

ETHNIC CONFLICT IN OSSETIA

**ETHNIC CONFLICT IN OSSETIA:
THE RISE OF NATIONALISM AND THE CRISIS
OF THE LEGITIMACY OF INTERNAL BORDERS**

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the causes and essence of the Ossetian-Ingush ethno-territorial conflict. The disintegration of the Soviet Union is viewed as a main factor of two interrelated phenomena: the crisis of legitimacy of the internal administrative borders of the national territorial units of the Russian Federation, and the rise of nationalism in the autonomous republics in the North Caucasus.

This study focuses on the logic of numerous violations of borders and administrative territorial belongings in the North Caucasus by the Tsarist and Soviet state as a key instrument to strengthen its imperialist domination in this region. These violations of territorial and national rights of the North Caucasian peoples form the basis for conflicting national ideologies: each of the parties chooses those historical arguments that are most favourable for its political aspirations and territorial claims.

The thesis argues that constant changes of administrative borders which have taken place throughout the history of the North Caucasus can hardly serve as a self-sufficient foundation for the contemporary determination of territorial belonging.

A methodology of interview in combination with archival research and documents analysis is used.

The study analyses the phenomenon of nationalism as an inevitable by-product of the process of search for a new, post-Soviet national and civic identity of North Caucasian peoples. It also attempts to demonstrate that the Ossetian-Ingush conflict could be considered as an example of the emerging 'civilizational stand-off' (Huntington, 1993) between the Muslim and Orthodox Christian cultures.

The dissertation concludes that being placed in its cultural and geopolitical context, this search for a new ethnic identity and non-Soviet symbolism among the Ossetians and their Muslim neighbours will determine the direction of socio-political changes in the North Caucasian region.

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Chapter One

Background

The Caucasus, a remote area little known in the West, has become a centre for ethnic conflicts and tension in the south of the Russian Federation. While this area is traditionally considered obscure, it is strategically important for its geopolitical position. It is the only point where Turkey, Iran, and Russia meet in a long standing tradition of rivalry. Republics had begun to emerge in the North Caucasus even before the collapse of the Soviet Union (See Map #1). But since 1988 the problems of identity and political organization have become acute, practical matters. The most extreme expression of the complexity of this new post-communist reality is the ethnic conflict in the very middle of the North Caucasus between the Ossetians and the Ingush people(See Maps #4 and #5). This conflict in all its dimensions symbolises a potential threat not only to the whole of the North Caucasus but to the future integrity and state formation of the Russian Federation.

Ethnic conflicts in Russia and in the North Caucasus have attracted limited attention in academic discourse, especially in sociology. On the other hand, these conflicts as well as tensions in the relations between the subjects of the

Russian Federation, have certainly become a topic of interest and investigation within a variety of public discourses. TV and newspapers in the West cover on a daily basis the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh, the war between Abkhazians and Georgians, the relationships between newly independent Chechnya and Russia. But there is a lack of information on the relations between the seven North Caucasian state-like entities - former "autonomous" republics. Several international organizations, such as International Alert, Helsinki Watch, and the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), have sent missions to the Caucasus and presented reports describing numerous aspects of the political situation in the region.¹ This description in the majority cases has a superficial character and can not be considered as a reliable source of detailed information about the roots and reasons of these ethnic disturbances.

The objective of this study is to further our understanding of the emergence of ethnic conflicts in the post-Communist North Caucasus. It tries to illustrate how the violations of administrative borders and territories by the Tzarist and Communist state form the basis for conflicting national ideologies. Part of this task involves description of

¹ (International Alert, November 1992; UNPO, December 1992; Helsinki Watch, November 1991).

the history of the region, which includes analysis of the evolution of the social, ethnic and religious structures of the North Caucasus, from the beginning of Russian colonization to the present day. This description will help to establish the historical and spatial frames of the research. It also provides the basic information which is especially helpful for the Western reader (See Map #2).

Until the middle of the 16th century the North Caucasus remained isolated from the international scene. It was inhabited by tribal clan-based societies professing different religions - Christians in the west and centre (Adyghes, Ossetians and some of the Kabardians); Muslims in the east (Daghestan); and pagans in the centre (Chechens and Ingush) (Broxup, 1992).

The Kabardians occupied the central sector - the most important one - of the North Caucasus. This important strategic position enabled them to play the role of arbitrators in the political arena of the entire Caucasus and gave them supremacy over their eastern and western neighbours (BSE, 1976).

The social structure of the Kabardians was the most sophisticated in the Caucasus. It consisted of a "feudal pyramid" that preserved the survival of the clan system. At the top was "the oldest member of the clan" - "prince". Princely clans owned their lands and serfs collectively. They

were not divided into nuclear families, and all were considered dependent on the eldest member of the clan. Inheritance was devolved from brother to brother, not from father to son (Broxup, 1992).

Next to the princely family came the "gentry", composed of vassals. They were endowed with the privilege of changing their patron. In the middle and at the foot of the social scale were the most populous classes, that of free peasants and then slaves.

The strength of feudal organization explains why there could be no central authority in Kabarda during this period of time: no princely family was strong enough to force the others to submit to its authority (Warziati, 1990).

Most historical documents refer to the Kabardians as Muslims. But some Russian archival documents show a more complex situation. Those Kabardians who served the Tsar were converted to Orthodoxy (Ippolitov, 1869).

The **Adyghe** (or Western Circassians (or Cherkess)²

²Circassians (or Cherkess) are divided between three national-territorial units: the Adyghe Autonomous Oblast (AO), the Karachay-Cherkess AO, and the Kabard-Balkhar ASSR. Circassian (Cherkess) is a collective ethnonim of the Circassian group of the Abazgo-Circassian peoples. In the late 1930s the Circassians were officially divided into three groups: western (Adyghe), central (Cherkess) and eastern (Kabardians) groups, each having the status of a distinct ethnic group. For more information, see Bennigsen & Wimbush, 1985).

tribes were more primitive and more divided than the Kabardians. At the top of the feudal ladder were the princes, or rather the clans' chiefs. Then came the "great nobles"; then the "small nobles", vassals of the former; then the free peasants, and , finally, freed peasants and slaves. Most of them were Muslims (BSE, 1976).

The **Daghestanis** had already been converted to Islam by Arabs during the eighth and ninth centuries. The Muslim Sunni religion was solidly established there in the sixteenth century and, for lack of other means, served as cultural cement between various small tribes belonging to three main ethnic groups:

- the Turkic group of **Kumyks** and **Nogays** in the steppe of the northern foothills;
- the Persian-speaking group composed of Muslim **Tats** and **Jews** established on the coast of the Caspian Sea between Derbent and Baku;
- the Ibero-Caucasian group of the medium and high mountain range, consisting in its turn of numerous sub-groups (Kozlov, 1988).

The social structure of the **Daghestanis** was greatly diversified:

while Kumyks had achieved a very complex feudal system, almost as complicated as that of the Kabardians, the small Ibero-Caucasian tribes still had no division into classes; all members of their community were considered as free and equal. The political organization of Daghestan did not correspond to its social, ethnic and linguistic structure. The country was divided into a number of diminutive multilingual and multi-ethnic principalities, with ever changing boundaries (Ippolitov, 1869).

The Chechen tribes lived mainly in the valley of the Terek river and of its southern tributaries the Sunja and the Argun, and on the northern slopes of the Great Caucasian mountain range. According to Russian sources class society was not yet formed among Chechens and Ingush: there was no feudal aristocracy and these communities were made up of large undivided families and tapes (clans) whose members considered themselves free, noble and equal to each other. In the 16th century, the overwhelming majority of *Vainakhs* (the Chechen and the Ingush) were animists. Islam was slow to penetrate into the eastern Chechen mountains, and it was only at the end of the 18th century, thanks to the activity of the great Sufi brotherhood, that Chechen country became one of the strongholds of Islam in the North Caucasus (Avtorkhanov, 1992).

The Ossetians lived in the valleys of the Terek river,

to the west of Chechnya. They were the remains of the great Alan nation that dominated the North Caucasus in the Middle Ages. The Alans were one of the numerous Sarmatian tribes. According to T. Sulimirski, their modern descendants, the Ossetians, a tiny race living in the Caucasian highland, are the only people still to speak the language of the once numerous and mighty Sarmatians. The whole country east of the Kuban valley up to Dagestan was named 'Alania'. This area was ruled over by the Alans whose princes and princesses often intermarried with the royal house of Georgia in Transcaucasia. When the Alans entered this country in the fourth century AD, they subdued the local peoples, and lived side by side with the natives in the same settlements. This relationship affected both cultures, but ultimately the Alans were absorbed by the aboriginal inhabitants who outnumbered them. It was the Tatar/Mongol invasion in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries which ended the Alans' existence; their name is never referred to again and 'Alania' disappears from written sources (Sulimirski, 1970: 197 - 199).

Unlike Chechens, the Ossetians possessed a feudal structure, though one less rigid than that of the Kabardians or the Kumyks. It comprised nobles, free peasants, serfs and slaves. The Ossetians' religion was a derived form of Christianity, stamped with animist elements. Islam began to penetrate into their territory from the west (from the

Kabardians). But the process of Islamization was never completed, and even now 85 percent of the Ossetians are nominally Christians (Sulimirski, 1970).

Confronting the indigenous population of the North Caucasus were two groups of Christian Cossacks who appeared in the mid-sixteenth century: the Greben and Terek Cossacks. They consisted mainly of outlawed elements. Usually they served under Russian command as auxiliaries entrusted with the task to defend the Russian frontiers. But frequently they could not be controlled and started their own operations, plundering Caucasian units on their way to Transcaucasia (Broxup, 1992).

The Russian drive towards the southern seas began in the second half of the sixteenth century from the banks of the river Terek. By that time Russia, for the first time in its expansion southward, reached the northcentral Caucasus. Intimate contacts were established with the Kabardian nobility. Russia remained unable to conquer the North Caucasus until the Crimean Khanate, which controlled the western and central Northern Caucasus, was subdued at the end of the eighteenth century. Russia's attention then focused on Transcaucasia, which was richer and strategically more important than the mountainous northwest and northeast Caucasus. The conquest of the southern Caucasus took place between 1801 and 1830. Russia's conquests there were sealed by peace treaties with Ottoman Turkey and Persia. Before 1830

advances had also been made in the North Caucasus, especially in the Kabardian and Ossetian territories in the centre, but the main task still lay before Russia. It took the Russians until 1864 before they were able to subdue first the eastern mountain people and then, finally, the western mountain peoples. During this period the North Caucasus underwent a total change: the feudal system was replaced by clans and free peasant societies. Sunni Islam provided a new ideology and became deeply implanted among the population.

For the indigenous peoples of the northwest Caucasus, the Russian conquest had dramatic consequences. It is estimated that at least half of the indigenous population was forced to leave for the Ottoman Empire (Henze, 1992; Dumezil, 1965). About one million West Caucasians were involved in this migration. The motives for leaving were manifold: the Russian authorities pressured Caucasians into leaving, and the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, beckoned to their fellow Muslims and often lured them into fighting against Russians, especially in the Balkans. The exodus from the Northern Caucasus forms part of a huge exchange between Turkey and Russia, involving mass migrations of Christians, mainly Armenians, leaving Turkey, and newly conquered Muslims, Crimean Tatars and North Caucasians, leaving Russia. In total, at least two and a half million people thus changed countries between 1830 and 1920. The extermination of Northern

Caucasians during the Russian - Caucasian War, the expulsions during and after the Caucasian War and the resettlements of the remaining Northern Caucasians deserve the term genocide no less than the treatment that was to befall the Armenians in eastern Anatolia half a century later (Broxup, 1992).

After the final conquest of the Caucasus , the area was ruled along non-ethnic lines. After the war the North Caucasian population was reduced to poverty. Prior to the Russian Revolution, unrest among the North Caucasians was more of a socio-economic than of an ethnic nature. They generally had little land, although some Kabardians were relatively affluent. The North Caucasians suffered at the hands of their nobility, who had retained many of their privileges, as well as at the hands of the Russian colonial regime and from the enormous influx of Slavic immigrants, who received better treatment from the colonial authorities. Only few Caucasians wished, or were able, to leave rural areas to live in the newly established towns in their homeland.

The period of the Russian Revolution and the Civil War was extremely complex, as in most of Russia. The last traces of tsarist power vanished in the peripheral parts of the Russian Empire in the early summer of 1917, after which these imperial outposts were left to themselves, to Bolshevik agitation and to foreign intervention. In 1917 , there were almost as many Russians as native people in the North Caucasus

and the Russians, too, were not homogeneous. There e two large groups: the Cossacks, who were very numerous, and the *Inogorodnye* ("newcomers"). The Cossacks were relatively wealthy. As the Tsar's favourites, they had been for centuries used as guards against the mountain people, especially the Chechens and Ingush, who bitterly hated them. The *Inogorodnye* were recent Russian immigrants who worked in what little industry there was. Some of them also leased land to the Cossacks. They were to play an important role in Soviets, and they were no friends to the Cossacks. A third Russian element were soldiers who returned home, along the railway after the Tsar's armies in Transcaucasia and Turkey had collapsed (Broxup, 1992).

In the summer of 1917, nationalist mountain people proclaimed a *Union of Mountain peoples*. The Terek Cossacks first tried to organize a local government with the Cossacks of the Kuban and Don, but in October they joined the Mountaineers and formed a Mountain Republic with the government in Vladikavkaz, at the Ingush-Ossetian border. But the fighting between Cossacks and their old enemies, the Ingush and Chechens, brought an end to the Mountain Republic government as early as January 1918. In 1918 the Ingush recaptured Vladikavkaz on behalf of the Bolsheviks. Afterwards, a North Caucasian Revolutionary Committee was created. Local power was given to local leaders, whether

Bolshevik or not, as long as they had cooperated with the Bolsheviks. A *Gorskaya* or Mountain (Bolshevik) Republic was created as early as January 1920. It was a close copy of the Mountaineers' and Terek Soviet governments. In November 1920 the Daghestan Soviet Socialist Republic split off from the *Gorskaya* Republic, and in the initial years of Soviet rule several more splits were to follow (Totoyev, 1989).

By November 1920 the Northern Caucasus had the following divisions: the Kuban' - Black Sea Province in the west, the Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in the centre and the Daghestan ASSR in the east. The Mountain Republic encompassed Karachay, Balkaria, Kabarda, North Ossetia, Ingushetia and Chechnya, i.e. all of the North Caucasus with the exception of the westernmost and easternmost areas (See Map #3). In the course of three more years the whole Mountain ASSR was to crumble away. Six Autonomous Oblasts (regions) were formed: in 1921 - Kabard AO (1), in 1922 - Kabard-Balkar (2) and Chechen AO (3), in 1924 - North-Ossetian (4) and Ingush AO (5). The Adyghe AO (6) split off from the Kuban'-Black Sea Province in 1922.

In 1934, the Chechen and Ingush AOs were united into a common Chechen-Ingush AO. In 1936 this new Chechen-Ingush AO along with the North-Ossetian and Kabard-Balkar AOs were promoted to the status of ASSR (Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic) (BSE, 1976).

German armies reached the western and central Caucasus in 1942 and were driven back in 1943. The Nazis did not reach Chechen territory, but the Circassian and Kabard-Balkar territories became a battlefield. Although the peoples of the North Caucasus did not appear to have cooperated with the Germans on a greater scale than elsewhere in the Soviet Union, several peoples were deported to Kazakhstan and Central Asia on the charge of collaboration. Among the deported people were:

- the Karachay (November 1943),
- the Kalmyks (December 1943),
- the Ingush and Chechen (February 1944),
- the Balkar (April 1944) (Helsinki Watch, 1991).

Once the deportations were effected, the names of the former territories were purged of mention of the deported peoples. The territories were resettled by other groups, and either renamed in the process, or split up and joined to neighbouring regions. Most of these deported peoples were "rehabilitated" in 1956-57, and all of them were allowed to return to their homelands, which were officially restored in January 1957. However, the boundaries and areas of settlement were often not the same as before.

In 1989, in the North Caucasus there were four ASSRs, so-called autonomous republics which had a much lower level of

autonomy than the fifteen Union republics. There were , in addition to the ASSRs, also two AOs or autonomous provinces, which enjoyed a still lower level of autonomy.

In the 1990s , the peoples of the North Caucasus issued declarations upgrading the administrative status of their regions. Some of the declarations were issued by Soviets, others by informal bodies such as popular councils, and some of these upgradings were recognized by the central Russian government. According to the text of the Constitution of the Russian Federation of December 1992, 21 republics are now recognized as member states of the Russian Federation. All 21 republics share the same status, including the following North Caucasian republics: the Republic of Adyghea, the Republic of North Ossetia, the Republic of Ingushetia, the Kabard-Balkar Republic, the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, the Republic of Daghestan. In August 1991 Chechnya declared its independence from Russia.

Adyghea

Adyghea was continuously enlarged during the Soviet period. By 1989 it was roughly three times larger than at the time of its founding (1922: 2,654 sq.km; 1989: 7,600 sq.km) (BSE, 1976). Because most Circassians lived to the north of Adyghea, the proportion of Circassians within Adyghea was negatively influenced by each extension. On the other hand,

the extensions involved territory that had originally been inhabited by West Circassian tribes. However, the former Circassian homeland was still vaster than the territory of the Republic of Adyghea at its maximum extent. Due to the nineteenth century exodus, the influx of Slavic elements and the numerous accretions to the Republic of Adyghea, the West Circassians have come to constitute less than a quarter of the population of their ancestral homeland.

Census return for Adyghea of 1989 (and 1970)

	1989		1970
Russians	68%	294,000	71.7%
Adyghe	22%	95,000	21.1%
Ukrainians	3.2%	14,000	3.0%

(Henze, 1991).

Karachay-Cherkessia

In 1943 the Karachay became the first people of the Caucasus to be subjected to deportation on the accusation of having collaborated with the Nazis during the Second World War. After the rehabilitation of the Karachay in 1956, they were allowed to return. Their autonomy, however, was never really restored. Before the deportation they had a province of their own. Afterwards the common Karachay-Cherkess autonomous province of the early 1920s was reinstated. After their return

they were treated as if their rehabilitation had been a mistake. No high official of Karachay origin was appointed in Karachay or Balkaria until 1980, and the memories of crimes they never committed were kept alive in publications and by means of monuments. It is little wonder that the Karachay recently began to demand the restoration of their autonomy.

In 1989 the area of the Karachay-Cherkessia was 14,100 sq.km. and the total population numbered 414,000.

	1989		1970
Russians	42.5%	176,000	47.8%
Karachay	31.2%	129,000	28.2%
Cherkes	9.6%	40,000	9.1%
Abaza	6.5%	27,000	
Nogay	3.1%	13,000	

(Henze, 1991).

Kabard-Balkaria

After the deportation of the Balkar in 1944, the Kabard-Balkhar ASSR was renamed as the Kabard ASSR. After the rehabilitation of the Balkar it became again the Kabard-Balkar ASSR. In 1989 the area of this republic was 12,500 sq.km. The 1989 census on ethnicity of the republic's inhabitants are as follows:

	1989		1970
Kabardians	48.2%	363,000	45.0%
Russians	32.0%	241,000	37.2%
Balkhar	13.4%	71,000	8.7%
total population		753,000	588,000

(Henze, 1991).

Informal congresses of both the Kabardian and the Balkhar people each declared their part of the republic to be autonomous. Their point of view has not been adopted by the republic's council, which is dominated by the old Communist Party *nomenclatura* (governors appointed by Moscow). Tension over the issue of a division of the republic grew in 1992. There was also disagreement between the Kabardians and the Balkars: the Balkars wanted to draw up borders in accordance with the situation immediately before their deportation. The Kabardians prefer to negotiate on the basis of the situation as it was in 1853.

Daghestan

Daghestan, about the size of Scotland, is bordered by Azerbaijan to the south, Chechnia to the northwest and Georgia to the southwest, and the Caspian Sea to the east. Over 60% of the population of two million live in about 700 mountain and lowland villages. The population increased by 25% during the

ten years from 1979 to 1989. There is additionally a Daghestani diaspora of 628,000, living in Azerbaijan, Russia and Central Asia, and a further 60,000 emigres in Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Israel. In Daghestan there are 32 ethnic groups, making it, in this way, a microcosm of the former USSR. The largest are the Avars with over 600,000 and the smallest the Hinukhs with 400. There are also about 240,000 Russians, some of whom moved to Daghestan as early as the last century. This concentration of ethnic diversity is partly the residue of a number of aboriginal mountain tribes and partly of repeated invasions throughout Daghestan's violent history.

In 1944 about 30,000 Chechens were transported from the former Auchovskii district in north Dagestan to Kazakhstan by Stalin. Later in 1944 some 15,000 Laks were forced to settle in this district when it was renamed Novolakski. They moved into the Chechen villages and over the years they looked after them well, building new houses, schools, hospitals and so on. In 1957 when the Chechens returned to their homes - there are now 70,000 - they found that according to the laws of the time they had been dispossessed and they resettled in Khsavyurtovskii district in an area several times larger than former Aukhovskii district. But it was not their home. In 1990, after *perestroika*, it was possible to discuss a solution. Following various demands, schemes and threats, in

1992 the Laks responsibly agreed to resettle elsewhere in Daghestan. The problem was escalated by the economic cost of resettlement and consequent problems with the Kumyks whose ethnic territory was chosen by the Dagestan government as the Laks new home. The Laks had no interest in returning to their old mountain villages which had long been abandoned and had fallen into ruin. The resettlement of the Laks led to a consequent problem for the Kumyks. They have ethnic problems with immigrants from Avar, Dargin and Lezgin mountain villages who were forcibly settled in the barren plains from the 1950s onwards. The Kumyks now find themselves as a 22% ethnic minority in their own territory (Henze, 1991).

Nationalists and extremists from both sides created artificial tensions around this sad problem, demanding immediate resolution which was unrealistic in a country in the midst of an economic crisis. For the meantime the situation is under control, though the ultimate solution of this problem is still to be found.

Chechen-Ingushetia

Chechen authorities calculate their present area of their republic at approximately 6,675 sq.mi. This means that they have given up a claim to more than 800 sq.mi, comprising Malgobek and Nazran districts, which are inhabited by Ingush. Almost a million Chechens were counted in the 1989 Soviet

census. Some 76.6 per cent of them lived in the Chechen-Ingush ASSR, where they accounted for 59 per cent of the population. Together with the closely related Ingush, they made up 71 per cent of the republic's population at that time. While the Slavs in the Chechen-Ingush Republic declined by 12 per cent in the decade 1979-1989, the Chechens and Ingush increased by almost 21 per cent (International Alert, 1992).

In February 1944 the entire Chechen and Ingush population - 425,000 people - was deported to Central Asia. A western, Ingush-inhabited portion of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was given to the North-Ossetian ASSR. Most of the remainder became part of a greatly enlarged Grozny province. In 1957 Chechens and Ingush returned back. There were many difficulties because a large number of Slavic (mostly, the Russians and the Ukrainians) settlers had come into the territory after 1944 and had taken over collective and state farms. About 77,000 settlers from Ossetia and Dagestan had also moved onto land emptied of Chechens and Ingush. There were many incidents in the countryside as Chechens and Ingush reclaimed ancestral lands. Serious clashes between Chechens and Ingush, on the one hand, and Russians and Ossetians, on the other, occurred. Russian settlers called for a new expulsion of Chechens and Ingush (International Alert, 1991).

In the 1959 census Chechens and Ingush accounted for

41.1% of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR's population in comparison with 58.4% in 1939. Slavs still constituted 49% of the republic's inhabitants in 1959, but their proportion has fallen 29% by 1979. The area of the republic was substantially enlarged at restoration by the addition of three districts from Stavropol Kray (Region) totalling 5,200 sq.km. that had long been settled by Cossacks. Many Cossacks remained and some have recently come into conflict with Chechen nationalists with the former demanding autonomy and secession (UNPO, 1992).

A different kind of territorial issue was created when the Prigorodny Rayon (district), 978 sq.km. in area, inhabited largely by Ingush, was left in North Ossetia. It has been a subject of controversy ever since. With the deterioration of Soviet authority during the late 1980s, Ingush frustration over territory lost to North Ossetia took a new turn. While the Chechens moved systematically toward *de facto* independence from the Russian Federation, the Ingush moved to separate from both the Chechens and the Ossetians. The "Executive Committee of Ingushetia" proclaimed an "Ingush Republic", including Prigorodny Rayon in October 1991. It declared the portion of Vladikavkaz east of the Terek river capital of the new republic. Ingush leaders called for a referendum among all Ingush on separating from Chechnya (already independent from Russia) and claimed Yeltsin had promised to recognise a separate Ingush Republic provided it remained within the

Russian Federation. In spite of the opposition of the Muslim Ingush clergy and Chechen President Dudaev, the referendum was held in November 1991. Over 70% of the adult population were reported to have voted. Of those voting, 97.4% approved formation of a separate Ingush Republic within Russia (Birch, 1993). In June 1992, the Russian Parliament issued a decree on the formation of Ingush Republic, but it did not include the disputed Prigorodny Rayon in the newly formed entity. As a result, in November 1992 a military struggle between Ossetians and Ingush started. More than 600 people were reported to have died (*Izvestia*, November 16, 1992). Some 40,000 Ingush have left the territory of North Ossetia and settled in Ingushetia.

Ethnic composition of the Chechen-Ingushetia

	1979	1989	%Change
Chechens	611,405	734,501	20.1
Ingush	134,744	163,711	21.5
Russians	336,044	293,771	-12.6
Armenians	14,621	14,824	1.4
Ossetians	2,191	1,821	-16.9
Tatars	5,444	5,102	-6.3
Jews	3,993	2,651	-33.6
Total Chechen-Ingushetia	1,155,805	1,270,429	

(Soviet Demography, 1990).

This brief historical description gives an opportunity to appreciate both the ethnic and the historical complexity of the region. It also may serve as a basis for understanding the historical grounds for the emergence of ethnic tensions between numerous ethnic groups and republics of the North Caucasus.

Part of the present study involves considering the existing literature on ethnic relations, history, and nationalism in the Caucasus and the former Soviet Union, in sociology and other related areas (history, ethnography, sovietology, political science) in order to address areas of research and issues which require further analysis. The main focus of the study concerns the way in which nationalist ideologies (the ruling national elites and intelligentsia) use historical data, reflecting the changes of administrative territories and boundaries in the North Caucasus, for their political purposes. It also tries to analyze how these nationalist ideologies affect mass consciousness.

The design of the study is organized around these specific aspects of ethnic conflict. However, it is not intended to be an analysis of ethnic conflict, but rather of its historical or ideological dimension. At the same time, the analysis briefly addresses various aspects of the problem of ethnic conflicts, such as the problems of human rights,

conflict resolution, conflict mediation.

The first section of the study outlines the central research questions which shaped the analysis and the discussion of the data gathered. The second section begins with a brief review of theoretical and special (dealing with the North Caucasus) literature on ethnicity and nationalism in the former Soviet Union with particular attention to how this information might inform the study of violations of administrative territories and borders in the North Caucasus, reflecting different phases of imperial rule in Tsarist and Soviet succession. The third section of the second chapter details the methodology of the study by discussing the research design and the methods used to obtain and analyze the data.

The third chapter presents the analysis of the central themes of the research. It deals with several stages of the Russian and Soviet administration of the region as an objective source of the emergence of conflicting nationalist ideologies.

The conclusion Chapter Four summarizes the results of the study, providing some comments on the prospects of further study of ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus and briefly discussing the place of the analysis of ethnic conflicts in the field of sociology.

Chapter Two

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to outline the main issues which are central to this study. It is hardly possible to do this without a review of the existing body of knowledge dealing with the problems of nationalism and ethnic conflicts in Russia and particularly in the Caucasus. The survey and critical discussion of literature on history and socio-political development in the North Caucasus helps to shape the present research in structural and methodological terms, provides the broad theoretical context and points to questions and directions for further investigation.

In the second section a brief review of literature will focus on historical and socio-political processes, determining various aspects of the nationalities problems in the former USSR. The first section outlines the central problems and research questions which shape the structure and the scope of the analysis as well as the discussion of the results obtained. The last section discusses methodology of the research: the research design and methods used to collect and analyze the data.

I

Analytical Framework

The purpose of this section is to outline the issues which are of main importance to this study. The research problems described in this section form the central concerns which were addressed during the analysis of literature on the Caucasus, historical and official documents, and in interviews with experts and participants. They were also taken as a guideline for interpretation of data collected.

There are two main areas which are addressed. The first one focuses on the question of how the violations of the administrative borders and national and civil rights by the Russian and Soviet state which have taken place throughout the history of the North Caucasus form the basis for nationalistic ideology and territorial claims. The second centres on issues related to the ethnic conflict between the Ossetians and Ingush. This conflict is analyzed as a result of the specific characteristics of ethnic stratification in the North Ossetia.

The dynamics of change of ethnic and administrative borders is not a decisive and self-sufficient factor in the genesis and development of a crisis of inter-ethnic relations in the former USSR. The foundation of this crisis lies in the

crisis of the social system itself, in the bankruptcy of the Soviet State organization. Having disappeared, the system left the borders which had been established in correspondence with the state and imperial priorities of different epochs. The administrative borders were established and changed reflecting the historical dynamics and the turning-points of the regional political strategy of Russian and, afterwards, of the Soviet state. They manifested different "imperial epochs" of territorial administration which had specific rationality and "legality". In this sense, the bankruptcy of the system (in Russian and Soviet succession) means the bankruptcy of the rational basis of internal borders. The empire does not exist any more, but the borders it created and sanctioned, the historical changes, become a spatial focus of inter-ethnic tensions.

The study focuses on the historical dynamics of changes of ethnic and administrative borders within the current political situation as a process which has localized this crisis of ethnic relations within particular regions of the North Caucasus (especially in Ossetia). Obviously, such an approach focuses on the ideology of these national-administrative changes. Each of the stages of the imperial domination within the Caucasian region provides a definite historical content which is used in contemporary ideologies of national movements as a moral and legal foundation of their

political aspirations, as a certain dominant characteristic of a national memory. The collapse of the Soviet system has actualized radically these topics, and has transferred them from a purely historical into political and legal dimensions. The amorphousness of the contemporary Russian legal system makes it inevitable that every national idea appeals to these changes in the history of a nation, to changes that either violated or incarnated the natural civil and national rights of the people.

This thesis examines several periods of this national and state construction and its territorial and administrative embodiment:

- 1) the period of Russian colonization of the North Caucasus (1801 -1917);
- 2) the period of Soviet nation-state construction (1918 - 1932);
- 3) the period of the "victory of socialism" in the North Caucasian region (1932 - 1941);
- 4) the period of deportation of nations and the abolition of several autonomies (1943 - 1956);
- 5) the period of "developed socialism" (1957 -1985);
- 6) the period of disintegration of the Soviet state system (1986 -1993).

The historical and demographic analysis demonstrates that the general crisis and bankruptcy of the Soviet state

system with its ideology, culture and legality has determined the crisis of legitimacy of the borders established in Soviet (imperial) era. The contemporary political situation reflects those historical events which deal with illegal (in today's system of juridical coordinates) violations of borders and administrative belonging of territories. These violations determine the territorial dimension of ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasian region, as well as their historical and legal content. Each of the conflicting parties chooses those historical arguments that are most favourable for their political aspirations (and which correspond to juridical argumentation). But, to the extent to which these contending historical arguments come into contact with each other, their "legal" interpretations will be equally contradictory, and thus the law becomes completely relativized.

This section will try to demonstrate that the fact of violation of national rights which has taken place in the history of the North Caucasus can hardly serve as a self-sufficient "basis" for contemporary determination of territorial possession. The historical criterion must be viewed as only one of many other factors of such a determination. It must be supplemented by other criteria - the guarantees of security for the whole of civil and human rights, for example, or the will of all people living on this territory.

The last chapter examines the substance of the Ingush - Ossetian conflict. This conflict is analyzed as a logical result of the collapse of the principle of national-territorial formation within Russia. This study posits a "three-term" ("titular - non-titular - native") character of ethnic stratification³ which characterizes the emergence of the adversarial conflict and ethno-political competition between the Ossetians and the Ingush national movement.

The major means of defence for the interests of the titular group (the Ossetians) is first of all the legislative system, legal acts adopted by the North Ossetian republican Government or Parliament, which are controlled by ethnic Ossetians. The strategy of the non-titular ethnic majority (the Russian-speaking population) is sufficiently clear: the accent on civic rights, the formation of local authorities and administrations with a majority of given group

³ By "titular" ethnic group I mean the one that gives the name to a particular national administrative unit of the North Caucasian part of the Russian Federation. For example, the Ossetians are the "titular" ethnic group in the Republic of North Ossetia; in Kabard-Balkharia both the Kabardians and the Balkhars are "titular" groups.

"Non-titular" groups consist of non-North Caucasians (mainly, the Russians and Russian-speaking groups, though in North Ossetia, the Armenians, the Georgians, and the Jews are considered as "non-titular" part of the citizens of the Republic of North Ossetia.

By native population I mean the Ingush living in North Ossetia. Most of them were either born there or have predecessors who had settled in North Ossetia (mainly in the former Ingush Prigorodny Rayon) before the deportation in 1944.

representatives, the steady move from territorial to political autonomy. The strategy of the native (but non-titular) group (Ingush people living in North Ossetia) does not have the obvious "legal" instruments when this group is a minority and when its status of "having been repressed" (deported) does not provide the satisfaction of its titular claims.

The strength of the Ingush ethnic group lies in its internal social structure, in the stable dominant character of family - clan ("tape") ties. The high degree of integrity and cohesion, the power of primary ties (power of kinship), the lack of civic culture determines the shift in ethnic balance in favour of the Ingush people. The Ossetians feel this ongoing process as something they have to resist. The forms of pressure they use as a titular group can be easily identified. Being fixed in legislative acts or administrative documents these forms of pressure can be interpreted and defined as human rights violations, violations of the rights of native people. For example, it can be a constitutionally approved right for the Ossetians to appoint the heads of regional administrations where a titular group is a minority. By contrast, the forms of pressure used at the informal primary level of every-day interactions by the indigenous groups (the Ingush) are hidden, routine, spontaneous, natural, tacit. The very violence (constant threats, blackmailing at the level of communal life) is implemented here without superfluous state-

legal instruments. While the titular group pressure has a clearly outlined subject - the state, the informal pressure is not institutionalized; it is nameless, anonymous and is never referred to as a political pressure. At the same time, this kind of pressure is very effective since it is able to neutralize the institutionalized press of the titular group or civic-legal resources of the non-titular Russian-speaking population of North Ossetia.

Therefore, the disintegration of the Soviet state system is perceived by the Ossetians and the Russian-speaking population of the republic not as a liberation of the latter from totalitarianism, not as a prerequisite for its national revival, but, mainly, as a destruction of the "complex of security" and internal stability.

National consciousness had emerged in Ossetia within the Soviet, socialist power structures. In Ingushetia, however, the Islamic clergymen represented that social stratum which provided immunity against the Soviet ideology and state structures. Because of the fact that the national identity of Ossetians was determined by Soviet structures, their destruction creates the feeling of political amorphousness and disorganization in comparison with the strength of cohesion of the Ingush national movement. The Ossetians are afraid of the perspective of "direct" ethnic rivalry in the region. The main reason is a fear that the formal equality in civil rights

(which is brought by a democratic legal state and civil society) which, however, is accompanied by the imbalance of "informal" ethnic solidarity and pressure at the level of communities, will be, in fact, a screen for personal inequality and the violation of individual human rights.

The main conclusion of the thesis is that Ossetia will continue to be oriented towards Russia which will be perceived as a guarantor of her territorial integrity and internal stability. At the same time, the political events in the North Caucasus determine the necessity for Ossetian society to obtain its national symbolism beyond and over those forms of the state system which prevailed during the former Soviet era.

II

Review of Literature

Usually research conducted in a specific area of study, like nationalism or ethnic conflicts, should stem from the existing body of knowledge. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the present research. First of all, the events and phenomena this study addresses have taken place in the last 5-10 years. Therefore, it is quite natural that they have not become a subject of detailed sociological analysis. In the second, the problem of ethnic conflicts and contemporary nationalism in the former Soviet Union, as well as related

questions, is a quite new theme of theoretical and empirical research. Such issues look even more complicated if one takes into account the fast and dramatic changes in the former Soviet Union and the fact that the Caucasus has traditionally been a little known area not only in the West but in the Soviet Union as well. As a result, there are few theoretical and empirical studies on ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus both in Western and Russian social science. Such studies would have been unimaginable during the Soviet era, since they would have contradicted the main ideological assumption that the Soviet system rested on: the absence of national antagonisms among Soviet nations.

Nevertheless, there exists a significant amount of literature which proves to be relevant for understanding the nature and origin of nationalism in the Caucasus. It is relevant since it contains very important information on different aspects of the problem of nationalism both in the USSR and in the Caucasus, which represents a basis for further sociological analysis. The majority of these works focus on the nationality question in the former Soviet Union (Huttenbach & Motyl, 1990; Gellner, 1988 & 1991; Simon, 1991; Lapidus, 1992). The authors of these works examine the story of the Soviet nationalities policy and mainly concentrate on the strategies and instruments the communist leadership employed at various times to integrate the "Soviet" nations

and to keep empire together. The fact of disintegration of the Soviet Union and the symptoms of the same phenomenon within Russia are considered as a natural result of the collapse of the totalitarian political power structures. As Simon describes it, nationalism in the USSR developed as an emancipation movement that mobilized large parts of the society against traditional power structures. "The old regime's crisis of legitimacy has invariably triggered nationalism" (Simon, 1991: xvi). The general explanation of the essence and roots of nationalism in the Soviet Union is related by the majority of Western scholars to the conflict between the imperial centre and the regions. All of them would agree with Gerhard Simon, who states that "for decades, national consciousness defended nations and regions from the encroachments of the centre; at the end of 1980s, it moved to attack and finally dismantle the centre" (Simon, 1991: xvi). Broxup (1992) shares the same conclusion in her description of the crisis between Chechnya and Moscow in September 1991. However, Gellner (1991) argues against the absolutization of the role of political decisions, made under the "command-administrative system," and expressed in the present list of sovereign republics and their boundaries. He insists that "the nationalities problem relates not merely, perhaps not even mainly, to conflicts between nationalities and the old imperial centre: it relates at least as much to conflicts

between nationalities" (Gellner, 1991: 8). This conclusion has important methodological and theoretical implications for the present study of ethnic conflicts. It means that social scientists studying the problems of nationalism in the former Soviet Union should overcome their common neglect they share, regardless of their area of inquiry, of social history, of attitudes and mindsets, as well as complex problems of regional, local, and inter-ethnic history.

Therefore, the comparative study of distinct Caucasian societies, the Ossetian and Ingush, and ethnic-cultural and social relations between them represents the most important dimension of this research. Generally speaking, the literature on the Caucasus has taken place in several disciplines including history, anthropology, and Sovietology. Each of them has tried to understand, explain, and account for different aspects of historical, inter-ethnic, social, religious, and cultural relations between the Caucasian people. But the approach in each of these disciplines has been limited and not interdisciplinary. The wide range of approaches and little dialogue between disciplines determine the difficulty in describing the existing literature in any systematic way. The present review will try to redress this gap by integrating the common themes on nationalism and ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus which cut across social scientific area of research.

Though the book by John Baddeley "The Russian Conquest

of the Caucasus" (Baddeley, 1908) still remains the classical one on the history of colonization of the North Caucasus by the Russian Empire, there are several studies both in the West and Russia, focussing on the Caucasian War, which are highly important for understanding the formation of numerous Caucasian ethnic groups and the emergence of their ethnic identity (Bennigsen, 1985; Wimbush, 1988). For example, in 1983, a North Ossetian historian M. Bliev (1983) argued that Tsarist colonial policies could not be the reason for the Russo-Caucasian war, because the North Caucasus was unaware of them. Instead, the roots of the war were in traditional aggressive raids known as *lakeoba* (which means in Georgian "the offensive of the Laks") of Daghestani and Chechen tribes into neighbouring Russian allies: Georgia and Ossetia. The opposite view was developed in Daghestan and Chechnya, where academics tried to rehabilitate the Shamil movement (the leader of the North Caucasians in the Caucasian War of 1824-1864) and justify the struggle against Russian colonization (Khalilov, 1988; Vinogradov, 1980).

The most recent and, probably, the most important and complete study of the history and contemporary problems of the North Caucasus is the monograph "The North Caucasian Barrier" (Broxup, 1992). It provides analysis of a wide range of issues: from the history of this region to the phenomenon of nationalist movements in the post-Soviet period. This work

puts the main emphasis on the analysis of the resistance of Muslim people (Cherkess, Chechens and Daghestani) to Russian and communist oppression; on the role of Islam and deportations of the North Caucasian people; and on the emergence of Chechnya claiming its independence from Russia. At the same time, several North Caucasian ethnic groups like Cossacks, Kalmyks, Ossetians, and Turkic groups remain unnoticed or are treated simply as traditional allies of Russia and even as the means of Russian and pro-communist domination in this region (Broxup, 1992: 238). Not surprisingly, the emerging ethnic tensions and violence are explained by the authors of this study exclusively as a result of deliberate, intentional efforts of Moscow to pursue its old imperial policy: "*divide et impere*". As a result, the differences and contradictions between the North Caucasian nationalities in terms of religion, political culture, the level of socio-economic development, and ethno-psychological features, become totally neglected or interpreted as something of lesser importance. These authors have demonstrated the same approach in their earlier studies on the Caucasus (Bennigsen, 1967; 1983; 1987; Henze, 1987; 1991).

Unfortunately, there are few comparative studies dealing with ethno-cultural and socio-economic analysis of the North Caucasian people (Warziaty, 1990; Kozlov, 1988; Present Day Ethnic Processes in the USSR, 1977). The problem with

these works is that they do not address the question of nationalism or territorial claims and can only be regarded as sources of specific information on Caucasian people which are not available from the studies mentioned earlier.

There are only two studies which directly focus on ethno-territorial conflicts in the North Caucasus. J. Birch (1993) describes in detail the territorial dispute and civil war between the Ossetians and the Ingush people. He discusses historical and immediate factors which led to the specific outbreak of violence between these two people in November 1992. He underlines the complexity of historical roots of this conflict stemming from the frequent changes in administrative borders between Ossetia and Ingushetia. However, he insists, historical argument must be taken into account: "Indeed, however regrettable or inconvenient the introduction of long-term perspective right claims to the control of the territory might be to an armchair audience of well-meaning liberals seeking to resolve contemporary clashes, consideration of the past situations cannot be avoided if severe injustices have ensued from a more recent period of domination of one people and culture by another. Indians in the Americas, ... , and the Lithuanians alike have shown that they simply do not forgive and forget. Their past position has born heavily on their conceptions of the future. The same was true for Ingushi..." (Birch, 1993: 17). The main reason for this

conflict, according to Birch, could be explained in terms of the analysis of historical relations both ethnic groups had with central Russian and Soviet authorities. He portrays the Ossetians as traditional allies of Moscow: they took an active part in the Russian conquest of the Caucasus; helped to establish the Bolshevik regime in the 1917-1921 revolution; they were one of the few non-deported nationalities of the North Caucasus; the ruling elite consists of ex-communists. The main conclusion Birch makes is that this territorial conflict marks the collapse of the Russian nationalities policy and the end of Russia's unchallenged domination in this region. This makes Ossetia a hostage of these changes: "The degree to which she (Ossetia) is still Russia's stalking horse in the area ... is open to question ... It will take a long time for her to adjust to new realities of power in the post-Soviet Caucasus" (Birch, 1993: 40).

Petrov in his article (Petrov, 1994) tries to construct a typology of ethnic territorial conflicts in the former Soviet Union. He defines ethnic-territorial conflicts as "the dispute between different ethnic groups (either mono-ethnic or multi-ethnic) for the right to own/rule territory" (Petrov, 1994: 1). He also argues that the main difficulty in studying these conflicts is the fact that the public consciousness is "mythologized tremendously" with regard to ethnic tensions. Oversimplifying and distorting the situation,

these myths influence further development of events both directly through politicians and indirectly through public opinion. Among these myths, which misrepresent reality, some have direct relation to the Ingush-Ossetian conflict. First of all, Petrov points at the widespread opinion that ethnic conflicts in the former USSR and territorial claims fallen upon the country in 1990-1993, are the result of diabolical plots, crafty designs of the Centre. In reality, he claims, conflicts did not emerge all of a sudden, but were accumulating for decades; they came to the surface at once when the society had been changed from totalitarianism. The other myth is a rationalization of a common stereotype in regard to the problem of borders. For example, it is taken for granted by the general public that the main reason for the ethnic-territorial conflicts is the disputable character of modern administrative borders, and that border shifts and changes of state territorial composition which have taken place in the past are reversible in principle. In other words, territorial justice, once upset, can be restored rather easily, or the modern national-territorial composition of Russia can be improved radically by means of more accurate border delineations and by formations of new ethno-territorial units. In fact, according to Petrov, the existing system of national territorial units in Russia is of a principal character and cannot be changed without rejecting the legal

national-territorial principle of state composition. This means that the haste of attempting to solve territorial disputes by taking land away from one party and giving it to another is criminal. To return territory to a people once robbed of it is, in effect to steal the land twice (Petrov, 1994: 4).

Finally, there is a body of literature consisting of the reports of several missions to the Caucasus of experts representing various international organizations, which analyze the complex problems related to the Caucasian ethnic conflicts (Helsinki Watch, 1991; UNPO, 1992; International Alert, 1991; 1993; Pax Christi, 1992). It is hardly possible to overestimate the importance of these reports. Based on interviews with local authorities, leaders of the national movements, academics, political analysts, and victims of ethnic violence, these reports form the basis for establishing legal and normative dimensions of understanding of the conflicts in the North Caucasus. They try to elaborate some general ideas concerning human rights violations, means of conflict mediation and conflict resolution in this region. As a part of their analysis they give an interpretation of historical roots of these conflicts which is based on traditional Western liberal values. The reports on the Caucasus reflect the growing concern of the international community about the potential threat of ethnic violence in the

North Caucasus to Russian state integrity and for the future of democratic reforms.

In sum, very few of the empirical and theoretical studies on the problem of nationalism in the former Soviet Union have direct relevance for the purposes of the present study. Being conducted in the area of history and Sovietology they tend to explain the outbreak of nationalism and territorial claims primarily as the consequences of the collapse of the Communist political system and the bankruptcy of the colonial (in its essence) nationalities policy of the Tsarist Russian regime and its successors - the Communist Party and "new democrats." At the same time, little is said about the differences between conflicting ethnic groups in the North Caucasus in terms of their political culture or social and political structure, or about the history of the inter-ethnic relations. Without analysis of the latter issues the problem of ethnic conflicts cannot be properly and completely formulated. The organization of this research which addresses (a) historical arguments for conflicting nationalistic ideologies, and (b) socio-cultural distinction between the Ossetian and Ingush societies as determined by the specific ways of their integration into and adaptation to the Soviet state system, hopefully will present new ideas and illustrate the areas which require further study.

III

Methods and methodology**Research Design**

Having decided to study ethno-territorial conflicts in the North Caucasus, the next step was to define the research tools of the investigation. Since one of the central question of the present research was to study the impact that the constant change of administrative borders has for the emerging nationalistic ideologies, analysis of the official documents as well as secondary analysis of statistical and demographic data form a substantial part of the study. The other question was which people would be best to focus on in interviews. For several reasons the group of participants which consisted of experts - representatives of Ossetia and Ingushetia in the Russian Parliament, the persons working in the Temporary Military Administration in the zone of the Ossetian-Ingush conflict, intellectuals, leaders of national movements, buisnessmen, and social scientists was chosen.

A brief pilot study conducted in December, 1992 - January, 1993 in Moscow and Vladikavkaz, consisting of a series of preliminary general interviews, determined the decisions concerning the limits of number of experts to be interviewed. This pilot research clarified the situation in the region and experiences of the victims of the Ossetian-

Ingush conflict, as well as the kind of attitudes and opinions people had about the conflict. These preliminary interviews were very helpful in choosing the specific methods of the research.

There was an expected limitation to the study as a result of the curfew in North Ossetia. It was very difficult to interview the Ingushi representatives, who left their homes in Vladikavkaz. The study was conducted in two Russian cities: Moscow (the capital of the Russian Federation) and Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia, in June - September 1993. The sampling procedure began by addressing the Press-Centre of the Temporary Military Administration (located in Vladikavkaz), which kept the list of all Ingush people still living in Vladikavkaz. The other source of participants (especially those of Ingush nationality, was the Analytical Centre of the "Rossiiskie Vesti" ("the Russian News") - the newspaper of the Russian Government (Moscow). Those who already had participated in the study referred other individuals for interviews. In the case of interviewing the Ingush people, this appeared to be crucial, in a sense, that it has provided a considerable number of participants. They were more eager to participate and talk about their experiences knowing they were referred by a representative of the Ingush nationality.

A total of 40 people were interviewed, 15 of whom were experts and whose opinions played crucial role for the present

research. The educational level and occupational status was relatively homogeneous among the experts from both Ossetian and Ingush sides: most of the experts held the Ph.D. degree in Humanities or Social Sciences (History, Law, Linguistics, Sociology, Philosophy).

Methods

Ethnic conflict is an area of sociological study that has great potential for interdisciplinary research. Analysis of documents, secondary analysis, archival study, and informal ethnographic interviews are essential for understanding the roots and nature of these conflicts. As was mentioned earlier, there are no interdisciplinary studies of ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus. The present research is the first to focus on the territorial dimension of the ethnic conflicts in this region, with emphasis on the Ossetian-Ingush conflict as the most dangerous one in the territory of Russia. The emphasis is more on the causes of this conflict than on in-depth analysis of the data collected through interviews with participants.

Most of the previous studies on the problem of nationalism and ethnicity in the North Caucasian region have made broad claims based on their research regarding the connection between the history of Russian colonization of the Caucasus and the resistance of native people to Russian and Soviet assimilation, on the one hand, and the collapse of the Communist political system and the process of disintegration

of the Soviet Union and Russia, on the other (Broxup, 1992; Huttenbach & Motyl, 1990; Simon, 1991; Lapidus, 1992). The methodological approach of these studies does not provide the possibility for very detailed analysis of the causes of ethnic conflicts and territorial disputes between the North Caucasian peoples. For example, these studies do not include relevant information on several Caucasian peoples (Kabardians, Ossetians, Kalmyks). As a result, very important data about geopolitical, historical, and ethnopolitical realities are not taken into consideration. Therefore, the emphasis on the Ossetian-Ingush conflict, based on the analysis of documents and a qualitative methodology relying on the elite interviews, seems to provide the most promising approach to the problem of ethno-territorial conflicts in the Caucasus.

The interviews were designed to elicit general detailed information about the experience of the conflict between the Ossetians and Ingush. The emphasis was on the experience concerning mutual perception of these two peoples of each other; on their attitudes to such legislative acts of the Russian Parliament as "The Decree on Rehabilitation of the Repressed Peoples" (1991), and "The Decree on Formation of the Ingush Republic within the Territory of the Russian Federation (1992), and on the opinions of participants on the prospects of resolution of this conflict.

The data were interpreted according to the central

theoretical goals of the study. This interpretation helps the researcher to have a better understanding of how territorial claims form the core of the emerging nationalistic ideologies in the North Caucasus.

Participants were interviewed at the North Ossetian Institute of Humanities (Vladikavkaz) and the central office of "The Rossiiskie Vesti" (Moscow). Each interview lasted between an hour and hour and a half. The participants were encouraged to talk about problems which were not included in the interview. In this regard, the original set of questions was used only as a general guide (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

This set of questions covered the four main issues:

- 1) the mutual perception and attitudes toward each other of the Ossetians and Ingush;
- 2) their interpretations of the historical arguments concerning the territorial claims of either side;
- 3) the attitudes to "The Decree on the Rehabilitation of the Repressed Peoples" and "The Decree on the Formation of the Ingush Republic within the Territory of Russian Federation";
- 4) the opinions of the participants on the prospects of resolution of this ethno-territorial conflict.

These issues were also the study's main research questions outlined in the analytical framework (section two). On a few occasions interviews were taped, but in the majority of cases notes were taken on the content of the interview. One

of the assumptions of the methodology was that enough trust was established between the participant and researcher to make participants talk openly about their views. Most of the people interviewed showed their support when they were convinced that the researcher needed information for the dissertation which would be presented in Canada. Or, in other words, that the position of the researcher is politically neutral.

The interview data were divided according to (1) conversations about the mutual perception of the Ingush and non-Ingush participants, and, (2) talk about their interpretation of the validity of historical arguments favouring territorial claims of either the Ingush or Ossetian side. The third step was grouping the information concerning the participants' attitude towards those legislative acts of the Russian Parliament which provide a legal basis for the transformation of the Ossetian-Ingush conflict. Finally, these three groups of data were related to the issue of the prospects of the possible resolution of the conflict (step #4).

Analytical Framework

step #1 (mutual perception)

Interview data: step #2 (history) step #4 (conflict
resolution)

step #3 (legislation)

The framework is constructed so that the interpretation of each section of the analysis clarifies and builds on the next level (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981). This gives the researcher an opportunity to probe deeper into the same interview data (Geertz, 1973).

Chapter Three

Inter-ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasian region: historical dynamics of national-administrative borders as a factor of inter-ethnic tensions

The dynamics of ethnic and territorial boundaries is not a decisive and self-sufficient factor in the genesis and development of conflicting inter-ethnic relations in the former Soviet Union. The foundation of these tensions lies in the crisis of the Soviet social system itself, in the bankruptcy of the Soviet state organization (Henze, 1993; Broxup, 1992; Huttenbach & Motyl, 1990; Simon, 1991; Lapidus, 1992; Gellner, 1991). The Soviet system disappeared, but left the administrative borders which had been established in concordance with the state and imperial priorities of different epochs. Internal (or administrative) borders were established and changed reflecting historical dynamics and turning points of the regional strategy of the Russian, and, afterwards, of the Soviet Empire. They symbolized different stages of territorial administration which had specific rationality and "legality". In this sense, the collapse of the system (in its Russian and Soviet succession) means the

bankruptcy of a "rational" basis for establishing internal borders: the empire does not exist any more, but the national territorial units and borders it created and sanctioned, as well as the content of historical changes, have become a spatial focus of inter-ethnic rivalry. These historically shifting borders, as well as their dissolution, have provided the concrete substance to form every ethnic conflict.

This section focuses on the problem of this constant change of the administrative boundaries in the North Caucasus. It tries to analyze the historical and ideological roots of the main conflict situations in this region with special emphasis on the territorial aspect of these ethnic conflicts.

The historical dynamics of ethnic and administrative borders is viewed through the prism of the contemporary ethnopolitical situation in the entire North Caucasian region. It is analyzed as a process which only provided a kind of structural frame to this "territorial" dimension and localized the metastases of a systemic disease within concrete national-territorial districts. Obviously, such an approach focuses on the ideology of these national -administrative changes, especially upon the terminology and content of ideological and legal arguments by which they are expressed.

This section argues that the each stage of the state's imperial predominance within the North Caucasian region makes up a definite historical content which is used in contemporary

ideologies by the national movements as a moral and legal foundation for the political aspirations and territorial claims, as a dominant characteristic of their national memory.

The collapse of the Soviet system has made these topics very urgent, and has transferred them from the purely historic or academic realm into the political and legal dimension. The amorphousness of the contemporary Russian legal and political system makes it inevitable that every nationalistic idea will seek affirmation from these changes within the history of this nation which either violated or incarnated the "natural rights of the people". The research outlines six stages of the national administrative development in the North Caucasus and analyses its territorial aspect in order to define those events that form the basis for historical arguments of conflicting nationalistic ideologies.

1. The Russian colonization of the North Caucasus (1784 - 1917).

The Russian colonization of the region and the Caucasian War (Baddeley, 1908; Broxup, 1992) still represent the basis for contemporary ideological reminiscences (Sheeny, 1984; Broxup, 1992). It is so, because the Russian colonization, according to contemporary historians (Broxup, 1992), is portrayed as the breaking-off of the "spontaneous" and "organic" development of the region, and as the beginning

of externally initiated ethnic and territorial changes which continue even now. The Russian colonization symbolizes the emergence of that state system which is "responsible" for the contemporary ethnopolitical situation in the whole North Caucasian region. It has brought "regular" historical evidence and documents as well as charts and population censuses. The information contained in these documents looks like the "beginning" of history, as data providing a legal sense of the rights to control over the territory, in a more distinct form than the historical evidence of the times preceding the colonization. At the same time, the documents of the Russian military administration form a foundation for modern ideological speculations: Russia has introduced its administration and its state and legal systems, and, hence, the criteria for defining the "violation" of national rights (the criteria now used by various national movements against the Russian state system itself).

Having taken Georgia under her patronage in 1801 (Pax Christi, 1992), the Russian Empire tried to create all necessary conditions for the stable functioning of communications passing through the territory of the North Caucasian mountain peoples. The strategy of creating military-cordon lines was chosen. It presupposed the development of the range of fortifications in these territories into continuous regions of Cossak *stanitsas* (villages) (Baddeley, 1908;

Gammer, 1992; Bliev, 1983). This strategy had the following ethnoterritorial consequences:

- a) an administratively sanctioned displacement of native population from the region of Cossak *stanitsas*;
- b) the resettlement of mountain people into the plain areas where it was easier for the Russian military administration to control them. Among these areas were those that had been controlled by other ethnic groups of the North Caucasus prior to the Russian colonization;
- c) the forced migration of mountain peoples from the territories blocked by military-cordon lines. These territories were mastered by Cossaks (Henze, 1992).

These changes made by the Russian administration introduced, for the first time ever, the concept of administrative borders, which were legitimate "within" and for the Russian state system, into the North Caucasus. Before this time, there existed only vague ethnic borders established according to the right of the "strongest", which did not have any legal consolidation and confirmation.

During this "imperial period" of the development of the North Caucasian region most of the administrative borders were constantly changing. But the main tendency in this dynamic, which became dominant by the end of nineteenth century, was the eventual approach of the configuration of administrative borders to the contours of ethnic borders. This

tendency partly coincided with another one - the tendency of adjustment of the administrative structure of the region to the goals of Russian military-territorial administration.

The gradual coincidence of ethnic and territorial boundaries favoured the emergence of the idea of "nation-ness" (or "We-awareness" (Anderson, 1987)) among various North Caucasian ethnic groups and societies. The North Caucasian nations were emerging as units from the ethnically close or ethnically identical (relatively homogeneous), but "separate", mountain tribes or societies (Bliev, 1983; Avtorkhanov, 1992). Sometimes the reverse tendency also took place, when, as a result of the actions of Russian territorial administration, ethnically close groups "gave birth" to several "nationalities" with their own self-consciousness and self-perception: Chechens and Ingush, or Kabardians, Circassians and Adyghes - are examples of this second tendency (Henze, 1992). Their division took place where the territories of ethnically close groups were intersected by administrative borders. What is more important, however, the ethnic boundaries accumulated the formal-legal sense of national borders. In other words, the administrative-territorial activity of the Russian administration created conditions for and started the process of the emergence of nation-ness and national state-like formations. Finally, these historical changes determine the existence of ideological collision in

the contemporary national movements of the North Caucasus. In other words, as a result of the Russian colonization many of the mountain peoples (the Shapsugs, the Cherkess, the Ingush, the Avars) have lost a considerable part of their territory - a motive which is used as a basis in the demands to "restore the historic borders" (Bazorkin, 1990). At the same time, the colonization led to the first institutionalized borders. It is clear that previously existing borders do not coincide with the first administrative borders in regard to the whole ethnic territory. The same people can be considered to have lost a part of their territory (which has become a part of Cossack settlements), and at the same time to have acquired territory at the expense of other ethnic groups in the process of the Russian administrative shaping of the North Caucasus. For example, each of these peoples - Ossetians, Kabardians, Chechens, Ingush, Avars, Lezgins, lost and gained part of its territory during nineteenth century (UNPO, 1992; International Alert, 1992).

Today, the interpretation of this historical theme forms a very important block in the national ideologies. A. Chochiev, the Ossetian historian and former Deputy Chairman of the South Ossetian Parliament argued:

In the eighteenth century the Ossetians were under a great deal of military and political pressure from the mighty Kabardians, Georgians and eastern Muslim ethnic groups. So, it was quite natural that they asked Russia for protection in 1784.

Russia has kept its promise to guarantee Ossetia's security. More over, she allowed the Ossetians to settle at the southern and northern slopes of the Caucasian Mountains. Not surprisingly, the Ossetians have become true allies of Russia and participated in numerous military affairs on her side. This voluntary joining with Russia was crucial for the formation of the Ossetian ethnic identity. Without any exaggeration, we can say that the fact of joining Russia is kept in our national historical memory and forms an integral part of the Ossetian ethnic identity.

Dr. R. Bzarov, another Ossetian historian, expresses doubts that the process of joining Russia was totally voluntary.

It would be a mistake and improper exaggeration to believe that it was an absolutely voluntary act. This decision was made by the Ossetian ruling elite. The majority of Ossetians became aware of it only a few years after. Many of them took part in military actions against the Russian administration. These uprisings have been taking place until the beginning of the twentieth century, when Ossetian society finally showed a great degree of integration into the Russian state system. It happened because of the transformation of the social structure of the Ossetians: by 1917, the Ossetians had acquired their businessmen, an intelligentsia, military officers, constantly growing middle-class. In other words, the social structure of Ossetian society and its distribution of power and authority were congruent to those existing in Russia.

B. Bogatryov, the Ingush member of the Russian Parliament gives an entirely different picture of Russian colonization of the Ingush lands.

We were too weak to be able to resist the Russian invasion which occurred in the end of eighteenth century. But we have never accepted the loss of territories that had previously belonged to the Ingush people. We did not also accept this alien Russian culture and the Russian language which

were a constant threat to our traditions and identity. On the other hand, I must stress that the Ingush are peaceful people. They did not participate in the Russian-Caucasian war on either side. But, of course, it does not mean that the Ingush will ever forget that the Russian fortress Vladikavkaz was built on the place of the city which had been founded by the Ingush people 3.5 thousand years ago.

The most remarkable thing about these statements made by the Ossetian and Ingush intellectuals is not the difference in the way they interpret the history of incorporation into the Russian Empire, but the attempt of direct association of the contemporary Ossetians and Ingush with their ancestors of the eighteenth century. It is an example of how both the Ossetian and Ingush ideologists try to portray ethnicity as looming out of the immemorable past. To modify the quotation of Debray by B. Anderson (Anderson, 1983: 19), these statements imply, 'Yes, it is quite accidental that I am born Ossetian (Ingush), but after all, Ossetia (Ingushetia) is eternal.'

By the beginning of the Russian Revolution (1917), no mountain peoples of the North Caucasus had their own state system. But they had administratively secured territorial units: *okrugs* (districts). The borders of these administrative units were very close to those of the ethnic ones. The distribution of mountain population indirectly confirms this assertion.

Okrug	Population (thousands)	Mountain people	Russians
Vladikavkaz	129.9	125.1	2.0
Grozny	120.5	117.2	3.2
Vedenskii	120.0	119.2	0.3
Khasav'yurt	83.9	55.2	16.1
Nalchik	154.5	129.3	20.3
Nazran	57.3	56.9	0.3

(Terskii Kalendar, 1916)

After the Revolution these mountain *okrug*s became a territorial basis for the formation of national state-like units (so called "autonomies" - autonomous republics and autonomous *oblasts*).

The most important feature of ethnoterritorial changes during post-revolutionary time was a catastrophic shortage of land in the mountain *okrug*s (Broxup, 1992; Totoev, 1990). In the times preceding the Russian Revolution, this shortage was associated with the Tsarist administration which was reluctant to solve this question by allowing mountain people to settle in the plains areas. But for the mountain people, the direct culprit responsible for the lack of land was the Cossacks. In the Civil War (1918 - 1921), the Cossacks who formed the basis for the White (anti-Bolshevik) movement found themselves between two hostile forces: Bolshevism and local mountain

national movements. In Ossetia this stand-off was not so striking: the fight took place between the Cossacks supported by the majority of Ossetians, on the one hand, and the Bolshevik and Ossetian socialist groups, on the other. After the victory of the Soviets in the region, the Cossacks lost the most part of their land. The population of numerous *stanitsas* was deported (Totoyev, 1990).

2. The period of the Soviet national-state construction (1918 - 1932).

Right after the Civil War, the North Caucasian autonomies began to emerge on the basis of the former *okrugs* of *Terskaya Oblast* (Region). The main feature of this process is the replacement of old imperial bureaucracies by national ones (Simon, 1991). These autonomies proved to be embryos for the national state system. Their evolution symbolized a new stage in the process of turning administrative borders into national state borders. The administration now is based upon the distinct criterion of ethnically based personnel selection (Simon, 1991). Inter-ethnic relations, determined by the victory of new power relations, became more politically important. Immediately after the victory of Bolshevism in the North Caucasian area, the issue of the land shortage (which formerly was manifested at the level of direct inter-settlement relations) was transformed into the problem of

"disputed territories" and, respectively, into the problem of real inter-ethnic antagonisms. For example, several serious disputes between the Soviet North Caucasian autonomies emerged almost simultaneously: a conflict between Karachay and Kabarda in regard to the Khassaut district, the growth of tensions between Kabarda and Ossetia concerning the Ossetian rental land in Kabarda, and, finally, the dispute between Ossetia and Ingushetia about the administrative border near the Daryal Gorge (Totoev, 1990). The most interesting characteristic of these disputes was the fact that the rights of traditional landowners - a rural community or a private person, were replaced by the unquestionable "right" of the Soviet state and illusory right of its direct agent, the national (local) administration. It was really an illusory right, because the general relaxation of inter-ethnic tensions and continuing decrease of the political meaning of new Soviet administrative boundaries showed that the process of Soviet national-state building was only an external feature of the incarnation of the communist system in the region.

In the 1920s the following territorial changes took place:

First, Bolshevik repressions against the Cossacks (especially in the districts with considerable tensions between the Cossack and mountain population concerning the land: Ingushetia, Daghestan, Chechnya) doomed them to mass

deportation from their *stanitsas*. These villages were resettled by Ingush and Chechens and became parts of their national autonomies. Those *stanitsas* where the Cossacks continued to live were also incorporated into the territories of national autonomies. Thus were the Cossacks to be the first ethnic group to be repressed by the Soviet state. They were deprived of self-administration as well as of other attributes of their communal life which had traditionally been perceived as their specific ethnic features (Dimanstein, 1930);

Second, the administrative borders between mountain peoples were also changed to make them congruent with existing ethnic borders. National features became dominant in the process of administration of the North Caucasus (Broxup, 1992).

It must be stressed that the administrative centres of several mountain autonomies were located beyond their territories. Partly this situation followed the old pre-revolutionary tradition. The centre of Adyghea was in Krasnodar, of Cherkessia - in Batalapshinsk, of Chechnya - in Grozny, of Ossetia and Ingushetia - in Vladikavkaz. Such a situation was perceived as absolutely natural and the only one possible, since these centres had a necessary minimum of infrastructure, facilities and experienced personnel to be able to perform the function of administration.

According to Dr. S. Kessayev, a member of the North Ossetian Parliament

the situation, when the administration of both the Ingush and the Ossetians located in Vladikavkaz, was seen by the Soviet central authorities only as a temporary one. There are archival documents which prove that in 1913, the Tsarist authorities planned to transfer the Ingush administration to the Ingush town of Nazran. It did not happen only because of World War I. When it was decided to unite the Ingush and Chechen autonomies (1934), the city of Grozny was chosen quite properly both in ethnic and geographic terms as the place of the centre of new Chechen-Ingush ASSR. After all, there were only five hundred Ingush (representatives of the Ingush administration and members of their families) living in Vladikavkaz (compared to twelve thousand Ossetians). Moreover, the Russian-speaking urban milieu of Vladikavkaz had played an enormous role in the emergence of Ossetian culture and its new Soviet national intelligentsia. For the majority of the Ingush it was simply the place where they had go to in order to arrange some current mundane issues.

In other words, for most Ossetians it is quite natural that Vladikavkaz is their capital city. Vladikavkaz is always referred to as the birthplace of Ossetian culture and as the symbol of their political and national identity, which, of course, can not be shared with the Ingush.

The Ingush political leaders, on the other hand, do not agree with such a point of view. B. Bogatyryov, prominent Ingush politician, insists that the restoration of the Ingush autonomy is inconceivable without declaring Vladikavkaz a capital of Ingushetia.

The Ingush people as well as all Caucasian people (excluding, of course, the North Ossetian officials) feel that our capital must be Vladikavkaz - the

right bank of the Terek river. It will be a restoration of historical justice. Vladikavkaz is a crucial symbol of Ingush autonomy and of our national pride.

M. Darsigov, the other political leader of the Ingush national movement says:

Without this city we (the Ingush) can not develop as a nation. We have all the necessary moral, historical and legal rights to get our share of its industrial, cultural and geo-political resources.

The changes in the national-administrative development that took place during this period have important political meaning in relation to the present ethno-political situation in the region. First of all, these administrative transformations of the 1920s were historically the first political and legal acts of that state to whom the contemporary Russian government serves as a successor. In other words, there is a qualitative ideological and legal difference between the pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary territorial changes in the North Caucasus. None of the conflicting national ideologies blames the central Russian government for the violation of territorial and other national rights during tsarist Russia.

This thesis provides a basis for an idea, popular among a certain group of Russian parliamentarians concerned with conflict-resolution in this region, namely, to declare the annulment of all territorial changes that have taken place after 1917 (*Izvestia*, December 12, 1993). This, does not,

however, necessarily mean the return to the borders of 1917. To do so would threaten the contemporary Russian federal state system. Rather, it reflects attempts to reach a mutually satisfactory administrative-territorial compromise.

In the 1920s the ethnic factor and the idea of nationhood were used by the Communist Party as the means to implant the Soviet state system in the North Caucasus. It enforced the policy of *korenizatsia* (which means something like "taking root", from the Russian *koren*, "root"). It meant support for the mountain peoples on the condition and in the expectation of stabilizing or establishing the Party's rule. In this respect, nation-building was an instrument of Sovietization. Relying on the national bureaucracies in the process of its implantation or *korenizatsia*, the Soviet state consolidated its position in the North Caucasian region in the form of a national state system. The resulting small states, however, were never intended by Moscow to be any more than superficial forms of true, legally empowered nations. Moreover, the activity of these national bureaucracies has always been potentially dangerous, since they tended to exceed the limits prescribed for them by their intra-systemic, "imitational" status. National local authorities and native people, in general, took this imitation for real, perceiving it as an indicator of genuine development and progress.

By the beginning of 1930s, the Soviet state policy of

korenizatsia began to result in a highly dangerous (for the Bolshevik ideology) phenomenon of radical nationalism (Simon, 1991).

3. The period of "victory of socialism" (1932 - 1941).

In the beginning of the 1930s, the Soviet state system which had become unrestrictedly powerful in the region, started pursuing a policy fundamentally different from that of *korenizatsia*. Henceforth, an open "socialist state" administrative policy was enacted. This turning point reflected the need for a concept of "expediency" that would correspond to a historically new phase of the development of socialism. During the previous period, an almost absolute coincidence of administrative and ethnic borders had resulted in the ethnic domination of mountain (titular) people within their own autonomies. However, by the beginning of the 1930s, the further consolidation of the totalitarian system had begun to challenge the tendency of increasing self-reliance of the national autonomies, a trend which threatened Moscow's control over the imperial periphery. The Soviet state initiated the policy of cultural, ideological, and territorial assimilation of mountain peoples. This it meant the pursuit of practices which aimed to establish and maintain an ethnic balance within the North Caucasian autonomies that could guarantee a higher rate of economic growth, and, at the same

time, could neutralize this "dangerous" (for the Soviet system) process of political and cultural divergence of the national regions. Such a policy presupposed the inclusion of neighbouring Russian districts and big cities with mainly Russian populations into the territories of the North Caucasian autonomies. This process gave an impetus to a qualitatively new socio-economic development which slowed down the rise of the national idea within the North Caucasian autonomies. National bureaucracies which emerged in the 1920s were "consolidated" with Russian functionaries appointed directly by Moscow. Repressions against national intelligentsias and religious leaders started precisely at this time (Bennigsen, 1985; Bryan, 1992). This chart reflects these territorial changes which occurred in 1930-1936.

Territorial changes in the proportion after the	of titular group before the change	change	by 1959
Adyghe A.O.			
(inclusion of Giagin and Maikop Districts, 1936-1940)	55.7%	32.4%	23.1%
Karachay A.O.			
inclusion of part of Batalapsh District 1931	81.3%	60.7%	39.6%
Cherkess A.O.			
inclusion of part of Batalapsh District 1931	70.3%	38.6%	39.6%
Kabard-Balkhar ASSR			
inclusion of Prokhladny District, 1934	76.3%	64.1%	54.4%
North Ossetian ASSR			
inclusion of the city of Vladikavkaz, 1934	84.2%	50.3%	47.8%
Chechen A.O.			
inclusion of Grozny and Sunzha Autonomous District, 1930 (Totoev, 1990).	94.0%	64.0%	41.1%

There were pre-existing conditions within the autonomies that made this political tendency successful. Autonomies were interested in new territorial acquisitions in order to achieve better economic results and ease the question of land shortage. Besides, the acquisition of industrially and infrastructurally developed cities - Vladikavkaz, Grozny, Maikop - created new prospects for the ruling national elites.

During this period, the difference in political and cultural adaptation between different mountain ethnic groups became distinctively visible. Of course, this difference had emerged back in the nineteenth century, the period of Russian colonization, as a typological difference of the "voluntary entry" (into the Russian Empire) and the "subjugation of mountain people". However, these two general constructions were used for a long while rather as competing "ideologemas" replacing each other from time to time (which was determined by political conjuncture) (Sheeny, 1984; Bryan, 1992; Bliev, 1983). Nevertheless, these two types of entry into the Russian Empire reflected objective facts. One part of the mountain peoples, Ossetians, Balkhars, Karachays, had received the North Caucasian plain lands, taking advantage of Russian colonization as a guarantee of its security within new places of settlement, and in turn this group of mountain peoples

itself became a guarantor of stability and security for Russian military communications and fortifications. The other North Caucasians encountered the Russian colonization at a time of expansion. These were Chechens, Lezgins, Avars, and Ingush. In other words, the former were "awarded" by Russia with new land ("returned the land of the ancestors" to them); the latter were awarded only with a formal right to own the land they had already controlled and mastered. In some cases, the mountain peoples were even deprived of their territories when they were deported or forced to leave their territory (Ubykhs, West Cherkeess tribes, Avars) (Avtorkhanov, 1992). This typological difference has determined the emergence of two extreme forms of adaptation of the mountain peoples to the Russian and Soviet state systems, typified by the Ossetians and the Vainakh (Chechens and Ingushi). The first symbolized a relatively smooth cultural, political integration into the new system of relations, while the other represented a never ending process of resistance. The Vainakh were "extreme", because the difference in the territorial aspect of their entry into the Russian Empire was reinforced by the religious factor: the Ossetians are mainly Orthodox Christians; the Chechens and Ingush are Muslims.

The difference between these two groups of mountain peoples had become most visible during the years of the Civil War, but it became even more important during the years of

"bolshevization" of the North Caucasus. The Muslim clergy played the role of preserving a kind of immunity against the Communist system (Bennigsen, 1985; Bryan, 1992), especially among those peoples with slight social differentiation: the Chechens and Ingush (Avtorkhanov, 1992). This "immunity" prevented the Soviet system from penetrating into the deepest layers of people's lives. In turn this immunity relied on the strength of family and clan ties.

The repressions against the Muslim clergy appeared to be a catalyst of emerging conflict of several mountain peoples with the Soviet state. In the 1930s, NKVD soldiers had been involved in numerous military operations against Chechen rebels (Avtorkhanov, 1992). The very fact of these uprisings played an important role in Stalin's decision to deport the Chechens and Ingush in 1944.

4. The period of deportation and abolition of the North Caucasian autonomies (1943 - 1956).

The deportation was accompanied by considerable territorial and administrative changes. The Chechen-Ingush ASSR, Karachay A.O., Balkar districts in the Kabard-Balkhar ASSR and the Chechen district in Daghestan ASSR were abolished. Their territories were re-distributed between neighbouring autonomies (Helsinki Watch, 1992). In 1956-1957, when the repressed peoples returned from the exile, the

administrative territorial division and borders were restored. However, there were several exceptions (Helsinki Watch, 1992; Birch, 1993; Broxup, 1992). These exceptions have formed the most painful and, at the same time, potentially explosive issues of contemporary inter-ethnic relations in the North Caucasus. Karachay A.O. was restored, but in the form of the "doubled" Karachay-Cherkess A.O. (in spite of the fact that these peoples belong to different language families (Dumezil, 1965; Wixman, 1984). Balkhar districts within the Kabard-Balkar ASSR were rebuilt in a such a way that under the new internal administrative division each of them became a part of a district where a Kabardian population prevailed. Aukhovski (the Chechen) rayon in Daghestan has not been restored. The descendants of Avars and Lacks who had settled there in 1944-1945 continue to live there.

After the restoration of the Chechen-Ingush autonomy, thre Cossack rayons of Stavropol Kray (Province) - Naurskii, Shelkovskoi, and Kargalinski Rayons - were included in the territory of Chechen-Ingushetia in order to compensate for the loss of Prigorodny Rayon which has remained in the North Ossetian ASSR. During the next 30 years the Cossack population decreased to 37% of the whole population (from 85% in 1957), while the Chechen and Ingush population increased to 51% (compared to 10% in 1957) (Kassaev, 1992). Ossetian settlers, who were forced to leave their villages in Georgia in 1944-

1945, were not allowed to return back to Georgia. So, Prigorodny rayon became a refuge for the Orthodox Ossetians deported from Georgia in 1944-1945 and from Ingushetia in 1957. Thus it remained in Ossetia.

As was mentioned earlier, in 1944-1945 the territories of the deported peoples were resettled by representatives of other North Caucasian peoples. It must be emphasized that this resettlement was a coercive act of the Soviet state. Each district had a detailed "plan" prescribing what ethnic group, from what region, and of what size should be relocated. Those local authorities who failed to provide the required number of new settlers were also repressed.

The ethnic selectivity of deportations seriously complicated the relations between the neighbouring mountain peoples. The deported peoples have begun to associate this criminal act of the Soviet state with their neighbours, a visible instrument of this state. The settler, along with the KGB/NKVD officer, has been perceived as a real agent of the hateful Soviet system. A kind of inversion took place: the "expansionism" of the neighbouring peoples on to the territories of deported groups was declared by the latter as the "real" source and reason for the deportations. The Soviet state has been perceived only as an instrument to secure the interests of

"treacherous" neighbours. From now on, the responsibility of

the state for the deportation exists in the form of the "guilt" of neighbours: the "plots" of Ossetians, Kabardians, Lacks and Cossacks provoked the deportation. Further, the more rapidly the Soviet state lost its power, the more visible this "guilt" became.

Dr. A. Dzasokhov, member of the Russian Parliament, former Chairman of the North Ossetian Parliament, is convinced that the period of deportations and territorial changes formed the most important reason of the Ossetian-Ingush conflict.

It was really a horrible and disgusting act of the Stalinist regime. No question about that. And now, I am very concerned about the irresponsible statements of some Ossetian politicians who try to justify this criminal act. I mean those accusations against the Ingush people for "cooperating" with the Nazi troops in 1942. Such statements will inevitably reinforce hatred between our peoples and will make the negotiating process more difficult. It will be impossible to explain that the Ossetians did not want to settle in the Ingush territory of Prigorodny Rayon, and, therefore can not be blamed for the deportation. This deportation was initiated by Stalin in order to justify the lack of success of the Red Army in the military campaign of 1942.

At the same time, Ingush politicians argue that the Ossetians are responsible for their deportation. M. Seinaroyev, member of Parliament of the Ingush Republic is totally serious saying

Stalin's closest environment consisted of the Ossetians. He himself was an Ossetian. He made his decision (on deportation) under the pressure from Kabulov (an Ossetian, one of the KGB high officials) and Pliyev (also an Ossetian, a high ranking military officer).

This perception of the "enemy's image" had the most serious consequence for the regions where the full restoration of the 1944 borders did not happen (Prigorodny and Aukhovski Rayons). The deported Chechens and Ingush, having returned to these places, found the local administration consisting of representatives of other ethnic groups. This made repatriation a hardship: strict limitations were placed on the issuing of residence permits (*propiska*) and home purchase permits. These measures were primarily aimed at Chechens and Ingush. The emerging land-property conflicts in these districts obtained the political form of ethnic contradictions. The changes in population and in the balance of political power between the titular and non-titular peoples, in this case, the deported ethnic groups, acquired the character of a "national security" issue. During the next historical period, the demographic changes in the disputed areas appeared to be the most evident symptom of increasing ethnic tensions.

5. The period of "developed socialism" (1957 - 1985).

One of the dominant features of the following period is the absolute stability of national-administrative boundaries: there were no territorial changes between 1957 and the beginning of *perestroika* (1985). The central Soviet state authorities did their best to make these borders stable in order to decrease their political importance. This paradox can

be explained rather easily: every territorial change would attract extra attention to the role of borders, while the fact of their relative stability created an illusion of their increasing conventionality. At that time, the issue of creating a "new historical community of the people", the "Soviet People", was one of the priorities of the Communist Party policy. The ideological doctrine of the Soviet People declared that the Soviet nations' development ("blossoming") and "rapprochement" and "merging" should occur simultaneously. According to this doctrine, the "rapprochement" was the "dominant tendency" in this "dialectic" process in the phase of developed socialism (Tsamerian, 1979). At this stage, national-administrative borders were gradually to lose their significance as territorial boundaries of specific cultural and linguistic features. In general this period can be characterized as a thoroughly controlled return to a policy of *korenizatsia*, when the role of the native administrators was filled by the *nomenclatura*, those representatives of the mountain peoples selected and screened by the central Communist Party apparatus. In other words, the Soviet state tried again to create an acceptable national bureaucracy and intelligentsia who could be relied upon to control Russia's imperial periphery.

The reverse side of this control was the increasing power and role of the titular ethnic groups within the North

Caucasian autonomies. The dominant position of these titular groups determined the emergence and politicization of ethnicity. National origin or identity became increasingly the main criterion of selection and appointment of administrative personnel. Ethnic identity became their chief political characteristic (Simon, 1991). As a result, this process has neutralized all previous efforts of the Soviet state to turn the national-administrative borders into a conventional phenomenon. The stability of the existing borders formed concrete frames for the steady tendency of increasing domination of titular groups within autonomous power-structures. Because of that, the goal of the Soviet state, to achieve political conventionality of administrative borders between the North Caucasian autonomies, has never taken place. Rather, it was perceived as an illusion of the state in its political declarations about the nature and characteristics of the phenomenon of the "Soviet People". In reality, the atmosphere of national preference has penetrated into all spheres of social life within the national-territorial units of the North Caucasus.

Demographic changes that have taken place in this region neutralized the efforts of the super-national Soviet state to assimilate the mountain peoples. The desire of the central government to secure a favourable ethnic balance within the North Caucasian autonomies, the same high

proportion of ethnic Russians, was in vain. In 1970-1980s the portion of the Russian population in the autonomies began to decrease, though in different autonomies this process has had different rates and results. The Russian and Russian-speaking population, in general, has started to abandon this region.

Russian population growth rate

(compared with all-USSR figures):

	1959-1970	1970-1979	1979-1989
USSR	1	1	1
Adyghea	2,89	0,51	0,50
Karachay-Cherkessia	1,11	0,29	1,23
Kabard-Balkaria	2,63	1,09	0,52
North Ossetia	1,02	-0,84	-1,02
Chechen-Ingushetia	0,41	-1,30	-2,25
Daghestan	-0,15	-1,47	-2,22

(Simon, 1991).

This tendency took place in a period of considerable political and inter-ethnic stability of the Soviet Union. One of the factors determining this surprising trend was the increasing domination by titular ethnic groups. The other factor is closely related to this domination. The Soviet state directly controlled only strategic foci in the autonomies, namely, local KGB and the local party apparatus. At the same

time, the state made possible a "free competition" between ethnic groups within other important spheres: trade, education, and the construction sector. This "free competition" favoured those ethnic groups which possessed more sophisticated and strong unofficial mechanisms of group cohesion, for example, the Chechens and Ingush. In this situation, the Russians, Armenians, Jews, and Georgians, groups who traditionally had controlled certain spheres of socio-economic life, such as education, informal economy, trade, began to lose their position to the mountain peoples, who had preserved their numerous close ties of blood. Using these ties, the North Caucasian ethnic groups created a "most favourable regime" for themselves in the most prestigious spheres of economic and social life. The traditional Russian professional advantages of higher educational level and the work ethic became less important. In addition there were no substantial programmes of economic development in this region that could have mandated the construction of big state enterprises and, consequently insured an inflow of non-native (usually, Russian) population to consolidate "traditional" (for the Soviet epoch) norms of labour, such as a relatively high degree of responsibility, discipline and reliability compared to native people.

From now on social life in the mountain autonomies was regulated mainly not by the central state as had taken place

under totalitarianism, but rather by national traditionalism driven by informal clan and blood ties. Therefore, the Russian population, devoid of these ties, was doomed to socio-political inertness. Beyond the sphere of big industry, still controlled by the state (where the Russian population is dominant even now), the "style" of state life became more amorphous and determined by national socio-cultural factors. The more vivid the traditionalistic features of political domination of native ethnic groups have become, the more apparent the gap between the two life-styles, that of the "state" and that of the "every-day". Thus the Russians found themselves to be aliens within the socio-cultural milieu dominated by native people.

This process was very important in terms of implications for the research questions of the present study. This change in the ethnic power-balance in favour of mountain peoples has opened the doors to direct rivalry between different ethnic groups during the period of the crisis and destruction of the Soviet state system.

6. The period of destruction of the Soviet state system (1985 - 1993).

Along with the crisis and, afterwards, the collapse of the Soviet state system and Soviet epoch with its culture and legality, has come the crisis of the legitimacy of national-

territorial boundaries. The crisis spots have appeared, first of all, in those regions where the two following factors have emerged simultaneously. The first one is the direct violation of the legal right of the peoples to live within their own former territories, a result of the period of deportations which changed territorial borders and composition. The second indicator is the existence, within these regions, of two or more ethnic groups claiming the role of "titular" people (Kabard-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Daghestan, North-Ossetia). The non-titular and non-native population became the ethnic minorities. It must be emphasised that the main and the only basis for this transformation was the administrative assignment of these ethnic regions to this or that persistent autonomous republic at the time of the emergence of the Russian Federation as a legal successor of the USSR.

Now I am in a position to examine the Ossetian-Ingush conflict as the most characteristic case study which discloses the most important features of inter-ethnic relations in the North Caucasus.

In 1973, for the first time in the Soviet period, the apparent expression of the emerging Ossetian-Ingush conflict took place. The Ingush people held a demonstration on the main Lenin Square in Grozny, demanding the return of their "ancestral" territory (Prigorodny Rayon). Their actions resulted in the arrival from Moscow of the Russian Federation

prime minister, Mikhail Solomentsev. He made some vague promises and left. The demonstration was dispersed by security forces (Helsinki Watch, 1991).

In 1981, the Ossetians staged disorders in Vladikavkaz, tipping over cars belonging to Ingush. It took three days to disperse people by using security forces. This incident took place as a protest against corrupt Ossetian authorities who had been bribed by Ingush on a mass scale. The latter paid money in order to get residence permits (*propiska*) in Vladikavkaz and Prigorodny Rayon (Helsinki Watch, 1991). In both cases the totalitarian system showed its strength. The use of force was a clear message that it would not tolerate any attempt to reconsider and change the existing status quo in ethnic relations and existing administrative borders in the North Caucasus.

The period of perestroika created favourable conditions for a final formation of the ideology of the Ingush national movement. The corner-stone of this ideology was the idea of restitution of the Ingush autonomy with Vladikavkaz as its capital.

From the very start, all political leaders of the Ingush national movement tried to act within legal and constitutional frameworks. They created specific organizations responsible for the achievement of their goals, restoration of the autonomy and restitution of Prigorodny Rayon, namely, the

Committee for the Restoration of the Ingush Autonomy and the Congress of the Ingush People. At the same time, these organizations were proto-institutions of their state system. One of the main ideologists of the Ingush, the Ingush writer, I. Bazorkin, expressed the central idea of this movement as follows:

Our people decided to become the masters of their destiny. We have got sixty thousand signatures in favour of our demand to restore the Ingush autonomy. It has the same meaning and importance as a referendum. The Second Congress of the Ingush People has reaffirmed this decision. No one, including central Russian government or any round table of experts, can ignore the will of the Ingush people. Our destiny has been solved by Stalin not at these round tables. Therefore, the restoration of our autonomy can be decided only on the basis of the legal decision of the Russian state central authorities. I believe that very soon there will be the Ingush autonomy with it centre in Vladikavkaz.

The Ingush were quite successful in terms of results of the activity of the pressure groups they had formed at every level of the state and legislative power in Russia. The Ingush problem became the focus of several legislative acts of the Russian Parliament. In 1991, just before the August coup, the Russian Parliament issued the "Decree on Rehabilitation of the Repressed Peoples" (*Izvestia*, April 26, 1991). According to this document, the Russian Parliament condemned repressions against and deportations of the North Caucasian peoples, expressed official apologies, and reassured the rights of the deported peoples to return to the places where they had lived

on the eve of the deportations. However, this decree specified neither the concrete peoples nor the specific places. As a result, the Cossacks and the Ingush have got the same rights to return to the same places, namely villages which belonged to the Ingush which previously had been Cossack *stanitsas*. Nevertheless, the Ingush leaders showed their support for this decree, and considered it as their great victory and legal document confirming their right to restore their autonomy centred on Prigorodny Rayon.

The North Ossetian leadership strongly opposed the ideas of this decree. As a response, the North Ossetian Parliament adopted the "Declaration of Sovereignty of the Republic of North Ossetia" (*Sotsialisticheskaya Ossetia*, June 13, 1991), wherein it was stressed that the borders of the Republic could not be changed without the special agreement of the North Ossetian Parliament and a referendum of the population of the Republic.

In June, 1992 the Russian Parliament issued the "Decree on Formation of the Republic of Ingushetia within the Russian Federation" (*Rossiiskie Vesti*, June 25, 1992). According to this document, three regions of the former Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic should have formed the new Ingush Republic. The territory of Prigorodny Rayon was not even mentioned in this document. In the official commentary to this decree it was said that the

future of the rayon had to be decided through the official negotiations between North Ossetia and New Republic of Ingushetia. However, there existed another major obstacle for the implementation of this decree. In September 1991, Chechnya declared its independence from Russia. The Ingush leaders had to decide, whether to join the President of Chechnya, D. Dudayev or stay in Russia. B. Bogatyryov, one of the most famous Ingush political leaders, admits that it was a tough decision:

Yes, it is true, the Chechens are our brothers. But it is impossible to return Prigorodny Rayon staying in independent Chechnya. To return our lands in North Ossetia - the birthplace of the Ingush nation - we will stay in the Russian Federation... Unfortunately, both decrees adopted by the Russian Parliament do not work. Something must be done to create a mechanism for their implementation. It will be difficult because of the negative attitude of the North Ossetian leadership.

A. Dzasokhov, the Ossetian politician also mentioned the difficulties created by these decrees.

At that point I felt it was time to start negotiations with the Ingush representatives in order to relax the situation around Prigirodny Rayon. But it was impossible: there was nobody to negotiate with. The Ingush legitimate authorities have not been elected yet, and there was a strong negative attitude both among the population and the authorities in North Ossetia. These decrees appeared to be unprepared, contradicting the Russian and North Ossetian constitutions.

Among the Russian analysts and political leaders the

negative attitude to the "Decree on Rehabilitation..." and the "Decree on Formation of the Republic of Ingushetia" was getting stronger. A. Mineyev, the leading analyst of the most popular Russian newspaper "Moscow News" argued:

It was pure populism. I mean those documents. Under circumstances of a current political situation in Russia and the North Caucasus the Decrees may provoke a real disaster. I think that there are many parliamentarians who do not understand that Ingush politicians who constantly remind them of the tragedy of the Ingush nation, try to make everyone forget the genocide of 1918-1921 which had been committed against the Cossacks. Their lands and property were divided among the Ingush. We must remember about this tragedy as well as about the deportations. I do not see how these decrees may equally satisfy both sides. They will not work.

The outbreak of violence between the Ossetians and the Ingush on October 30, 1992 can be interpreted as a result of the Ingush frustration at the failure to implement of the decrees of the Russian authorities. ⁴ The current situation has minimized the chances to resolve this territorial dispute peacefully. Prigorodny Rayon was declared by the central Russian government to be a zone of curfew, and the Temporary Military Administration (appointed and governed directly by Moscow) took responsibility for this region. Negotiations

⁴ For more information, see Birch, J (Birch, 1993).

between the North Ossetian and Ingush authorities which are held on a constant basis have not brought any positive results to date. Each side blames the other and does not want to make any concessions. But the most regrettable fact is rapidly growing deep alienation between the Ingush and Ossetian population. A. Tsutsiyev, the Ossetian political scientist, tried to explain the roots of this growing mutual hostility in following terms:

The main problem is that the Ossetians and Ingush are really culturally different, "assymetric" ethnic groups with absolutely different mentalities. Because of this they interpret the current problems of their relations in an absolutely opposing way. The Ingush say we will forgive the Ossetians for what they did to us (took their lands in 1944, make the Ingush leave Prigorodny Rayon again in 1992) if we are allowed to return to our homes. The Ossetians say is it possible to live again with people - your former "good neighbours"- who may any day all of a sudden take guns and start shooting at you? We can live with only those Ingush who did not participate in the military actions against us in 1992. In other words, the Ossetian do not understand, why they should beg forgiveness and feel guilty: they did not break the laws of the Russian Federation they live in. The Ingush equally do not feel themselves guilty for the attempt to take what they sincerely feel belongs to them - houses and territory of Prigorodny Rayon. The latter simply do not recognize and respect the same law which the Ossetians consider as a primordial value everyone should respect. And I feel, this different attitude towards formal legality has its roots in the culture of these peoples.

While the Ossetians are openly against the return of the Ingush people, saying that right now they can not live

together with them, the Ingush leaders say that if their people return they will not seek revenge. A. Malsagov, former reporter for "Rossiiskie Vesti" argues:

You, Ossetians, do not understand that we, the Ingush are more your allies than enemies. Together we could control the whole Caucasus enjoying the advantages of our geo-political position, mineral resources and the skills of our peoples. Together we can create a prosperity which will make us forget our quarrels. The only thing we Ingush need is to be allowed to return back to Vladikavkaz and Progorodny Rayon.

This statement reflects a general feeling among the Ingush. Their optimism concerning future relations with the Ossetians is based upon the awareness of the strength of integrity of the Ingush society. They are not afraid of competition with other ethnic groups.

Regardless of how sad or disgusting the situation of this ethnic conflict is for both the Ingush and Ossetians, it gives us a unique opportunity to focus on basic ideas such as mutual perception of both neighbouring peoples, stereotypes, attitudes, fears which in normal life usually go unnoticed and are taken for granted. To use the terminology of phenomenological sociology (Schutz, 1964; Garfinkel, 1970), the ethnic conflict "interrupts" the normal "flow of life" and reveals the aspects of ethno-psychological, cultural, social and ideological activity, which previously looked unproblematic, trivial. Moreover, such an approach grasps the dynamic of the process of formation (construction) of these

attitudes, preferences and mindsets concerning a wide range of issues dealing with ethnicity, nationalism, and culture. In this particular study, especially at the stage of interview and interpretation, the main focus was made on:

(a) the participants' understanding and evaluation of the history of Ossetian-Ingush relations (with the accent on territorial issues);

(b) their attitude towards the legal acts of the Soviet and Russian central authorities (which has relevance to the problem of the conflict);

(c) their opinions on the prospects of resolution of this conflict;

(d) mutual perception of the Ingush and Ossetians.

The most striking result of the study is the complete opposition concerning every relevant issue between the Ingush and the rest of the participants, especially those concerning possible ways of resolving the conflict. The Ingush insist that all refugees should be returned to the villages in Prigorodny Rayon **immediately**.

As I. Kodzoyev, an Ingush member of the Ingush Parliament, explains:

If the refugees are allowed to return immediately, the faith and trust of the Ingush people in the Russian leadership will be restored and serious talks with the North Ossetian leadership will be possible.

His Ossetian colleague, S. Kessayev, does not agree:

If the Ingush are allowed to come back, it will mean that we lost Prigorodny Rayon forever. And we should expect thirty thousand Ossetian and Russian-speaking refugees to leave the Rayon. The Ingush will use their traditional arsenal of dirty tricks (threats, street violence, robberies) to force the non-Ingush population to move out of there.

Such a view became widespread among the population of North Ossetia. Even the representatives of the Temporary Military Administration have no doubts that the return of the Ingush refugees, if it takes in the near future, will mean a higher degree of confrontation and escalation of violence. General A. Lozovoy, head of the Administration, strongly opposes this idea:

There are three options for resolving this conflict. The first one, is to confirm once and for ever (at the level of the Russian Parliament) the constitutional right of North Ossetia to its territorial integrity (Prigorodny Rayon). The outcome of such a decision is a new war. The second is to allow the Ingush to return to their places (which means the region soon will be out of control of our administration and the North Ossetian authorities). The result is a war again. And, finally, we can try to preserve the existing status quo as long as we can. Of course, it will not satisfy anybody. One thing will never happen for sure: Moscow will never agree to territorial changes in favour of the Ingush republic. My prediction is that all three scenarios will coexist for a while. It means that we must think not about the resolution of this conflict but of the perspective of its "natural transformation". This is the most realistic and desirable outcome. Hopefully, at some point, there will appear conditions for serious and fruitful negotiations and both parties will agree to make tangible concessions.

The absence of any prospects for the mutually satisfying solution to this conflict reinforces mutual hatred and suspicion, while it creates the image of an enemy and undermines the authority and prestige of the Temporary administration and central government. A. Chochiev, an Ossetian politician, described this picture in following expressions:

Let us focus on the national aspect of this conflict seen through the spectacles of narrow-minded populism. It has the following logic. The army is the Centre. The Centre is the Russians. The Russians are Yeltsin. "Yeltsin could but did not stop the Ingush invasion". This view is popular in Ossetia now. But the Ossetians do not understand that Yeltsin and his interests are not the Russians' interests. They are the imperial ones. Therefore, their indignation they turn on the Russians. "Refugees in Ossetia, which has for ages been a traditional and faithful ally of Russia!?" The height of the Ossetian refugees' tragedy is expressed in this phrase: "We and the Russians have the same ancestors: we are the Scythians. But they betrayed us. They have good relations and respect those who hate them. We love them for nothing". The whole history is accumulated for the Ossetians in this confession. Personally, I do not know who has the right to blame them for such feelings. However, there are the Russians who have such right. I mean those who fought on the Ossetian side in this conflict. Unfortunately, neither politicians nor the refugees want to hear about this.

Anti-Ingush sentiments have grown stronger among the population of north Ossetia regardless of nationality. The main theme which is present in the majority of interviews is the unarticulated fear of the Ingush. This fear and hostility is projected into the past of Ingush-Ossetian relations as

well. Statements like "the Ingush have always been the treacherous people," "one should never trust the Ingush," "they were always tough people to deal with," "they are a typical example of Muslim extremists," were heard in almost every interview. Witness, for example, S. Krokhin, a Russian, businessman living in Vladikavkaz:

I have known the Ingush for ages. I have reasons not to trust them. I can imagine what kind of atmosphere there will be if they return. They will outnumber the rest of the republic's population very soon. They will push us out of the business. There will be a type of corporate economy controlled by the Ingush mafia clans. Where do I go then? I was born here. Nobody expects me in Russia. I prefer to stay here, and if it happens, I will fight against the Ingush together with the Ossetians, Cossacks, and Armenians.

The Ingush also admit that their relations with the Ossetians have grown worse, but they are sure that once they regain their territory, these relations will inevitably improve. For instance, B. Seynaroyev, says:

There have always existed family and blood ties between our peoples. Now they are shy of these ties and tend to hide them. But I believe that friendly relations between our peoples could be restored when we resolve this territorial issue.

Such statements, unfortunately, scare the population of North Ossetia even more since they are interpreted as a confidence in final victory of the Ingush movement. Therefore, the population of North Ossetia strongly support the thesis introduced by the North Ossetian leadership that the common

life of the Ossetians and the Ingush is temporarily impossible. The arguments in favour of this thesis are based on fear of direct competition which is reinforced by fears of "inevitable Islamic expansionism." Not surprisingly, the desire to strengthen ties with the Russians and exploit the idea of Ossetia as Russia's "natural" and "faithful" ally appears to be so strong that nothing is likely to challenge it in the near future.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

One of the main goals of this study was to show the importance of the history of territorial changes for understanding the ethnic conflict in the North Caucasus between the Ingush and the Ossetians. The thesis also argued that the ideologies of national movements tried to use these changes to justify their territorial claims. In this particular case, the territory becomes the ultimate issue and object of rivalry: the Ingush perceive the territory (of Prigorodny Rayon) as a vital element for the further development and existence of the Ingush ethnos; for the Ossetians, the same land has the meaning of a safe-heaven, where the population of the North Ossetian Republic (including the non-Ossetians) could survive and protect itself against the "expansionism of Islamic neighbours.

The analysis of data provided by the interviews gives the opportunity to go beyond this conclusion. It points out that the ethno-territorial conflict between the Ingush and the Ossetians is only one side of a more fundamental problem: the phenomenon of post-Soviet identity among the peoples living at the periphery of the former USSR. Or, in other words, the

problem of ethno-territorial conflicts is a part of a more global question dealing with a wide range of interrelated issues: the essence of nationalism, the construction of nation-ness, and the evolution of ethnic and civic identity. For many social scientists, as well as for a number of political figures exclusively dealing with these matters, the ultimate cause of ethnic clashes is not the plot of "Russian imperial forces", but the realm of culture which divides radically conflicting ethnic groups. This phenomenon, culture, is understood here in a very broad sense: it includes history, specificity of religious life, distribution and function of power and of authority, various symbolic systems (folklore, norms, traditions, customs), a certain level of political culture. As Anderson formulates his approach: "What I am proposing is that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well against which - it came into being" (Anderson, 1983: 19). The same is true for the other related phenomena: ethnic conflict, the idea of nationhood, national and ethnic identity.

The works of E. Gellner (Gellner, 1983; 1987), E. Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm, 1983; 1992), B. Anderson (Anderson, 1983) could serve as a basis for a creation of conceptual framework which might be applied to the investigation of ethnic

processes in the post-Communist Soviet Union and in the North Caucasus.

The work of S. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" (1993), is the best example of the attempt to use the analysis of culture for the explanation of global conflicts. It is very difficult to challenge his central idea which is summarized in the following statement: "It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflicts in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural...the principal conflicts of global politics will occur among groups and nations of different civilizations" (Huntington, 1993: 22).

The main idea of Huntington's article has direct relevance to the present study. First of all, there is a direct reference to the Ossetian-Ingush conflict as an example of this clash of civilizations (namely, between Orthodox Christianity and the Muslim world) (Huntington, 1993: 33). Data provided by the interviews support this statement. Generally hostile Ossetian attitudes toward the Ingush, the unarticulated fear based upon stereotypical perception of Muslim ideology and culture, show that this particular conflict between the Ingush and the Ossetians has acquired the features of a civilizational polarization.

Moreover, the central statement of Huntington's work

is no longer a "hypothesis." In May, 1993, an international organization of Eastern Christian Peoples was officially formed. It includes representatives of differently oriented political parties from the countries traditionally associated either with the Orthodox or Eastern Christianity: Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia. It also includes North and South Ossetia, Nagorno Karabakh, the Republic of Crimea, and the Dniestr Moldavian Republic as its full and equal members. Although the participants in the Eastern Christian Organization try to accentuate their cultural origins (the historical belonging to the "Byzantine Circle") and the non-political character of this association, its anti-Western and anti-Islamic, especially - anti-Pan-Turanian orientation is absolutely evident (On East Christian Peoples Cooperation, 1993: 13).

The participation of North Ossetia in this movement is quite remarkable. First of all, it is a clear message to her Ingush neighbours about Ossetia's resources for a broad political manoeuvre aimed at the consolidation of her image as a "historical and natural" ally of Russia. Secondly, it is a message to Federal authorities that Ossetia will support any political regime in Moscow that will guarantee its security and territorial integrity, literally understood as a protection against Ossetia's Muslim neighbours.

The official membership of Ossetia in the Eastern

Orthodox movement logically corresponds to the continuing process of search for a new post-Soviet identity and non-Communist symbolism. The enormous interest in Orthodox Christianity, in Ossetia's history, especially, its "glorious Alanic era" (Sulimirski, 1970), among ordinary citizens of North Ossetia, including those of non-Ossetian origin, is one of the most striking features of contemporary every-day life of North Ossetia. This interest is strongly supported by local and Federal governmental institutions, and, according to the interviews with experts and ordinary people, this feature is perceived as something absolutely natural and positive. Most of them believe that this image of Ossetia as an ancient Orthodox Christian territory, and as a traditional ally of Russia, has been playing a crucial role in consolidating a multi-ethnic population in the North Ossetian Republic. Even the Ossetian Muslims did not show any kind of protest or disagreement.

The ideas about the ancient roots of Orthodox Christianity among the Ossetians are highly controversial (Sulimirski, 1970). However, Ossetian historians and anthropologists are doing their utmost to promote them. For example, in 1992, the North Ossetian Institute of Humanities published a monograph "Alans and the Caucasus". It contains articles with quite symptomatic titles: "From the History of Alanic-Byzantine Relations" (Doguzov); "Ruses and the

Caucasus: to the Problem of Genetic Kinship of Ruses and Alans" (Gritskov); "On the Problem of Russian-Alanic Relations in the Twelfth Century" (Malakhov) (Alans and Caucasus, 1992). All this vividly resembles the example of what E. Hobsbawm calls "the inventing of tradition". So far these efforts appear to be quite successful. Nationalism becomes more and more dominant and, at the same time, a natural, taken for granted feature of political and cultural life in North Ossetia. It became a logical successor of the almost extinct Soviet identity.

The quality and content of this nationalism determine North Ossetia's pro-Russian orientation. Mythologically coloured nationalistic sentiments concerning Ossetia's history, culture, and religion which prevail among the population of the republic, sanction the political steps of the North Ossetian authorities in the direction of further confrontation with Ingushetia.

The most paradoxical thing is that the Ossetians belong to the same North Caucasian civilization (or, in Huntington's terminology - "subcivilization") to which the Ingush belong. Both peoples share common cultural and symbolic systems which include traditions, customs, norms, etiquette, and material culture. The Ossetians continue to consider themselves as a North Caucasian people. This sense of their organic belonging to this sub-civilization forms an integral

part of their ethnic identity. For the Ossetians, the answer to the question, 'Is it possible to be a Christian and a Caucasian simultaneously?' is absolutely positive. Ossetia's participation in the activity of the Caucasian Peoples Confederation (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, May 23, 1992) is the symbol of recognition of her Caucasian roots. The question now is which of these two tendencies or orientations, pro-Russian (Christian) or pro-Caucasian (anti-Russian and mostly Islamic) will prevail and have a crucial impact on the formation of the new national identity of the Ossetians.

This dissertation argues that the pro-Russian orientation is vividly seen and will be the main factor in shaping political, social, inter-ethnic, and cultural life in post-Communist Ossetia. However, the ultimate answer is not so trivial. Putting aside the highly dynamic processes of political and social life in Russia and in the Caucasus, in order to answer to this question, the domain of culture of the North Caucasian peoples should become the object of a series of separate comparative sociological studies.



Map of the Transcaucasus region at the End of the Soviet Union Source: Lenze, 1993

Ethnolinguistic Groups in the Caucasus Region

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, Public Release, 1992

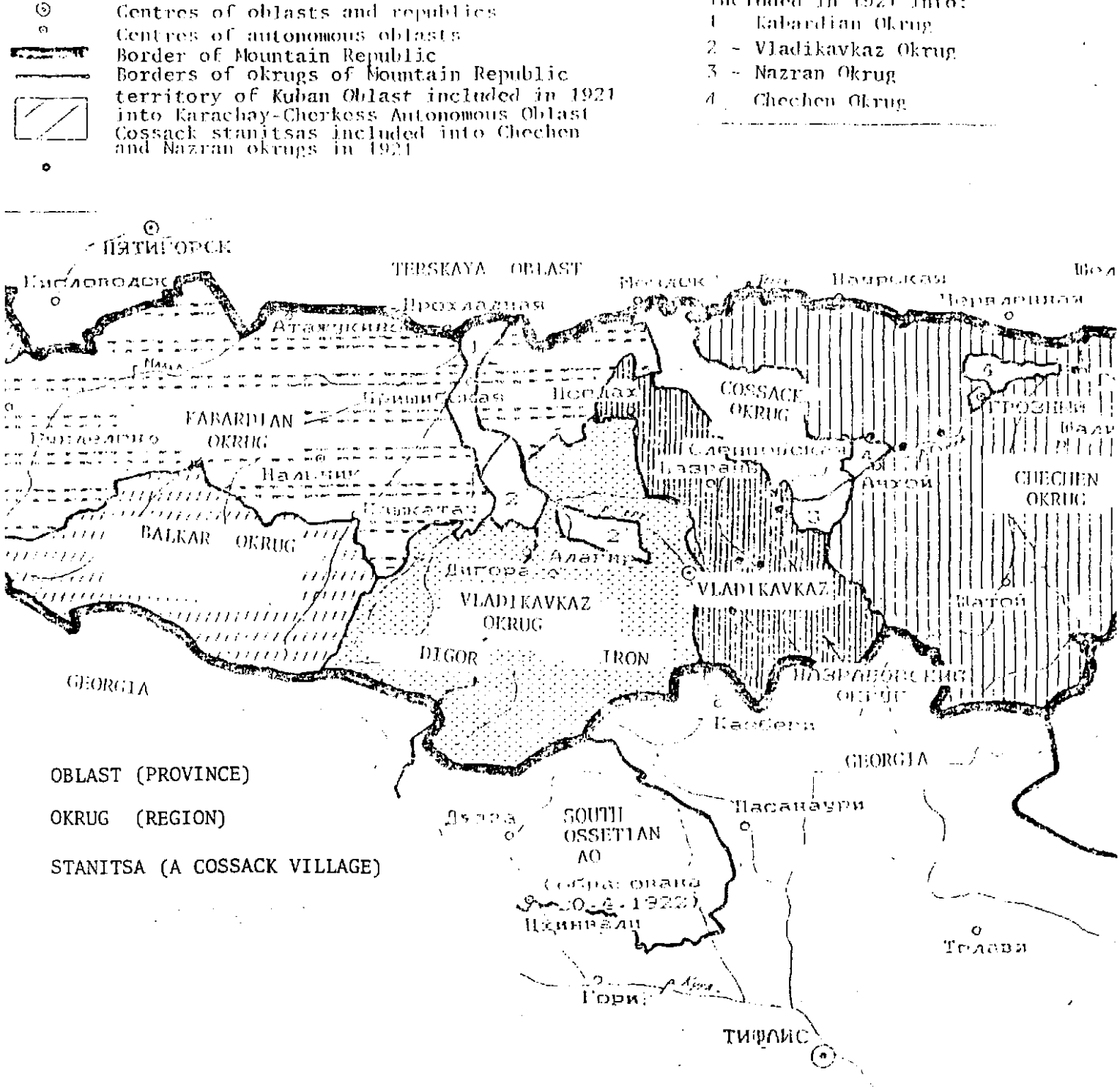


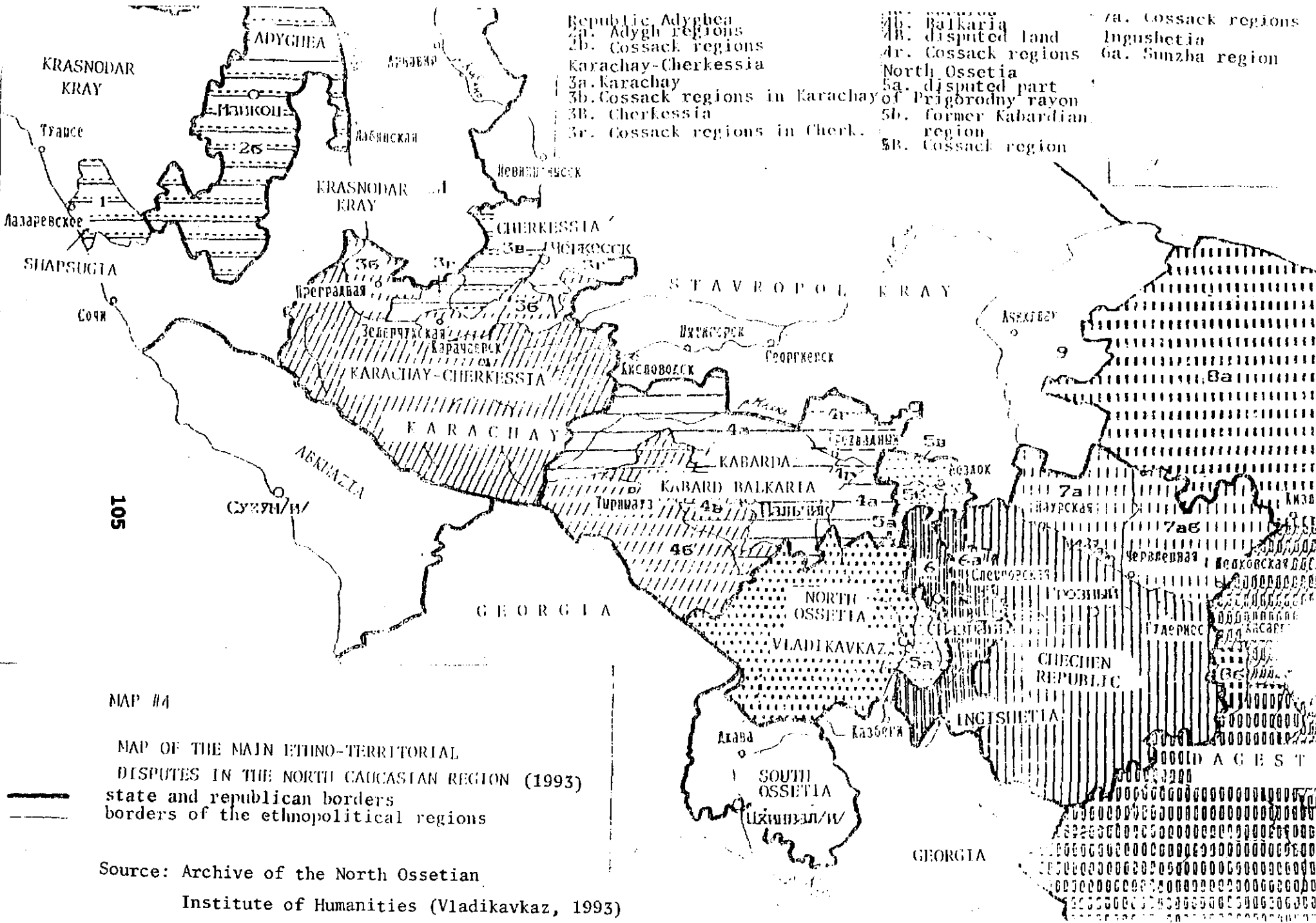
Map #2

Map #3 The Mountain Republic Source: Archive of the North Ossetian Institute of Humanities (Vladikavkaz, 1992)

Centres of oblasts and republics
 Centres of autonomous oblasts
 Border of Mountain Republic
 Borders of okrugs of Mountain Republic
 territory of Kuban Oblast included in 1921
 into Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Oblast
 Cossack stanitsas included into Chechen
 and Nazran okrugs in 1921

Territories of Cossack stanitsas
 included in 1921 into:
 1 - Kabardian Okrug
 2 - Vladikavkaz Okrug
 3 - Nazran Okrug
 4 - Chechen Okrug





- Republic Adygha
- 1a. Adygh regions
- 2b. Cossack regions
- Karachay-Cherkessia
- 3a. Karachay
- 3b. Cossack regions in Karachay
- 3B. Cherkessia
- 3r. Cossack regions in Cherk.
- 4b. Balkaria
- 4B. disputed land
- 4r. Cossack regions
- North Ossetia
- 5a. disputed part of Prigbroadny rayon
- 5b. former Kabardian region
- 5B. Cossack region
- 7a. Cossack regions
- Ingushetia
- 6a. Sunzha region

MAP #4

MAP OF THE MAIN ETHNO-TERRITORIAL DISPUTES IN THE NORTH CAUCASIAN REGION (1993)

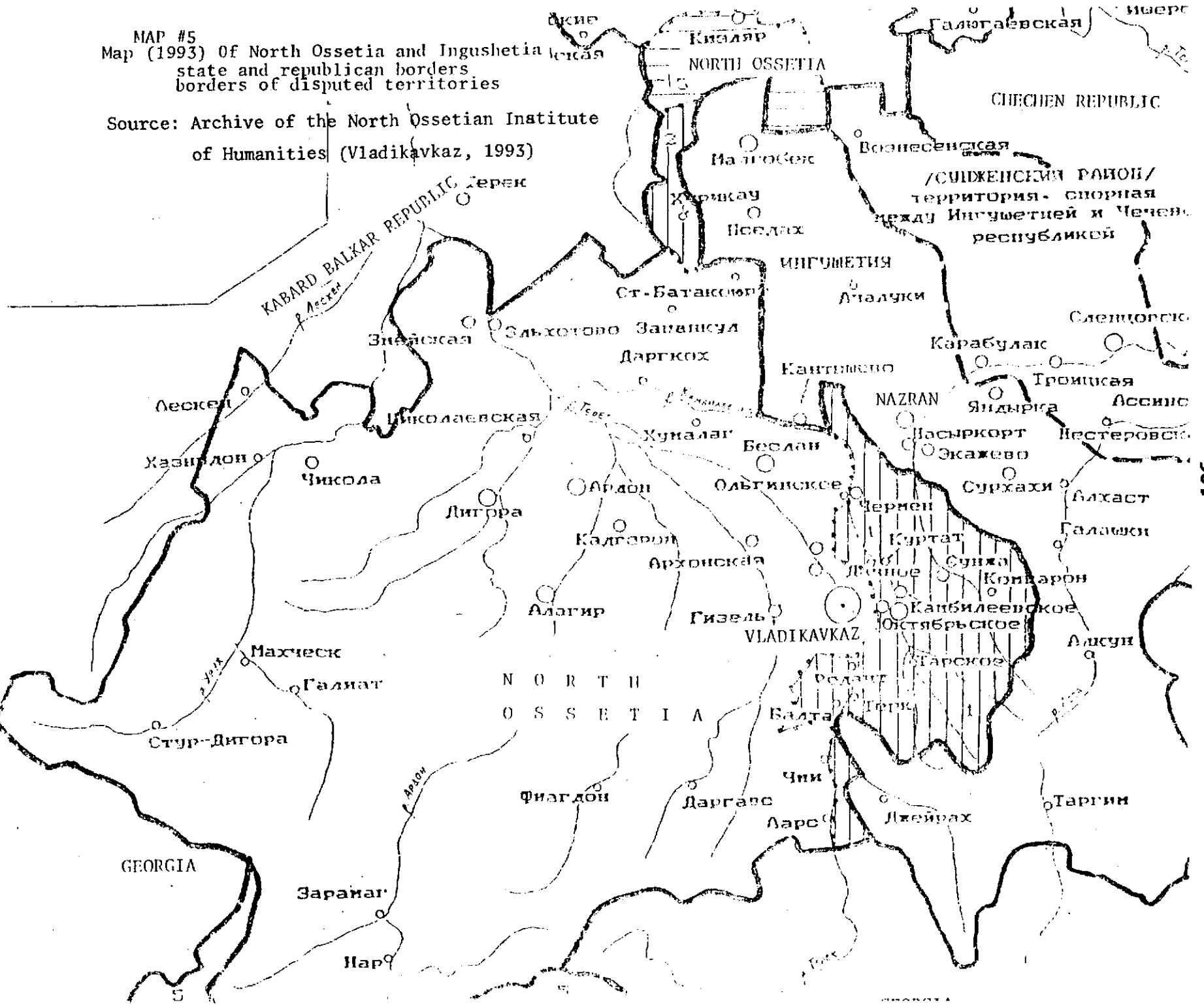
— state and republican borders
 - - - borders of the ethnopolitical regions

Source: Archive of the North Ossetian Institute of Humanities (Vladikavkaz, 1993)

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MAP #5
 Map (1993) Of North Ossetia and Ingushetia
 state and republican borders
 borders of disputed territories

Source: Archive of the North Ossetian Institute
 of Humanities (Vladikavkaz, 1993)



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