan from the north and east have a wide strip of forests. These are especially widespread in Qaytāq [Kaitag, Kaitakh] and Ṭabarsarān [Tabassaran], but nowhere reach the extent and density of the forests of Chechnia. From the forest zone these ranges descend gradually to the semi-arid Ghumuq (Qumiq) [Kumyk] plain in the north-east and the narrow strip of lowland along the Caspian shore. This strip is cut in a few places by the mountains reaching the sea. The most important of these is near Derbend – erroneously translated by many as ‘the gate’¹⁹ – which was the only city in Daghestan.

The areas to the south of Daghestan – Qubāh, on the northern side of the main range and Shirvān, Shekī and Chārtalah on its southern side – have had traditional ties with Daghestan.²⁰ They have similar landscapes to the outer slopes of Daghestan; the mountains descend through a strip of forests to a semi-arid steppe.

The Caucasus imposes two of the most difficult modes of war on an invading army: mountain and forest warfare. Although completely different types of warfare, both give enormous advantages to the defenders, making it very difficult to wage a pitched battle and use artillery efficiently and posing tremendous problems of logistics and communications²¹ Before any battle the invaders have to overcome nature. The Russians had to cut (or fell) a way through the forests for the use of their artillery and supply convoys, and even then pack-horses often had to be led one by one and artillery pieces carried by soldiers. Even in peacetime, for example, three battalions with four guns needed ten hours to cross a 200-metre-long defile in Daghestan.²²

Mountain warfare had to be waged in Daghestan and forest warfare in lower Chechnia. Only in upper Chechnia did the two converge. Chechnia and Daghestan thus formed separate theatres of war, necessitating completely different – sometimes even diametrically opposed – tactics.

Even the preferable season for operations was different. In Chechnia, the high water occurs in the spring and summer and in the autumn the rains turn the soil into mud, so that winter, when the ground is frozen and hard and the rivers at their lowest, even if not frozen, was the best time for campaigns. In addition, in the winter the trees and many bushes are bare of leaves, thus denying the Chechens cover.²³ In Daghestan, to the contrary, the mountain passes were impassable until the thaw of the snows

THE THEATRE

and even then the Russians could not conduct operations before the appearance of fodder for their horses in about June. By October–November the first snowfalls rendered any campaign impossible.

Of the two, Chechnia was the more difficult theatre to fight in and it was here that the Russians suffered their greatest defeats and disasters. But Daghestan was the more alien, frightening and psychologically imposing:

However savage the campaigns in [Chechnia], where sharpshooters lurked behind every tree, and Russian losses were terrible, the land itself was not hostile. There were trees, grass, streams; it was a world they knew. Dying there, the men still felt themselves among friends. Not so in Daghestan, where nothing lived; where an endless labyrinth of precipices and phantasmagoric peaks formed an accursed desolation – a hell, which they had reached before death.²⁴

Chapter 2

The People

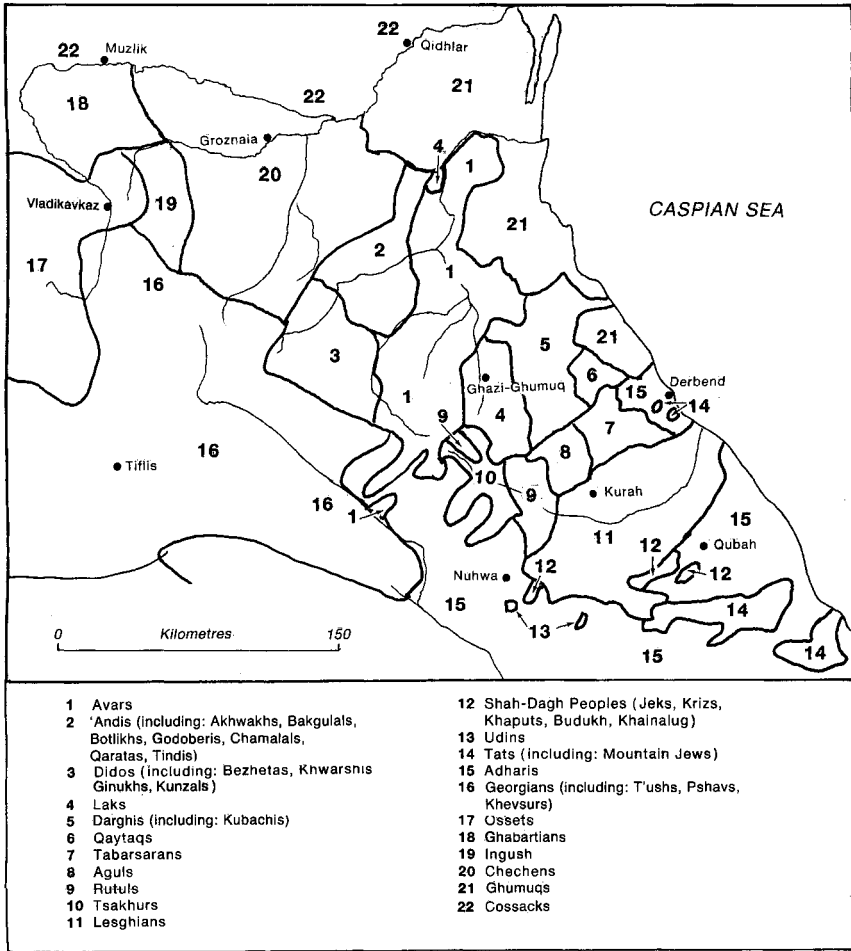
The Caucasus is probably the most varied area in the world with regard to the ethnic and linguistic composition of its population.¹ Daghestan takes the lion's share of this variety. No fewer than 30 ethno-linguistic groups inhabit this area, some being confined to the population of a single village. The four most important groups are the Avārs, the Darghīs, the Laks and the Lesghians.² All these groups speak languages belonging to the north-eastern group of the Caucasian, or 'Japhetite', linguistic family. Many of them also live south of the main range in present-day Ādhār-bāyjān [Azerbaidzhan]. Some, like the Lesghians, are present there in greater numbers than in Daghestan, while some groups related to them live only in northern Ādhār-bāyjān. The Ghumuq plain and most of the coastal strip are inhabited by the Ghumuqs. In the environs of Derbend the Ādhārī Turks (Azeris) prevail. Both speak Turkic languages. Speakers of Iranian languages are represented by the Tats and the Mountain Jews in the mountains south and west of Derbend.

Chechnia is mainly populated by the Chechens (Chehān), whose Russian name derives from the village of Great Chechān, where the Russians first encountered them. The western and south-western part of the country is inhabited by the Ingush. (The two groups are in fact so close to each other that according to some scholars they are separated 'only because of their different historical backgrounds. The Ingush did not participate either in the Shamil movement . . . or in the revolt of 1920–22.'³ This statement is generally correct, though some of the Ingush did in certain instances take part in the Shamil movement.) In the south, on the lower slopes of the main range, live the Kists, who are regarded by some scholars as a separate group. Most sources, however, consider them to be a Chechen tribe. The upper slopes of the main range are inhabited by the Khevsurs, a Georgian Christian mountain tribe.

The great ethnic-linguistic divergence notwithstanding, all the

THE PEOPLE

MAP 4: CHECHNIA AND DAGHESTAN : APPROXIMATE
ETHNO-LINGUISTIC DIVISION c. 1830



inhabitants of the Caucasus, or the mountaineers as they are usually called by Russian sources, shared the same way of life, traditions, customs and even costume.⁴ Their common culture is classified by Luzbetac as belonging to the nomadic-patriarchal type,⁵ even though the mountaineers were not nomads. The population was divided along patrilineal lines into extended families, clans and tribes. These served, with different emphases at the different levels, as foci of identification and mutual responsibility and were at the basis of the mountaineers' political, social and economic structure.⁶ In some cases the boundaries of the clans and tribes (sometimes called by the Russians 'communities' [*obshchestva*]) corresponded to those of ethnic-linguistic groups. In Chechnia and great parts of Daghestan these communities were 'free', that is, independent of outside control. Many of these communities were headed by an elected *qāḍī*.⁷ In all of them important decisions were taken by the elders and a general assembly of all the men. Because of this some Russian authors called these communities 'democracies' or 'republics'.

Sometimes several such communities formed a loose confederation. The strongest of these in Daghestan was Aqūsha (also called Darghī), which in 1744 defeated Nādir Shāh.⁸ The eastern part of Daghestan was divided into a number of such confederations, or principalities. The rulers of some of them had special titles: the *Shāmkhāl* of Targhū; the *ʿUṣmī* of Qarāqaytāq; the *Maʿšūm* of Ṭabarsarān. The ruler of Iliṣū had the title of *Sulṭān* and the others – Ghāzī-Ghumuq [Kazi-Kumukh], Kurāh [Kiurin],⁹ Mekhtulī and Khunzakh (also known as Avāristān [Avaria] – had the title of *Khān*. The degree of autonomy of the different communities within these principalities always depended on the personality and power of the individual rulers.

Farming was the main occupation of the population. The mountaineers grew a great variety of cereals, fruit and vegetables. But the basis of economic life was livestock and people kept their wealth in herds of horses, cattle and especially sheep and goats. These were the targets of mutual raids. Such raids, especially on the lowlands, were in some areas of great importance to the local economy.

In Chechnia and some of the 'free communities' of Daghestan social structure was not stratified. Land was owned communally and all men belonging to the group were free – *uzdens*. Prisoners were enslaved or exchanged for ransom.

In the principalities and their satellite communities, as well as

among the Ghumuqs, social structure was more complicated. A nobility (*beks*) existed which enjoyed some social, economic and political prerogatives, but in other respects were equal to the *uzdens*. Children of noble fathers and commoner mothers and their descendants, called *janka*, enjoyed some of the privileges and prestige of their fathers, and formed a separate group between the two. Land ownership was considerably more complicated and there were serfs as well as tenants.

In Chārtalah a confederation of five Daghestani communities and the sultanate of Iliṣū formed ruling élites over Georgian Muslim serfs (Ingilois) and free but unprivileged Turkic people – Mughals, now assimilated with the Ādhārīs.

The mountaineers were aware of their ethnic-linguistic divisions. Especially noticeable was the division between Chechens and Daghestanis – mainly Avārs and related groups – who were known to the Chechens as *Ṭawhlīs*.¹⁰ Yet the ethnic-linguistic group was not a focus of identification above the tribal level. Rather, it was religion which served as such a focus. The Chechens and Daghestanis were *Sunnī* Muslims, at least nominally.¹⁴ As such, they intermingled with the Ghumuqs, the Ghabartians and the Circassians [Cherkesy]¹² and were opposed to the Shīʿī Ādhārīs and to the Christian (at least nominally) Georgian mountain tribes – the Tʿush, Khevsurs and Pʿshavs. In the wider Islamic context they were aligned to the Ottoman *Sultān*, the head of *Sunnī* Islam. This identification as *Sunnī* Muslims would play an important role in the struggles against the Russians.

Three other characteristics of the mountaineers resulting from their cultural and social milieu must be singled out for the role they played in the struggle with the Russians. One was the extreme vigilance over their freedom and the strong rejection of any authority external to the tribe or clan.¹³ Another was the blood feuds [*kanly*], which sometimes lasted for generations and caused the destruction of entire villages and communities.¹⁴ The third was the mountaineers being in nineteenth-century terminology a 'martial race', raised from childhood to be warriors. Their bravery, accomplished horsemanship, superb mastery of dagger (*kinjāl*), sword (*shashka*) and musket, and their ability to find cover and to disguise themselves were admired by the Russians, who lagged far behind in these qualities.¹⁵

Many also admired the swiftness of the mountaineers' moves, whether on horseback or on foot. Unlike a regular army, they were not bogged down by supply trains. Being used to a frugal

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way of life, they had all they needed with them and once their supplies were exhausted, they could always live off the land – being supported either by friends or by raiding enemies.

But the main thing to be admired in the mountaineers was their adaptability. The Russian army, like all its Western counterparts, when facing non-Western forces, relied heavily on very specific tactics which were based on rigid discipline and superior fire-power to secure victory in a pitched battle. Indeed, in defence, the infantry carré proved impregnable and in attack the bayonet usually overpowered the enemy; in both cases artillery fire, and especially the use of grapeshot, was indispensable to secure success.¹⁶

The mountaineers were not used to pitched battles. Their warfare centred on swiftness of manoeuvre rather than on fire-power. It mainly took the form of raids and counter-raids aimed at catching cattle and prisoners. But they soon adjusted to the Russian tactics and learnt how to use to their advantage their adversary's weak points, while circumventing the strong ones. The Russians were, thus, confronting in the north-eastern Caucasus a population of about 200,000, 40–50,000 of whom were accomplished warriors ready to strike at any moment.

Chapter 3

The Russians

The Russians were the mountaineers' exact opposites in every conceivable way. They were heavy and slow; they depended on, and were hampered by, long trains of supplies (logistics, never the strong point of the Russian army, often collapsed in the extremely difficult terrain of the Caucasus);¹ they relied on infantry and firepower (artillery);² and rigid discipline and robot-like execution of orders worked against personal initiative.

The Russian forces in the Caucasus, later successively named 'the Caucasian Corps'³ and 'the Caucasian Army', consisted of three elements:

1. Regular army units were the backbone of the Caucasian Corps and bore the main burden of the fighting. These consisted mainly of infantry (jägers and musketeers) and artillery units, though at a later stage a regiment of dragoons took part in the operations as well. The soldiers in these units were mainly peasants drafted for 25 years. They were brave, loyal, obedient and 'went to battle as if to church'.⁴ During their long service these soldiers showed great ingenuity and initiative when left alone. They specialised in different crafts (tailoring, shoe-making, etc.);⁵ they grew vegetables and fruit in gardens in and near their fortresses; they had herds of cattle, sheep and goats.⁶ Thus, the Caucasian regular units were in many – though not all – respects self-sufficient. Most important, the soldiers specialised in the local mode of warfare and learned how to behave in encounters with the mountaineers.
2. The Battalions of the Line [*lineinye batal'iony*] were second-rate troops, many of them unfit for field service, who were used to garrison forts and fortresses. They were seldom used in the field and were usually looked upon with contempt by the Russian commanders.⁷
3. The Cossacks fought in the same way as the natives. But neither they nor their horses equalled the mountaineers.