

THE MUSLIM EAST AND RADICALIZATION OF ISLAM IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS

Amirkhan MAGOMEDDADAEV

*Ph.D. (Hist.), head,
Department of Oriental Studies,
Scientific Center of Daghestan, Russian Academy of Sciences
(Makhachkala, RF)*

In the 1990s, extremist terrorist organizations and movements operating under religious and ethnic slogans and trying to impose their own ideological and moral principles on others became very active in the Northern Caucasus. Their radicalism and extremism stemmed from trends and organizations that tried, like ultra-left revolutionaries, to monopolize the right to speak for the people and

express their interests and hopes. They distorted the Koran and the Sunna in an attempt to adjust them to their purely political aims.

For this reason it is hardly correct to use “Islamic terrorism” and the “Islamic threat” to describe extremist movements and groups acting in the Muslim world. All of them are out to change the social and political life of the Muslim countries ac-

ording to the principles of “pure,” original Islam, which means that they are, in fact, apologists of the ideology known as Islamism.

M. Roshchin, Ph.D. (Hist.), who is well known as an expert in Daghestan, has pointed out that the first seat of Islamic fundamentalism in the Northern Caucasus appeared in Daghestan, from where it gradually spread across the region. By the mid-1990s, the republic had already become the ideological center of fundamentalism, while Chechnia promptly developed into its proving ground.

In 1989-1995, these structures were living on huge amounts of money from abroad, yet foreign influence was obvious even earlier. In the latter half of the 1980s, the founder and leader of the Islamic Jamaat Muhammad Bagauddin (Bagavudin Magomedovich Kebedov born, according to certain sources, in the Avar village of Santlada, Tsumadinskiy District of Daghestan, or in the Chechen village of Vedenov, according to other sources) “had contacts with embassies in several Arab countries, which supplied him with the literature he needed.”¹ Foreign money helped build mosques and open teaching and propaganda centers in Makhachkala and Kiziliurt, foreigners paid for huge circulations of newspapers and magazines, and for the large number of copies of religious books. Numerous foreign delegations and individual functionaries visited the republic as missionaries and educators, wishing to learn more about the local situation. Arab and other Islamists used the visits to establish contacts with corresponding structures in Daghestan, to share experience with Muslim leaders, and to influence the ideological and political orientation of the local Muslims.

“On 13 May, 1989 a group of Islamists from Kirghizia, Turkmenia, Kazakhstan, and the North Caucasian republics held the so-called congress of Muslims in Buinaksk. The congress decided to capture the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus. Later, they were active in the villages of Agvali (the Tsumadinskiy District), Erpeli (the Buinaksk District), Kaiakent (the Kaiakent District), in villages of the Buinaksk and Gunib districts, and in the city of Khasaviurt. They

¹ A.M. Magomedov, K.M. Khanbabaev, “Religia i protsessy mirotvorchestva v Daghestane,” *Informatsionno-analiticheskiy biulleten* (Makhachkala), No. 2 (5), 2003, p. 10.

also held several unsanctioned rallies of believers in the center of Makhachkala.”²

Early in the 1990s, young people from Daghestan went abroad in large numbers to study in Muslim educational establishments. The process was uncontrolled; it was up to the representatives of foreign Islamic organizations to select future students from among the local young men. In the mid-1990s, the Daghestani Islamists turned the selection process into a competition among the students (ilmizes) of the local madrasahs and were also guided by teachers’ recommendations. The competition lasted a week, whereby the competitors first stayed at the Chaika sanatorium and then at the Primorskaia tourist base. Students from the madrasah of the Kudali village (founded by Akhmad-Qadi Akhtaev), Kiziliurt (founded by Bagavudin Kebedov), and other Islamist schools stayed at the sanatorium. The selected were sent to Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Egypt, Malaysia, etc. to continue their studies. Early in the 1990s, deputy finance minister and pro-rector of the Islamic University of Medina, accompanied by Akhtaev, visited the village of Kudali, where they arrived in a helicopter hired from the republican authorities. Akhmet Iarlykapov has written: “Some of the Wahhabi madrasahs were reminiscent of quasi-military camps where study went hand in hand with serious physical and military training: it was believed that in contemporary conditions, jihad would inevitably develop into an armed struggle.”

In 1995-1996, a group of Arab lecturers at the Shafi‘a Islamic University rented the Danko summer camp in the Buinaksk District where the university students were taught Islamic sciences. The Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Daghestan, in turn, tried to send “its own” graduates abroad, mainly to Syria (with the help of a Syrian citizen, ethnic Daghestanian Muhammad-Noor Daghestani) and to Turkey (with the help of a retired Turkish general, descendant of Daghestani émigrés Mehti-pasha Sungur).

There was a more or less common opinion among the imams and the Spiritual Administration’s functionaries that the graduates of Islamic educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and other countries strengthened the position of Islam-

² G. Kurbanov, “How Daghestan is Opposing Religious Extremism,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 5 (17), 2002, p. 122.

ists in the republic. Head of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of European Part of Russia Ravil Gainutdin agreed with this. Some of the Daghestani lecturers at the Shafi'a Islamic University did not completely trust their Arab colleagues. They were tolerated because Arab charities lavishly supported those institutes that hired their compatriots. Islamist NGOs of Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia used their local Daghestani diasporas to actively influence the Muslims of the Republic of Daghestan.

While in the early 1990s the influence of Islamist organizations of other (except those enumerated above) Muslim countries was negligible, by 1999 Russia had about 110 registered Muslim educational establishments, in which teachers from Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Turkey, and other Muslim countries taught religious disciplines and Arabic.

In 1986, there were 27 mosques in Daghestan, while according to official sources, as of 1 July, 2003 there were 1,679 mosques with 2,400 imams and muezzins, as well as 16 Islamic higher educational establishments with 52 branches, 141 madras-

ahs, and 324 maktabas. All together they taught 15,630 students (4,300 in maktabas; 5,400 in madrasahs; 5,930 in institutes). There were over 30,000 Sufis of the Naqshbandi, Shazili, and Qadiri tariqats. About 100,000 Daghestanis performed the hajj and umra; nearly 1,200 are studying in higher educational establishments abroad, hundreds of graduates have already returned home.

Arabian students at Daghestani higher educational establishments have also contributed to politicization of Islam in the republic. To promote their ideas and enlist supporters, they were actively involved in religious seminars, symposiums, and other scholarly and cultural international events. Some of them used the idea of resurrecting the cultural and historical heritage of Islam in certain Muslim regions of Russia to remove them from "Moscow influence." After the well-known events of August-September 1999, all teachers from Muslim countries were deported from Daghestan; some of them, however, managed to stay as post-graduate students of state institutes of higher learning.

Is This Charity?

The officially registered offices of Islamic charities and national Arab organizations also contributed to the developments described above. Several of them are fairly well known in Daghestan: the International Islamic Salvation Organization (al-Igasa) headed by a Saudi subject, Abd al-Hamid ad-Daghestani, and an Algerian citizen, Zarat Abd al-Qader. According to the republic's law enforcement bodies, such organizations as al-Igasa, Benevolence International Foundation (BIF), Jamaat Ikhya at-Turas al-Islami (the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society—RIHS), Lashkar Tayba, Al-Hayriya, Al-Harameyn, Qatar, and Ikra set up Wahhabi enclaves and seats of armed resistance in Chechnia and Daghestan. According to the Algerian authorities, Zarat Abd al-Qader was also involved in transporting Algerian and Egyptian mercenaries to Chechnia and Daghestan.

M. Aliev has pointed out that technologies for destroying the united spiritual administrations of the Muslims were first tested under al-Igasa's patronage, together with methods for planting Wahhabi ideology, financing religious extremists, and setting up separatist alliances and illegal armed formations. The Islamic Salvation Organization educated personnel for other similar organizations. For example, head of the BIF office in Daghestan Jordanian Al-Fara Yusef Ali used to be the Chief Health Officer with al-Igasa. In August 1999, he hastily left Daghestan investing one of the local people with the enduring power of attorney.

M. Aliev has further written that, as a rich organization, BIF financed the Charity Hospital for Women Foundation set up by a Wahhabi Mother and Child League. With no bank account of its own, the League had to use bank accounts of the Charity Hospital. The BIF was not registered with tax offices; couriers from Baku delivered its money in cash. Cooperation among these organizations and the methods they employed to avoid taxes brought large amounts of cash into the republic. For the same purpose, an eponymous company, the Benevolence Inter. Fund, was established. According to the Auditing Chamber of the Republic of Daghestan, in 1999, the Benevolence branch transferred 91,800 rubles to the Charity

Hospital; in 2000, the sum was 1,628,192 rubles. According to customs declarations, in 1999 the Charity Hospital received 70 units of medical equipment worth \$27,961 from the so-called representative office of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in Baku and from the Kuwait Foundation of Aid to the Sick. The Charity Hospital registered the receipt of only 23 units worth 173,503 rubles (or \$6,968). The rest (47 units in the sum of \$20,994) disappeared together with the documents confirming that the equipment had been sent. The leaders explained that the equipment did not reach the Charity Hospital, but was sent on to Chechnia, where it was supposed to go from the very beginning.

In fact, the Benevolence branches were set up to complicate control over them. The League itself was set up with the financial support of Abd al-Hamid ad-Daghestani and the Pakistan organization Lashkar Tayba; according to the Western press, it was connected with bin Laden. The Charity Hospital was set up to screen financial transactions going to aid Wahhabism and transport extremists and dual-purpose equipment to Daghestan and Chechnia. According to Sheikh Abdallah Dabbag, Chairman of the Qatar Charity Society, its eight branches have been working in Daghestan and Azerbaijan since 1995. The Daghestani branch was working illegally before it registered itself in March 1997. Between 1996 and 1999 about \$1 million was sent to Daghestan and Azerbaijan in the form of aid.

In 1995-1999, Al-Harameyn and Jamaat Ikhya at-Turas al-Islami unofficially transferred nearly \$10 million to the illegal armed units of Daghestani Wahhabis. In his report of 6 March, 1996 Bagaudin wrote: "To my esteemed brother Salim Muhammad Zakharan, Director of the Jamaat Ikhya at-Turas al-Islami Bureau in Russia and the Islamic republics. We inform you that we bought office and video equipment, means of transportation, and five apartments for teaching students outside the mosque. We registered the Kavkaz Center and started the *Znamia Islama* (Banner of Islam.—*Ed.*) newspaper."

Declared good intentions aside (these organizations claimed that they helped common people, victims of natural and social calamities, and orphans), these structures secretly used their potential to strengthen the Islamic factor in the republic. The number of religious educational establishments was growing in geometric progression, tempted by money secular higher educational establishments were also involved in the religious sphere, and mosques were mushrooming everywhere. Hundreds of young people were driven to extremist centers and camps, and local Wahhabis, radical Islamic parties, and societies were enjoying financial and material support from abroad. Missionaries from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Sudan, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, UAE, etc. were arriving in large numbers. Foreign money paid for the Kavkaz Information Center, the Islamic Nation, the Congress of the Peoples of Ichkeria and Daghestan, Al-Islamiyya, the Islamic Revival Party, and other regional separatist structures.

In 1999-2000, the North Caucasian Islamists tried, probably in vain, to receive official (government) aid from the Arab countries. Zelimkhan Iandarbiev (who lived in Qatar) confirmed this by saying: "So far we have not received support in any of the Islamic countries we counted on."³

Late in 1999, a nongovernmental Organization of Islamic Salvation of Chechnia (Munazzamat al-igasa al-islamiyya li Sheshen) was set up in Kuwait (not registered with any state structure). Connected with Khattab, it gathered money, recruited mercenaries and transported them to Chechnia through Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Daghestan. Normally, one operation, or three days, was needed to transfer up to \$100,000.⁴ According to the Russian special services, members of another Kuwaiti religious organization, Islamic Heritage Revival (Ikhya at-Turas al-Islami), transferred \$40,000 to the Kavkaz Center.⁵ Certain UAE official structures, the Islamic Bank headed by Chechen Said Luta among them, also gave money to Islamists in Russia.⁶

In Yemen, too, radical Islamic groups stepped up their support of Daghestani and Chechen Islamists. For several domestic and socioeconomic reasons (separatism of the sheikhs of large tribal confederations, an official ideology crisis, and the grave economic situation in the south), the Yem-

³ G. Charodeev, "Kto pomogaet chechenskimi boevikami," *Izvestia*, 8 December, 1999.

⁴ See: E. Mikhailov, "Tainye tropy oruzhia," *Versty*, 25 October, 1999.

⁵ See: *Vlast*, No. 44, 9 November, 1999.

⁶ See: E. Mikhailov, "Obshchak," *Versty*, 7 December, 1999.

eni authorities are unable to control the local and foreign Islamists who have entrenched themselves in the country.⁷ In the first ten months of 1999, the Yemeni Alliance for Reforms (al-Islakh) gathered about \$4.5 million; the money was sent to Saudi Arabia through the Islamic Bank and on to the Northern Caucasus.⁸

In Lebanon the North Caucasian Islamists were mainly supported by nongovernmental religious-political organizations (NGRPO). Earlier Sheikh Taher Mahmud al-Murshidi, the founder and head of a terrorist group Khalid Islambuli Brigade (named after the man who in 1981 assassinated President of Egypt Sadat and was executed) dispatched a group of mercenaries through Lebanon to Chechnia. The operation was supervised by Bagauddin (B. Kebedov) as one of the leaders of the Islamic Army of the Caucasus.⁹

Jordan plays a special role in helping Daghestan and Chechnia. It has a large North Caucasian diaspora of muhajirs (whose ancestors emigrated to the Ottoman Empire after the Caucasian War of 1817-1864). There are several cultural and humanitarian North Caucasian associations in this country, including Chechen Charity and the Society of Friends of Checheno-Ingushetia. There is the opinion that they are engaged, in particular, in gathering information about Russia. This does not mean that Jordan is pursuing anti-Russian policies at the official level, but the local radical Islamists have been actively gathering money for Chechnia. For example, early in 1999 the local branch of the Muslim Brothers gathered about \$20 million; the money was transferred to the Baku office of Al-Harameyn and from there to Chechnia and Daghestan by couriers as aid to communities, schools, mosques, etc. One trip could bring up to \$100,000. (Information about \$20 million gathered in Jordan for Islamists and Chechen militants was confirmed by the Russian Foreign Ministry.)

Results

It was mainly missionaries from Arabian and other NGOs who helped radicalize Islam in Daghestan. Mustafa Muhammad Tahan, Secretary-General of the International Union of Islamic Student Associations, has written in his book *The Future of Islam in the Caucasus and Central Asia* (published in 1995 in Arab in Kuwait) that he personally took part in setting up an All-Russia Islamic Revival Party on 9 June, 1990 in Astrakhan. Said he: "Our party tried to overcome regionalism, Islamic legal and theological differences, and everything that destroys Muslim unity in this country." In 1990 its branch appeared in Daghestan; above-mentioned Egyptian Servakh and Algerian Zarat were its active members. According to the special services of Russia, in 1992 alone this branch received \$17 million from Saudi Arabia.¹⁰ In Daghestan, the city of Kiziliurt and the village of Santlada (the Tsumadinskiy District) became centers of radical Islam, from which it spread across the republic; some of those who lived in the villages of Kvanada and Tlondoda were also involved in the process.

Bagauddin founded the Khikma madrasah in Kiziliurt, which taught several thousand tilmizes; the curricula included religious films with sermons delivered by Islamic radicals from Arab countries, as well as videos showing fighting between the Chechen separatists and the federal forces, etc. Another large community of radicals appeared in the zone of the Kadar jamaat, which included the villages of Kadar, Chabanmakhi, and Karamakhi where Arabs offered primary religious instruction. According to the law enforcement bodies, until the summer of 1999, criminals guilty of grave crimes and even murders concealed themselves in Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi. The Muslim community of these two villages and partly of Kadar of the Buinaksk District with the main mosque in Karamakhi became "a small Wahhabi republic," an outpost of fundamentalism in Daghestan. It was there that young people from all over the

⁷ See: K.I. Poliakov, "Yemenskie ekstremisty i Rossia (Plemennye vozhdii pokrovitel'stvuiut eksportu islamskoy revoliutsii)," *NG-Religii*, 24 February, 1999.

⁸ See: Iu. Tyssovskiy, "Islamskie den'gi tekut v Chechniu," *Vek*, No. 40, 1999; *Vlast*, 9 November, 1999.

⁹ See: Iu. Tyssovskiy, "Dollary iz-pod poly," *Vek*, No. 44, 1999.

¹⁰ See: A. Chelnokov, "Vahhabity v Tobol'ske," *Sovershenno sekretno*, No. 10, 1999.

republic and from other North Caucasian republics came in search of “pure” Islam. Local instruction included two stages: first ideological and then military training.

Akhmad-Qadi Akhtaev opened a madrasah in the village of Kudali (the Gunib District) where Alaudin and other Arabs taught students from Daghestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Ossetia, and Karachaevo-Cherkessia. A Wahhabi enclave was set up in the village of Gubden; radicals appeared in the Khasaviurt, Kazbek, Gunib, Karabudakhkent, and Derbent districts, as well as in the villages of Khushet and Leninkent (near Makhachkala). There was an Islamic institute in Makhachkala on Lenin Street in a building which formerly housed a music school. Among the lecturers were several Arabs: Mukhammad-Gani, Khusam ad-Din, Abd al-Maksud from Egypt and several of his compatriots; Yusuf and brothers Takha and Ibrahim Yasin from Iraq, who had lived in Saudi Arabia, Algerian Ashur, who moved to Baku in 1996, Salakh from Sudan, etc.

Nurul Islam, the official newspaper of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Daghestan, published some of the documents found during research at the Islamic Center Kavkaz carried out after Khattab attacked a military unit in Buinaksk on 23 December, 1997. These documents contained information about \$9,000 the Baku branch of Al-Harameyn Charity transferred in 1998 to celebrate Iftar in Daghestan. The newspaper also published a request for \$20,525 for the Kavkaz Center, a report on how \$10,688 allocated “for Iftar for poor Muslims” in Karamakhi, Kiziliurt, Uchkent, Kizliar, and Makhachkala had been spent, and a document under which Bagauddin (Kebedov) received \$2,000, his salary for four months.¹¹

Money was mainly delivered by couriers; many of them, Arabs and Turks who came to Russia legally (and illegally) with huge amounts of cash on them, were detained in Daghestan. Two Iraqis with \$300,000 on them were detained in the Belokan District of Azerbaijan. They were headed for Daghestan. Couriers crossed into Russia from Georgia; there were other channels of cash deliveries. In December 1998, Egyptian al-Labban used a conference of the Congress of the Peoples of Ichkeria and Daghestan to hand \$200,000 to Shamil Basaev.¹²

Saudi Arabia: Is It a Cradle of Islam and a Cradle of Terror?

Some radical organizations have set up their headquarters in the Gulf countries; financially they are mostly dependent on the local governments, yet prefer to ignore their recommendations. The Russian ambassador to Saudi Arabia has pointed out that officially the country does not support the fighters.¹³ Since the religious-political situation in Saudi Arabia is not a simple one, we should keep in mind both the motives and the consequences of the humanitarian aid and educational activities its subjects carry out in Russia (in Daghestan, in particular). For the same reason we should not overestimate the Saudi authorities’ ability to control all the large international Islamist organizations in their country: they are virtually free to operate at will. Obviously, what is going on in Saudi Arabia—one of the most influential countries in the Arab and Islamic world and the largest oil producer—directly affects the situation in the Middle and Near East and even in the world.

Despite certain progress in liberalizing its public life, Saudi Arabia is still one of the most conservative and closed Muslim states. Political scientist Valentin Lurchenko writes that the outward peace and

¹¹ See: D.V. Makarov, *Ofitsial'niy i neofitsial'niy islam v Daghestane*, Moscow, 2000, p. 47; *Nurul Islam*, No. 3, February 1998.

¹² See: Iu. Tyssovskiy, “Dollary iz-pod poly;” E. Mikhailov, “Taynye tropy oruzhia;” Iu. Tyssovskiy, “Islamskie den'gi tekut v Chechniu.”

¹³ See: A. Stepanov, “Oazis posredi pustyni (Saudovskaia Aravia unikal'na po-osobomu,” *Trud*, 2 and 6 February, 2002.

social and political stagnation in this country are deceiving.¹⁴ The religious-political situation there is still very complicated; there are serious social and economic problems there caused primarily by the sharp fluctuations in oil prices on the world markets. Drinking water is in short supply; it is increasingly harder to create jobs for the local people, especially for the younger generations, and to maintain their high social status. The number of unemployed educated young men is climbing, class differentiation is becoming more and more obvious, and the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. The shrinking financial resources make it much harder to pay for the nation's loyalty, the "golden age" of wealth and great expectations when all were sure of affluence from the first to the last day of their lives is receding into the past.

Historian V. Solovey, an expert at the Gorbachev Foundation, has the following to say about Saudi Arabia: "The contemporary regime in Saudi Arabia cannot be called fundamentalist—the initial revolutionary Wahhabi impulse has been completely exhausted. It seems that the catastrophically wide gap between degrading reality and standard utopia is forcing the Saudis to export Islamic revolution by channeling the passionate energy threatening the kingdom outwards."¹⁵

In this way, the threat of Islamic extremism is always present in Saudi Arabia; today, the radical trend of "neo-Wahhabis" is the main menace.

Involvement in Hostilities

The Arab countries discovered that it was much easier to control financial flows than to keep their citizens away from fighting in the Northern Caucasus. The authorities of some of them can only exercise limited control over the comings and goings of members of religious-political extremist organizations. The first press reports about mercenaries from Arab and other Muslim countries appeared when armed Islamists from Chechnia invaded the Tsumadinskiy and Botlikh districts of Dagestan on 2 August, 1999. The so-called United Command of Dagestani Mujaheddins headed by Shamil Basaev (which carried out the invasion) was divided into three groups: the Islamic Army of the Caucasus (under Bagavudin Kebedov), the Dagestani Rebel Army of Imam (under M. Tagaev) and the Peacekeeping Forces of the Mejlis of the Peoples of Ichkeria and Dagestan (under Khattab).¹⁶ The press referred to officers of the Dagestani security services when it reported that Arabs on the payroll of extremists of Egypt, Turkey, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, and Morocco trained fighters in Chechnia.

This was possible because for many years the local Islamists used 25,000 passport blanks of the Russian Federation (brought to Ichkeria in 1993 and left there) to issue Russian passports to foreign mercenaries. The special services suspect that many Russian citizens of this sort are roaming around the country gathering information and setting up subversion groups.¹⁷ According to the RF Ministry of Defense, in October 1999 alone up to 300 mercenaries from the Middle East and Bosnia and Herzegovina came to the fighting area in the Northern Caucasus through the "gaps" in the Russian-Georgian border.¹⁸ Back home, they were wanted criminals. In fact, in their countries, most Islamists are persecuted as criminals for wishing to set up an "Islamic state" contrary to the local constitutions. Al-Harameyn and the Alliance of the Muslim Bosnian Youth recruited mercenaries in Turkey, Pakistan, and other Muslim countries and paid for their transportation.¹⁹

¹⁴ See: V. Iurchenko, "Saudovskaia Aravia: vlast i opozitsia," *Vlast*, No. 1, 2003, p. 66.

¹⁵ V.D. Solovey, "Ideologicheskoe i politicheskoe izmerenia fundamentalizma," *Rossia i musul'manskiy mir. Bulletin referativno-analiticheskoy informatsii*, No. 10 (136), 2003, p. 150.

¹⁶ See: I.P. Dobaev, "Kvaziislamskie ekstremizm and terrorizm na Severnom Kavkaze," *Rossia i musul'manskiy mir*, No. 9 (135), 2003, p. 73.

¹⁷ See: V. Khlystun, "Naemniki," *Trud*, 19 November, 1999.

¹⁸ See: E. Mikhailov, "Taynye tropy oruzhia."

¹⁹ See: V. Khlystun, *op. cit.*

There were military camps in Chechnia and Daghestan where local young men were trained. A. Shagako of the Federal Security Service said at a press conference that those who organized and carried out the blasts in Moscow, Volgodonsk, and Buinaksk were trained in Chechnia at the Kavkaz training center set up by Khattab.²⁰ He also controlled the so-called Islamic Institute of the Caucasus, at which 40 lecturers from Afghanistan and Arab countries trained 160 students; after two months of Koranic and linguistic (Arabic) studies they were sent to the militarized Ibn Abu Vakkas camp, where Khattab and others taught demolition techniques and all the other skills indispensable for a "jihad fighter." Some of them were sent to Pakistan, Turkey, and other countries. All foreign mercenaries had to study at Khattab's courses as well—not only those who wished to learn more at the Islamic Institute of the Caucasus.

The republic paid with 212 killed and 619 wounded (108 and 179 civilians, respectively) during the invasion of August-September 1999 when it had to rebuff an armed aggression from Chechen territory. Thirty-three settlements were destroyed in the Botlikh, Novolakskoe, and Buinaksk districts; 17 schools, 20 kindergartens, 20 cultural institutions, 11 mosques, 28 outpatient clinics and hospitals, 45 administrative buildings, 156 km of highways, 333 km of transmission lines, 210 km of communication lines, and 5,980 private houses were demolished. Three thousand four hundred and seventy-seven families, or 13,989 people lost their homes and property.²¹ Overall losses were assessed at 1,632,000,000 rubles.

Late in April 2002, when it became known that Khattab had been killed, the Federal Security Service made public information about the leading role of foreign terrorist organizations in Chechnia: Khattab, for example, was a member of the so-called Shura, a council of warlords all of whom, except Basaev, were Arabs. (Khattab was its actual head.)

Under pressure from the federal forces, the Islamists had to limit their activities. From time to time the media report deaths of "amirs," destroyed Islamist groups, and considerable losses among the Wahhabis. We should not dupe ourselves, however: the Islamists have not lost their influence. Extremists were driven underground, yet did not lose their attraction for the young men who joined their ranks (in smaller numbers than before), tempted by payments from abroad or allocated by the local criminal groups acting under the "banner of Islam." Religious faith is used to justify terrorism, subversion, and other crimes.

There can be no doubt that Islam is one of the key social and political factors in Daghestan. Most people practice traditional Islam in the form of North Caucasian Sufism (Muridism) represented by three tareqats: Naqshbandiyya, Shaziliyya, and Qadiriyya. The relations among them are far from perfect, yet they agree that Islamism, locally known as Wahhabism, should be denounced and uprooted.

According to the Daghestan Interior Ministry, there are 893 supporters of this extremist religious teaching known to the ministry's structures; in 2001, 12 people were arrested as members of illegal armed groups; 53 more are wanted, 50 of them are wanted by Interpol. (In the same year, over 100 were detained to investigate their contacts with illegal armed groups.)

The movement of "pure" Islam, which seeks cleansing of "illicit novelties," has a long history in Daghestan, the Northern Caucasus, and elsewhere in the Muslim world. Driven underground, the Wahhabis became extremists: no wonder they resorted to blasts in Kaspiisk, murders of militiamen and top officials of the Republic of Daghestan, and other extremist acts.

There is the opinion among the common people and in the law enforcement bodies that the anti-Wahhabi law was premature: it would have been wiser to identify all members of this movement, their contacts, and the channels through which they received aid from abroad, etc. and then deliver a blow to all their structures across Russia.

In his interview with the *Neprikosnovenniy zapas* journal, Prof. Malashenko, a prominent Russian specialist on Islam, pointed out that the struggle for the utopia of an Islamic state will never end; for this

²⁰ See: *Kontinent*, No. 12, 2000.

²¹ See: M. Kurbanov, "Repressions against the Peoples of Daghestan: Rehabilitation Problems," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (18), 2002, p. 150.

reason political Islam, Islamic fundamentalism, will never disappear: in the near future it will continue fighting for the same unattainable goals.²²

²² See: "Sovremenniy Islam: mezhdru politikoy i traditsiy," *Neprikosnovenniy zapas*, No. 6, 2002.