

REFLECTIONS ON THE CAUCASUS

21 MAY 1864 – 2010

CIRCASSIAN WORLD

“I had a dream last night. I can’t tell it to you, because it was in Ubykh,” said the last speaker of the Ubykh language, Tefvik Esenç. When he passed away in 1992, the unique language of the the Ubykh people, the indigenous people of Sochi, where the 2014 Winter Olympic Games will be held, also died. This was one of the consequences of the fall of the Caucasus, which was celebrated by the Russian armies with triumphalism and a procession in the Valley of Kbaada, now called Krasnaya Polyana on May 21, 1864.

What the 21st May brings to the mind of the Adyghes (Circassians), the Abkhazians, and the Ubykhs, who have been scattered all over the world and struggling to preserve their cultures and languages today, must be exile and genocide... But what do experts have to say about 21 May, about the Adyghes, Abkhazians and Ubykhs? And what are their thoughts?

This project is the outcome of a desire of CircassianWorld.com, which has always tried to publicize academic works from the very day of its inception, to provide a platform for academics, researchers, politicians, journalists, and executives of NGOs from various countries to express their opinions about the 21st May, the North Caucasus, and its peoples.

I would like wholeheartedly to thank all of the following people who have contributed to this project proffering their valuable thoughts for inclusion on this site.

Metin Sönmez,
CircassianWorld.com & AbkhazWorld.com
Ed.

The authors were given complete freedom regarding the content of their texts whose maximum length was specified as around one page. Their views in this project do not necessarily reflect the views of the CW website. The texts have been listed alphabetically according to the names of the authors.

Annsi Kullberg, Antero Leitzinger, Ayhan Kaya, Cem Özdemir, Charles King, Daniel Müller, Eiji Miyazawa, Erol Taymaz, Fethi Açıkel, George Anchabadze, Georgi Derluguian, Georgy Chochiev, Hakan Kırımlı, Irma Kreiten, John Colarusso, Karlos Zurutuza, Kemal Karpat, Khasan Kasumov, Laurent Vinatier, Liana Kvarchelia, Mark Levene, Max Sher, Michael Khodarkovsky, Mohydeen Quandour, Moshe Gammer, Muhittin Özsağlam, Murat Papşu, Musa Shanibov, Naima Neflyasheva, Neal Ascherson, Oliver Bullough, Patrick Armstrong, Paul Henze, Paula Garb, Radosław Żurawski vel Grajewski, Rieks Smeets, Seteney Shami, Sibel Siber, Stephen Shenfield, Sufian Zhemukhov, Thomas De Waal, Walter Richmond, Yakov Gordin.

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21 MAY 1864-2010

ANNSI KULLBERG
FINLAND

The occasion of the Circassian Memorial Day on 21 May brings to our minds some of the worst experiences of modern history. It is particularly important to remember the events known as the Circassian genocide in the latter half of the nineteenth century, because they were fully comparable, both in numbers and in proportions, to the catastrophes that later faced the Armenians and the European Jews, even though only the latter two remain widely known to the public. Several other nations, who similarly to the Circassians fell victim to the unscrupulous imperial policies, hold memorial days of their respective genocides or atrocities, such as the Chechens in February, the Armenians in April and the Assyrians in August.

Each one of these memorial days refers to similar disturbing developments due to the imperial policies that were endorsed since the late eighteenth century. The Jewish Holocaust is probably the best known example of the consequences that resulted from such policies. However, most of the other devastating events belonging to the same historical series of crimes took place on all the four sides of the Black Sea.

It could probably be said that the *Reconquista* of the Iberian Peninsula marked the beginning of a new kind of ethnic cleansing in Europe, with the expulsion and killing of Muslims and Jews in the fifteenth century. This was followed in the seventeenth century by the expulsion and killing of the Moriscos, former Muslims who had at least nominally converted to Christianity. Keeping the Iberian precedents in mind, the era of “modern” genocide in western Eurasia seem to have started on the other side of Europe, during Catherine II’s reign, with the conquest of the Crimea by the Russian Empire in 1783. Long before that the Ottoman Empire, Russia’s southern rival, had already turned the Crimean Khanate into their vassal, but the Crimean Tatars had not been subjected to forceful Turkification or ethnic cleansing as a result.

When the Russian tsarina’s armies took over the Crimea, the Tatars still constituted 98 per cent of the population on the peninsula. Within days from the formal annexation of the Crimea to the Russian Empire – in late April 1783 – thousands of Crimean Tatar intellectuals, noblemen, officers and clerics were arrested, gathered to Karasubazar and executed. The banishment of the Crimean Tatar elite launched a period of systematic policy that aimed at complete destruction of the state structures of the Crimean Khanate as well as the Tatar society and culture. The act was similar in character and intention to the Katyn massacres of 22,000 members of the Polish elite by the Soviet Union in 1940.

The 1830s witnessed systematic and organized campaigns of confiscating and burning Crimean Tatar literature, books and manuscripts. More than 900 mosques and schools were abolished. As many as 75 per cent of the Crimean Tatars fled to the territories of the Ottoman Empire during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. The first half of the nineteenth century also saw the Russian conquest of the Caucasus.

At the time of the Crimean conquest, the prevalence of religious notions over national ones may have contributed to the fact that most Crimean Tatars opted for exile in Ottoman territories rather than large-scale resistance. However, this was not the case with the North Caucasians, who put up a fierce resistance against the invading Russians. Campaigns of terror and genocide as well as fierce resistance took place in Chechnya and Dagestan, where it continued until the capture of the most legendary leader of this resistance, Imam Shamil in 1859.

In 1860, the Russian Empire launched similar policies against Circassians to the west of the Chechens and Dagestanis. Prior to their persecution, the Circassian peoples inhabited and ruled the entire eastern coast of the Black Sea; from the Taman Peninsula to Abkhazia, in addition to the inland areas that extended east to the principality of Kabarda.

The Circassians, who were fortified in their capital Sochi, appealed to Turkey and the Western powers for protection, but apart from symbolic gestures and references in literature, their appeals were ignored. Hundreds of thousands of Circassians had to flee from the conquered areas to the Ottoman Empire. Many settled in the area of current Turkey, forming a sizeable diaspora there, while others ended up far around the empire, in the Middle East, Iraq, Egypt and the Balkans.

In 1862, the campaign against Circassian populations included use of the notorious “fire and sword” tactics, something similar to what would later be known as “torched earth.” Cavalry units and Cossacks were used to ravage the area, destroying villages, massacring, raping and looting, burning fields, granaries and gardens. Hundreds of thousands of Circassians perished as a result of famine, whilst others died on their desperate trails over the mountains into Turkey.

Russia finally crushed the Circassian resistance on May 1864, although it would still re-emerge many times over the following century, often in tandem with their eastern brethren the Chechens. Within four years, 1860—1864, an estimated one and half million Circassians were killed and around one million ended up in exile, mostly in the territories of the Ottoman Empire. (Exact numbers, as in the case of most atrocities in the region, remain disputed.) Towards the end of the nineteenth century, similar purges that the Russian Empire had launched in the Crimea and the North Caucasus became increasingly common also in the south of this region in the eastern territories of the Ottoman Empire; increasingly nationalist Turkey launched pogroms and atrocities against the Christian populations of Anatolia, including Armenians, Assyrians and Pontic Greeks. Many of the Anatolian Christians were perceived as tools of Russian policies against Turkey, but similar to what happened in the Russian Empire, innocent civilians were branded and targeted, which led to devastating results.

Turks as well as other Muslims of the Balkans and the Caucasus were targeted, too, with hundreds of thousands killed or expelled. When many embittered populations ended up in exile, there were cases where the refugees, in turn, targeted minorities perceived as linked with their enemy, causing chain reactions of revenge. Over the same period Europe also saw the emergence of pogroms against Jews. All this formed a continuous trend over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reaching its peak in the industrialization of genocide by the Nazi and Soviet regimes.

Several factions on many sides committed crimes against other populations over this period. Entire nationalities, in areas where Christians and Muslims had previously coexisted for centuries, suddenly became victim to imperial rivalries. It was certainly not necessary to have hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people murdered and expelled for the sake of the general political and military circumstances that have often been used to justify previous atrocities. The great powers that took part in these imperial rivalries bear the biggest responsibility.

Those particular leaders, who were directly responsible for giving the orders that led to genocides around the Black Sea, the Caucasus and Anatolia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, are no longer alive and cannot be brought to justice, and neither can the individuals who executed their orders. The same is true for the persons responsible for Nazi and Stalinist crimes. The fact that these people are dead should make it even less excusable for current leaders to avoid remembering and acknowledging the crimes that took place in the past, for which they cannot be blamed. Memory is part of human dignity. Therefore, remembering past injustices should not be seen as revenge or conspiracy against the states whose precursors were responsible for so much destruction. History deserves to be known to all.

Yet it raises concern if the issue of acknowledging historical truth is subjected to polling by foreign parliaments, since politicians would vote with limited or biased knowledge, and their vote would in many cases be based on motives quite different from historical facts. Many would vote from the platform of religious bigotry or great power rivalry. Therefore, such politicization of historical atrocities could open wounds rather than heal them, and repeat the policies that once led to these crimes rather than serve to prevent them from being repeated.

The least that states and political leaders today should do in respect to recognizing past crimes is to refrain from similar policies. Unfortunately, pogroms, ethnic cleansings and genocidal tendencies are still present in the conflicts of the twenty-first century, resulting in millions of refugees and internally displaced people. What happened to so many populations in the past also does not excuse them, or the states and leaders speaking on their behalf, from waging similar crimes against civilian populations today. National hatred is a dangerous double-edged sword, and therefore when generations change, reconciliation should prevail over revenge.

Anssi KULLBERG, Analyst and co-founder of the Research Group for Conflicts and Terrorism in Turku, FINLAND. *The article represents the author's opinions and does not necessarily reflect those of his current or former employers.*

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ANTERO LEITZINGER
FINLAND

The Circassian genocide is certainly one of the least remembered genocides in world history. Of course it can not be called completely forgotten, as we would, logically, not be able to recall such a genocide in the first place. It is a universal tragedy, that nations get destroyed or diminished and dispersed throughout history, for various reasons and often with gravest injustice. So, is there something special in the fate of the Circassians, and can it be compared with the better-known repeated massacres of Armenians in 19th and early 20th century, with the pogroms and Holocaust of Jews, or with the erasing of several nations by Stalin?

In all fairness, we should avoid the temptation of a genocide rivalry. Nor should we spend too much energy for body counts or formal recognitions by political entities. Premeditated mass murder or reckless deportations of populations based purely on their nationality, regardless of sex and age or military considerations, is a crime against humanity no matter how long ago it was committed and how many families it affected.

The Circassians were a link in a chain reaction or vicious cycle of genocides around the Black Sea, maybe already starting from the mythical Trojan War, but certainly during a century launched by the Crimean War. Their fate was not unique, but to acknowledge this and the historical connections between nations and tragedies in a wider region, does not in any way belittle the sufferings of individual Circassians or make them collectively less important as a study object. Actually, the way Circassians always interacted with neighbouring nations linguistically, religiously, politically, and culturally, stresses the need to understand their role in a broader context, as victims of a long-term homicidal strategy of political expansion.

Time should heal but not erase memories. Descendants of the victims in the 1860s should continue to cherish the memories of their ancestors, but also learn from their experience and teach solidarity between nations in similar circumstances. Instead of just bitterness and exclusivity, Circassians have a history of survival and interaction that deserves some merit. Already before the Crimean War, they had appealed for international recognition of their right to self-determination, and for European intervention. So did the Poles and Hungarians around the same time. Today, many other nations - Chechens, Uyghurs, Tibetans, etc. - may face the risk of (sometimes slower but nevertheless equally tragic) annihilation, and Circassian studies should be of interest for all of them. That way, Circassians of the 1860s did not fight and die in vain, but their example might still save lives by raising important issues of ethics, touching the conscience of distant people, and paving the way for a better understanding and handling of the root causes of genocidal politics.

In a way, reflecting the words of President John F. Kennedy on the Berlin Wall almost half a century ago, we are all Circassians. **Antero LEITZINGER. Political historian and researcher for the Finnish Immigration Service. He is the author of “Caucasus—An Unholy Alliance.” He is a history researcher on topics from Russia to Islam. FINLAND.**

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AYHAN KAYA
TURKEY

Circassians experienced one of the greatest tragedies of humankind. Millions of people had to leave their homeland, and thousands of them died during the exodus. The tragedy of exile has always remained intact, being transmitted from one generation to the other. The despair of exile has given the entire Circassian diaspora dispersed around the whole world from Turkey to the USA a common identity. This is unique to a handful of classical diasporic communities. As someone who worked on the production and articulation of Circassianness in the Circassian diaspora settled in Turkey, I have to underline that I am amazed by the collective memory of the Circassians, and their ability to revive their language, culture and memory throughout more than one century. Circassians remember the tragedy of the 21st of May every year, and by doing that each time they confirm the sense of belonging to the Circassian

community. The flowers thrown into the sea every year on the 21st of May is a way of easing the souls of those people who lost their lives during the exodus in one way or another. I am dreaming of a world free of involuntary and forced migrations. **Prof. Dr. Ayhan KAYA, Director of the European Institute, Department of International Relations, Istanbul Bilgi University, TURKEY.**

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CEM ÖZDEMİR
GERMANY

The 21st May is for Circassians around the world a day of sad remembrance of the expulsion which began that day in 1864. It is a day where one recalls all the suffering, but also the fact that the memory of the Circassians and their culture and history has been effectually preserved down to the present day. For this to succeed in the future Circassians have to exert themselves for the preservation of the unique nature of the Caucasus, especially during the Olympics in particular ways. However, they also must argue that all minorities and cultures around the world including their own are protected and received and they must fight for the fact that war and nationalism are finished once and for all. Considering that Circassians only know too well which suffering humans can cause towards other humans. **Cem ÖZDEMİR, Co-leader of the German party Alliance '90/The Greens. GERMANY.**

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CHARLES KING
USA

Circassians around the world are rediscovering their cultural heritage and reexamining many of the most painful episodes from their past, including the experience of exile from the 1860s forward. The ease of communication--from text-messaging to webpages such as this one--have helped to create a genuinely global Circassian community in ways that no one, not least the Russian officials whose terrible acts helped create the Circassian displacement, could have imagined. Circassians left their ancient homeland as tribes and clans, with primary attachments to particular hills and valleys or to their own lineage groups. But in the early twenty-first century, they are rapidly becoming a globally connected and self-conscious nation. May 21 has emerged as a major rallying point, just as the Sochi Olympics will focus attention on the horrors of imperial expansion and the dispersal of indigenous peoples from the Caucasus highlands and Black Sea coast. Not all Circassians will have the same point of view of these events; any national group is always composed of many voices, some calling for national revival, others calling for Circassians to maintain the “multi-local” identities that they have cultivated for the past century and a half--with connections ranging from Russia to Turkey and from Jordan to New Jersey. It is clear, though, that a strong and patriotic sense of Circassian identity is emerging even despite a long history of exile, assimilation, and cultural change. **Charles KING. Professor of International Affairs and Government at Georgetown University. He is the author of the books *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus & The Black Sea: A History.* USA.**

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Kabardian Circassians

DANIEL MÜLLER
GERMANY

My contribution is not (as perhaps some may expect who know me from my contribution to George Hewitt's book on the Abkhazians) linked to historical statistics or demography; quite the opposite. I want to share a simple observation, namely, how politics has incurably infected the writing and remembering of history including, of course, the remembrance of human suffering. Even professional historians cannot, as a rule, overcome this; sadly enough, most do not even seem to try. The suffering 'their' people inflicted is ignored, explained away, belittled, justified, denied – whatever. Surely it takes a rare gem of a human being to be equally disturbed by Sumgait and Khodzhalı. This author for one has never met such a person. Generally, people are either outraged by Sumgait or by Khodzhalı (or, of course, by neither event).

May 21 is a case in point. The lists of people publicly remembering that sad day of exile for the Northwest Caucasians will, then, be full of the names of the usual suspects. Armenians e. g. will be missing because they know that most people expressing solidarity with Muslim victims (although, of course, not all Northwest Caucasians were/are Muslims, in 1864 or today) of a 'Christian' power would never dream of joining an April 24 declaration to remember the suffering of Armenians and others in the genocide of 1915 ff.; most or all Georgians and Georgia-lovers (or Saakashvili-paid spin doctors, this being so hard to distinguish these days) will also stay aloof, for as much as they love to see Russia discomfited, their PR frame imperiously calls for the Russian bear vs. tiny Georgia, so that the mere

mention of Abkhazians and others evokes the danger of exploding their heartrending fairy tales.

The author's wish, then, would be for everyone, the Cherkess of the world included, to grant the dignity of victim status to those of the 'wrong', politically inexpedient, side also (including, of course, the Georgian victims of the wars unleashed by Georgia in 1992 and 2008). **Dr. Daniel MÜLLER, Research & Teaching Assistant, Institute of Journalism, TU Dortmund University, GERMANY.**

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EIJI MIYAZAWA
JAPAN

The more I learn about the Circassian exodus from their historical homelands in the North Caucasus, the less I feel that I understand what was that which really happened. According to some scholars, it was an expulsion, and according to others, an emigration. However, it was certainly one of the most tragic events in the history of mankind, no matter how much multi-dimensioned the process was. Visit any of almost-deserted Circassian villages in Anatolian highlands, and listen to people who say "We're still being driven out." You immediately realize, human sufferings continue till today, 146 years after Circassian exodus. May peace prevail in the North Caucasus and the world. **Dr. Eiji MIYAZAWA, Visiting Staff, Institute of Asian Cultures, Sophia University, Tokyo, JAPAN.**

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EROL TAYMAZ
TURKEY

21 May: A Tragedy to Remember

21 May is a day of remembrance to mark one of the worst human sufferings in the history. The Circassians resisted desperately and fiercely, for more than a century, against the gigantic Tsarist Empire without any organized army and without any significant external support. But this freedom loving nation was deported *en masse* into foreign lands following the occupation of their homeland in the mid-19th century. The deportation of the Circassian people was among the largest exodus in modern times. Almost 90 percent of the population was deported, and a third of them perished during the exodus from disease and starvation. 21 May 1864 is the symbol for the tragedy of the Circassian people.

The Circassians who were deported from their homeland were dispersed into various countries, and forced to live under extremely unfavorable conditions. But they have resisted against all odds, and have survived as a people. In spite of a long period of denial and oppressions, the Circassians have never forgotten what they had to live through, and kept alive the memory of their beloved homeland since the day of departure.

The first large scale commemoration in the diaspora was held by the Caucasian Association in Ankara with the participation of many organizations from the homeland and other diaspora countries in 1989. That meeting gave birth to the first ever Circassian organization uniting the

Circassian associations separated by artificial boundaries, the World Circassian Association. Although the Circassians were remembering and commemorating the Great Exodus the first time in 1989, they did not consider 21 May only as a day of mourning, but they took it as a day of remembrance, to understand what happened in the past and what they could build in the future. I will follow the same tradition, and share my feelings about what happened in the past and what we could do for the future.

There are three root causes for the current ethnic and cultural problems of the Circassians. The first and foremost important one is 21 May. 21 May is the day of occupation of Circassia and the subsequent separation of the Circassians from their homeland where they lived since time immemorial, and developed their unique language and culture that reflects the history and geography of the Caucasus.

The Circassians were settled all around the Ottoman lands, from the Danube river in the Balkans all the way down to Amman, as a result of the Ottoman Empire's settlement policy. The dispersion of the Circassians has broken their community links, and made it very difficult to protect and to reproduce their culture and way of life under new conditions. This is the second major factor behind their current problems.

The tragedy of the Circassians alongside with their basic rights have been denied for a long time. The oppression they face with after the tragedy of the Great Exodus made them a muted people. This is the final decisive obstacle for the survival of the Circassian people.

The Circassians have to address all these issues if they would like to survive as a people: they have to guarantee and protect their rights wherever they live in, they have to concentrate their population in the homeland up to a minimum necessary level, and they have to undo historical injustice of the Great Exodus. These are the tasks for each and every 21st of May. **Prof. Dr. Erol TAYMAZ, Member of the Caucasian Center for Strategic Studies (KAFSAM) TURKEY.**

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FETHİ ACIKEL
TURKEY

Towards the 150th Anniversary of the Caucasian Exile

The Russian-Caucasian Wars, which lasted for many decades, ended with wide scale forced deportation of the native peoples of the Northern Caucasus, particularly the Circassians. The wars that resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of Caucasians, is surprisingly not well-known enough not only among the scholars, but also among the world public opinion. The same lack of knowledge is also the case for the rich language and culture of Circassians, which are sadly now on the edge of extinction. Now the Circassians, who were settled mostly in Anatolia, and the Middle East and the Balkans after the tragic events of 1864, live along the peoples with whom they share a new destiny, and without exception, have been actively contributing to the social and political lives of the countries in which they live. Having said that Circassians, dispersed across the world from today's Russian Federation to Turkey, and from the Middle East to Europe and the USA, unfortunately, did not, or could not make known the sad and almost forgotten history of the forced migration and the tragic human losses resulted from it. This people's primary goals are to save their languages from extinction,

to be known, and to be recognized in a race against time. Their struggle against times is becoming more interesting in the 21st century. While doing that they seem to be very well aware of the fact that these can be achieved not only through memorizing the sad stories of forced migration of the 19th century, but also through constructing stronger cultural-political ties and communication-channels with the peoples with whom they are now living, the Turks, Russians and Arabs. The way to enable this is to devise amicable and democratic approaches without being hijacked by diasporic fanaticism and blind radicalism, and without allowing their consciousness to become dominated by a morbid psychology of mourning and retribution. The diasporic strategies the Circassians are improvising nowadays will succeed, as they also admit, so far as a firm subscription the politics of cosmopolitan citizenship and peaceful coexistence among the peoples of the region is assured. Strengthening the relations between the peoples of the region, particularly between Turkey and the Russian Federation, will further help developing a new awareness of pluralist citizenship without giving up the most humane demands of the Circassians for cultural-linguistic preservation and the recognition of what had happened in the 19th century. It is in this sense that the 21 May presents an opportunity to the peoples of the region not merely a date to commemorate, but also a new invitation for cosmopolitan citizenship, which hopefully all peoples of the region, including the Circassians, will benefit from and contribute to. **Fethi AÇIKEL, Associate Professor, Ankara University, Faculty of Political Science, Political Studies and Public Administration, TURKEY.**

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GEORGE ANCHABADZE (ACHBA)
GEORGIA

Because of his current work-load, George Anchabadze wishes his contribution to this project to be the 5th chapter of his book ‘‘The Vainakhs (The Chechen and Ingush)’’. The whole book will be published on CW in due course. MS.

The Chechens and Ingush in the Caucasian War

The beginning of the Caucasian (Russian-Caucasian) War is dated in different ways, mainly within the first quarter of the 19th century, though according to our consideration the warfare broke out in the 80s of the 18th century, when uncoordinated resistance to the tsarism exceeded the bounds of separate regions (the Kuban Region, Kabarda, Chechnya, Daghestan) and turned into an all-North Caucasian movement advancing the precise religious-political slogans.

So, in spring of 1785 a Moslem preacher, Sheikh Mansur, or Ushurma, appeared in Chechnya, who, striving for unification of the highlanders to fight against the tsarist colonialists, called upon them for ‘‘hazavat’’, i.e., ‘‘sacred war’’ against the ‘‘unfaithful’’ enemy. Thus through Islam taken as an ideological basis, politically separated Caucasians of different tribes partially consolidated in the struggle against the colonial power.

In the Northern Caucasus (in Daghestan) Islam began to spread yet in times of the Arab Caliphate, though for the majority of the native peoples it was established as an official religion considerably later. Thus the Vainakhs inhabiting in the plain and foothill zones of the Caucasus apparently came into contact with this teaching not earlier than in the 15th - 16th centuries; as to the inhabitants of the mountainous part of Chechnya and Ingushetia, the

influence of Mohammedanism on the highlanders was rather weak even in the 17th - 18th centuries. As is generally known, in the 18th to the early 19th century the Ingush elders swore not to the Koran but to their pagan gods despite the fact that Islam had already existed among a certain part of the Ingush.

A striking and mysterious person of Sheikh Mansur gave rise to a number of fabulous versions about his non - Caucasian origin as far back as the end of the 18th century. He was believed to be an Italian adventurer (soldier or monk) who had adopted Islam. Some considered him a descendent of Shah Nadir, the ruler of Persia, others attributed him to the Poles. It was also rumoured that he had come from the Orenburg steppes. However, these considerations have been rejected scientifically as having nothing in common with the historical truth. It is proved scientifically that Mansur was Chechen by birth.

Ushurma was born in 1760, in a poor family, in the village of Aldyi (the Chechen Plain). In his youth he pastured cattle and tilled the soil. He got married at the age of 22 and had three children. Owing to his mode of life of high moral standards, wit and strong character, Ushurma was held in high respect by the countrymen even when he was young in years. Although Ushurma was illiterate, he was a brilliant orator and subtle psychologist.

In 1785 Ushurma began an active religious and political activity. Due to his preachings Ushurma became far-famed and enjoyed the support of the influential mullahes and theologians of Chechnya, who declared him sheikh and gave him the name "mansur" which means "victor" in Arabian.

The highlanders, not only peasants and ordinary people but also the representatives of feudal nobility, came from everywhere to listen to Mansur. Apart from the Chechens, among his numerous followers were the Kumyiks, inhabitants of mountainous Daghestan, Adigeys, Ingush, Ossetes, Nogais... The Russian command kept vigilant watch of the processes taking place over the river Terek and in summer of 1785 sent a military unit three thousand strong under the command of Colonel Pierry against the village of Aldyi, where the Imam had his seat, to capture the "false prophet and restore calm and order violated by him in that region". Having left part of the troops for guarding the crossing across the Sunzha, Pierry and his main armed forces (three infantry battalions and a Cossack *sotnia* (squadron) with two guns) burst into the aul abandoned by the inhabitants and committed it to the flames. The chastisers failed to find Mansur, but on their way back when moving through the forest, they fell into the ambush laid by the Chechens. Pierry was killed in the battle and it ended in an utter rout of the Russian detachment. According to official data, 8 officers and 414 soldiers were killed, 162 of the enemy were made prisoners and an overwhelming majority of the survived were wounded. The highlanders captured both of the guns.

This victory has brought a great fame to Mansur. The Russians had not been defeated in the Caucasus since their unsuccessful campaign organized against Daghestan in the early 18th century, therefore, the fellow-fighters of the Sheikh did not fail to proclaim the results of the battle to be the fulfilment of his prophecy. The number of Mansur's supporters and followers was increasing at still faster rates. That was the period of the utmost general enthusiasm.

Striving for exploitation of his success, Mansur assaulted the centre of the Russian domain in the North-Eastern Caucasus, Kizlyar, but the storm was repelled. The highlanders managed to capture one stronghold only, which covered the Terek crossing in the environs of the city. At night the army of the Sheikh got lost in the marshland when, all at once, was attacked by the

Cossacks. So, the mountaineers, having suffered heavy losses in killed and wounded, had to retreat.

The same fate befell the mountaineers when taking Kizlyar by storm for the second time and when they were breaking through Kabarda to join the local rebels. In the battle which took place in the vicinity of ancient ruins of Tatartup, the Russian forces defeated the detachments of the highlanders (Chechens, Kabardians, Kumyiks and others) and threw them back. In 1787, Mansur was impelled to flee to the Kuban Region where, at the head of the Adigey detachments he, in alliance with the Turks (the Russo-Turkish war of 1787-1791 was in progress), continued to fight against the Russians, though in 1791 in the battle for Anapa Mansur was captured by the Russians and died in casemate of the Schlusserburg Fortress. (According to another information Mansur died on the Solovetski Islands).

Proceed from the afore-said Sheikh Mansur, or Ushurma, a Chechen from the village of Aldyi, was the first great organizer of the liberation movement of highlanders against tsarist Russia in the Northern Caucasus. The activity carried out under his command, though religious but anticolonial in its essence can be in fact regarded as the beginning of the Caucasian War. **All article:** www.circassianworld.com/new/war-and-genocide/1466 **George ANCHABADZE (ACHBA), Professor of history at the Ilia State University, GEORGIA.**

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GEORGI DERLUGUIAN
USA

Although I am a historical sociologist, let me abstain from analysis and instead suggest a real-life story. Once while visiting Turkey I found myself in the extraordinary company of young men and women who had just graduated from the Turkish police academy. It was supposed to be an academic lecture on contemporary issues such as European integration, transborder crime and human rights. But I could not help wondering whether my audience also realized that my name is Armenian. Yes, they did as became clear from the cautiously asked question: What do you think about this issue of the so-called Armenian genocide? I paused, my heart beating uneasily, and then asked: Please, raise your hands, how many among you here have Circassian heritage? I already knew that it would be probably more than one. Still, the show of hands was overwhelming. More than half readily raised hands, their eyes suddenly glimmering with excitement. The silence was broken and stories poured about the grandmother in a village outside Ankara who still spoke Circassian, about the taste of Circassian cheese and about Circassian dances. Well, I said finally, now I have two confessions to make. First, I grew up on the other side of the Black sea, in the beautiful place where your ancestors had once lived. I love this land which is now my native and some of my best childhood friends were Adyghe. Secondly, my own ancestors were the Armenians from Artvin which is now a Turkish town. How do we feel about all this? What can we tell each other? What would be a humanly decent attitude? **Georgi DERLUGUIAN. Professor of Sociology, Northwestern University, Chicago, USA.**

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May 21, 1864 is not simply a date that ended the long and bloody colonial war in Caucasia... Just as the valley of Kbaada is not simply a name of an area lost in the mountains of the North-Western Caucasus, which was destined to become the site of the last resistance and the last massacre of that war... These are two symbols of the human tragedy of appalling scope that are linked with one another forever. These are the quintessence of a crime, quite calculatingly committed in an enlightened and civilized age in behalf of imperial grandeur of one nation at the price of humiliation of the other and destruction of the unique, nowhere else and never again repeatable culture. These are sorrowful reminders of the event, obviously not singular in the modern history, but unlike most of its ilk, almost forgotten and unknown nowadays in the world, in Russia itself, and even in the Caucasus to some extent. Unfortunately, hardly a great many of those people, to whom Sochi is well known as a beautiful resort and the future Olympic capital, realize or are willing to reflect on why streams, hills, woods and even some settlements in the region still bear such “unexpected” non-Slavic names, seemingly whispering something in native language from the depths of epochs. And for what reason a handful of men and women living among the masses of Russian-speakers in several scattered villages in the coastal valleys between Tuapse and Adler, protect with such persistence and trust their “mountaineer” dignity and the title of Circassians. Or why millions of *Çerkez* citizens of Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries turn so sensitive and emotional, when another adversity or a new pain befalls the Caucasus. There is apparently something deeply wrong, unfair and calling for correction in all these “mismatches” and “strangenesses”. Maybe a certain error of time and place has occurred: the land bereft of its indigenous inhabitants nurtured and moulded here for thousands of years, and the nation in exile torn from its ancestral soil... It is true that the past never turns back. Nonetheless, we can work to restore what is possible, and to build on this basis a new homeland with a more fortunate and peaceful future. Realization of this noble and humane idea requires unity, wisdom, patience, courage and self-sacrifice. It also requires understanding and cooperation with all concerned parties, who are ready for dialogue. But perhaps above all it requires the memory, including the memory of dates like May 21, 1864... Then we can trust that one day the “error” of history will be overcome, so that the long-suffering ground of North-Western Caucasus will regain its genuine name of Circassia, descendants of the desperate defenders of Kbaada scattered now around the world will reunite freely in their ancestral country, and the peoples of the Caucasus will recover again their brothers that were absent in their home for so long. With a hope of coming true... **Dr. Georgy CHOCHIEV, North Ossetian State University (Vladikavkaz). NORTH OSSETIA, RUSSIA.**



Ubykhs

HAKAN KIRIMLI
TURKEY

Its intrinsic historical importance notwithstanding, 21 May 1864 marks neither the beginning, nor the end of the Caucasian emigrations. In fact, the emigrations of the Caucasian peoples at large, or the Adyghes in particular, to the Ottoman Empire took place in very significant dimensions before and after this date. Nevertheless, the symbolization of the “21 May” signifies more than a mourning for a long bygone tragedy. By underscoring the “21 May”, the descendents of those masses who had been forced to leave their homelands and who had been deemed to vanish in the course of time, now blare before the world their determination as a dignified people not to get lost in the dark labyrinths of history. For the peoples whose diasporic populations far exceed those remaining in the homeland, such symbols denote the societal unity and memory. **Hakan KIRIMLI. Associate Professor Doctor, International Relations, Center for Russian Studies, Bilkent University. TURKEY.**

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IRMA KREITEN
UK

May 21 in 1864 was celebrated by the Russian imperial society as a day of joy marking the end of the so-called Caucasian Wars. The festivities held in Akhchipskh in order to commemorate this ‘historical event’ consisted of a church service thanking god for bestowing victory upon the Russian troops, a military parade and a banquet in honor of the royal family and those responsible for the ‘final subjugation’ of the Caucasus. All in all, Russian officials showed themselves extremely proud of their achievements and had high-flying plans for the creation of a ‘well-ordered’, economically thriving colony at the Eastern Black Sea shore. The region was now deemed ready to “enter the blissful path of all-enlivening civilization”. [1]

These enlightenment-informed visions had shown absolutely no consideration for the fate of the local Caucasians. Russian troops had systematically uprooted the Circassian population by the burning of villages, deliberate destruction of the means of subsistence and by military purges, forcing the majority of the Circassians to seek refuge in the Ottoman Empire. At the same time then that imperial society was celebrating its ‘civilizational’ achievements, the tragedy of the Circassians had taken on lethal dimensions with refugees dying in hundreds each day.

My wish is that 21 of May will become internationally known as day of sorrow commemorating the colonial policy of ‘cleansing’ and the willful destruction of Circassian lives and culture. I hope that in the near future it will no longer be acceptable to speak and write of the Circassian exile as ‘voluntary migration’ or to pride oneself on colonial ‘civilization’, and I equally hope that any talk of state rationale and geopolitical ‘necessities’ in this context will be thoroughly discredited.

However, May 21 should not only be taken to commemorate the Russian conquest of Western Caucasus as singular event of high visibility. It should also make us question the cultural context in which these colonial excesses were embedded and from which they arose. That is, if we want to learn a lesson from our colonial pasts for our lives today, we should not refrain from questioning the underlying narratives of civilization as progress and the rhetoric of ‘development’. Ultimately, the Russian proceeding in the Caucasus was nothing but a continuance of pan-European traditions of military conquest and cultural imperialism for which the whole of the ‘Western world’ must assume responsibility. **Irma KREITEN, Ph.D. candidate in Comparative Genocide Studies, Southampton University, UK.**

[1] Po povodu okonchaniia kavkazskoi voiny. In: Voennyi sbornik 1864, t. 38, No. 8, otd.3, pp. 136-148, here p. 137.

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JOHN COLARUSSO
CANADA

Thoughts on May 21st, 2010. The 146th anniversary of the expulsion of the Circassians, Abazins, and Ubykhs.

The long and grievous war against the Adyghey people and their kin was waged at the height of European Imperialism. In many ways the outcome of the war was foreseeable. The bravery and sacrifices of the Adyghey peoples in the conflict were noble. These were as clear a manifestation of their culture and character as any cultural traditions could have been. A small and divided people, the various Adygheys, resisted a massive and modern European power, Russia, as she expanded across the Steppes. All the advantages lay with Russia. Defeat for the Adygheys was inevitable.

The war itself represented a marked turnaround in Moscow’s relation with the Adyghey princes, who had for more than two hundred years enjoyed amicable ties with the Tsars. This changed, however, at the start of the 19th century. The conquest of the Caucasus was geopolitically crucial for Russia if she was going to expand farther into Central Asia. The Tsarist elite seems to have understood this and taken whatever measures were necessary to achieve the conquest of the Caucasus, with the Adygheys forming the last resistance, and

therefore suffering the worst consequences. Russia was not magnanimous in victory. In fact, her ethnic cleansing of the Adygheys was exceedingly harsh and reminiscent of the sorts of annihilatory campaigns waged by the 19th century United States and others nations in the New World.

As with any war of the past the anguish, the screams of suffering and the memories of the dead, grow muted and recede into a distant background. Yet this background persists as a crucial element in the identity of all Adygheys today, both those in the Caucasus, and the vast majority in the diaspora. This anniversary attests to this persistence. In an interconnected world far different from that of their ancestors the modern Adygheys find themselves still facing a legacy of sorrow and injustice. Russia has made some amends: the introduction of writing and literature, the formation of small republics, and founding of museums and cultural centres. For brief periods there have even been programs that offered some form of repatriation. Nothing from Russia, however, has directly address the simple fact of the war and its consequences. It is hard not to conclude that in many ways Russia still fears the Adygheys as much now as she did 146 years ago. With modern warfare such as it is, such fear, real or not, seems absurd, especially for a nation, such as Russia. The need for force in the open plains of western Eurasia has formed an integral part of political and strategic culture of Russia from the inception of the Principality of Muscovy. Clearly the Adygheys, scattered and integrated into many other nations, or fragmented and small in their multi-ethnic republics can mount no serious threat to Russia. The most they can do is mount a symbolic protest, and in a shame culture such as Russia's, such a protest presents political challenges that the Kremlin seems to find difficult to address. This is understandable because Russia's reliance on force has concomitantly led to an impoverishment of her symbolic repertoire and her ability to utilize and assess symbolic action.

Canada is an example of an heir to an imperial legacy, wherein the indigenous peoples suffered. The circumstances of these numerous and varied peoples have changed from that of their ancestors, but their grievances have not all been answered by any means. The Canadian government, however, heirs to the rich symbolic repertoire of the British Empire, have dignified them with the name of 'First Nations.' More tangibly, the full panoply of such peoples, following the example offered by Beijing, was given the place of honour at the Vancouver Olympics. They had a chance, as we say, to strut their stuff and to show the world that they indeed still exist.

The contrast with the upcoming Sochi Olympics could not be greater. Russia would do well to learn the politics of symbolism from Canada and China, and to use Sochi as an opportunity to extend to the Adygheys a modicum of respect and a gesture of repentance for the wrongs of the past. In doing this, Russia would elicit from the Adygheys a modicum of gratitude and even of loyalty. She would help the diaspora come to terms with its past and win the allegiance of the Adygheys and others who still dwell in the North West Caucasus. She would do well to keep in mind too that one of the most prominent features of Adyghey culture is loyalty.

If Russia does not make some gestures in this regard at Sochi, she risks giving the Adygheys a free forum in which they can air their grievances to the entire world. The Adygheys have become a sophisticated people, who have emerged in the past twenty years with an electronic identity through the various media of e-mail and the web. They are well positioned to present their case. They will surely do so, because another prominent feature of Adyghey culture is memory, especially of wrongs suffered. In Canada we live with this sort of memory as well:

every license plate in Québec says “Je me souviens,” (I remember). The Anglo-French wound still lies festering. Russia risk creating a new motto for the Adygheys: /segW qéc@&Jez@Je/ ‘I remember’. To leave this wound of memory to fester would be as tragic for the Russians and Adygheys as it would be unnecessary. **John COLARUSSO. Professor, Department of Anthropology, and Department of Linguistics and Languages, McMaster University, CANADA.**

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KARLOS ZURUTUZA
BASQUE COUNTRY

Keep it up, Abkhazia!

People are always curious. “But why Abkhazia?” they ask. It is indeed a tough question, not one I can answer in any very coherent way. Before I even start, hundreds of images swirl through my mind. Images of Strabo’s army of 70 translators, Jason’s Argonauts in Colchis, but also the Genoese and the Turks, Keraban the Terrible and Konstantin Paustovsky. Did you know that Paustovsky once got drunk with Isaac Babel in the monastery hostel in Novy Athos?

So I secured my clearance letter, mailed to me as a PDF document, and that granted me Maxim Gunjia’s warm welcoming in Sukhum. And then came that picnic day with Aljasur, a Chechen war veteran from Grozni. “We came on foot from Chechnya to help,” he said, pointing to a mountain path that skirted an achingly beautiful lake called Ritsa. That day I saw offerings to both Ajargi and Ananagunda, two of the Abkhaz old divinities, and learned about local hunters speaking a language that, they said, “their prey would not understand.” Would they dare to speak it in Khabug’s presence? Probably not, for Sandro of Chegem’s old mule was nobody’s fool.

And there was also that Abkhaz superb linguist who spoke every local lingo but also lots of very foreign ones...even Basque! Among a million things he told me was the tale of the Estonians who lived at a tiny village called Salme. Unfortunately, the Estonians had left by the time I first visited Abkhazia.

A bottle of brandy shared with an Armenian painter from Gulripsh and a green eyed Greek sailor from Gagra. We toasted for Hayastan, for Dioscurias, and for many other places that I cannot now recall. But I do remember a wonderful dusk light over a sumptuous Mingrelian meal. That was in Gali.

You have given me so much, Apsny-Abkhazia! Let independence be the tool to keep all your treasures safe and, at the same time, open to the rest of the world! **Karlos ZURUTUZA, Freelance correspondent specializing in the Caucasus and the Middle East regions. BASQUE COUNTRY.**

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Abkhazians who took part in the 1866 Likhni uprising. Photo by D. I. Yermakov (1867)

KEMAL KARPAT
USA

The First Landing of the Cherkes in Turkey (Kefken-Kelken)

A few years ago in 2004 the Cherkes Federation [KAFFED] in Ankara invited me to speak about the forced eviction of the Muslim peoples from their ancestral homes in the Caucasus. “Ancestral home” is a word that can cover any period of time extended from a few decades to thousands of years. In the case of the Caucasus it is impossible to quantify the length of time that its inhabitants inhabited the Caucasus Mountains. In fact, many scholars believe that the peoples of the Caucasus are the original inhabitants who lived there continuously for tens of thousands of years and even more. Strabo (b. 63BC) the Greek geographer-philosopher provides (based on older sources) a description of the Caucasian peoples which is similar with the information provided by the more recent, contemporary sources. In sum, the Caucasians, divided into numerous groups and languages, are among the oldest peoples in the world to inhabit their original lands since time immemorial. That was the case until 1864 when the Czarist government after killing hundreds of thousands forced most of the remaining out of their lands. Their forced emigration, which is a typical case of ethnic cleansing, peaked out in 1868 but continued sporadically well into the 20th century. The ousting began after the Caucasian resistance to Russian occupation embodied in Sheik Shamil’s twenty five year rebellion ended in 1859. The Caucasians coming to the Ottoman lands were Muslims and the sole reason for eviction was their Islamic faith which in the eyes of the Czar made them susceptible to the religious-political-military instigation of the Sultan-Caliph in Istanbul. There is no question that the Muslims of the Caucasus held the Sultan-Caliph in high esteem and that thousands had settled in the Ottoman lands in the previous centuries and occupied high social and political positions there. They maintained their ethnic and regional identity as seen in names such as Gurcu Ahmet, Cherkes Hasan, Abaza Selim etc. But there is no proof that Istanbul or Persia planned to use them or their kin in the Caucasus to incite a rebellion against the Czar. The purpose of my brief essay here is not to repeat the information I provided in the lengthy talk to the Cherkes Federation in Ankara which commemorated the first Cherkes landing in Turkey. My intention is to provide a brief description of the

commemoration ceremony of the first Caucasian landing in Turkey. The commemoration was organized by the sons and grandsons of the original immigrants who had landed who gathered every year at Kefken one and half a century ago. The commemoration has become an annual event.

The experience was extraordinarily moving for me as I witnessed in person the landing sites, and the profound emotion of the participants. So the rest of this writing will in the form of personal reminiscence of the commemoration at Kefken.

I planned to spend the day after my speech in Ankara seeing old friends and visiting the universities where I had taught. However, in the morning, the driver of the car and his friend who had brought me to Ankara the previous day called to say goodbye before they drove back to Istanbul. They told me that they planned to stop at Kefken on the way back to attend the commemoration at the site of the landing of the first group of Cherkes refugees who had managed to survive the hazardous trip across the Black Sea. This was an excellent unique opportunity for me to visit Kefken, the landing site of the first Caucasian (known generally as Cherkes) refugees in 1864. The landing site is generally known as Kefken, a small ancient port on the southern shore of the Black Sea at about seventy miles east of Istanbul. The actual landing site is an isolated beach at about 10-15 miles north east of Kefken. To reach the beach, the driver left the main highway between Ankara and Istanbul at Izmit and drove north to Kandira a town in the Kocaeli peninsula that stretches for about 70 miles into Anatolia east of Istanbul. From Kandira we drove another 20-30 miles to Kefken and then a few miles more to the landing site. A large number of people had already gathered on the volcanic rocks overlooking the beach when we arrived. The emotions run high. Some prayed, others carried flowers and cried while a few engaged in mournful guesses as to where the ship bringing the Caucasian refugees had stopped and how the refugees managed to reach the shore. The crowd consisted mainly of Caucasian, men and women, who came from all over Turkey, a sure indication that the memory of the catastrophe of being evicted from the ancestral homes and the landing on a bare beach and facing an unknown future was still alive in the minds of the refugees' descendants. The refugees who landed apparently stayed first in tents then built houses and lived in the area for a while before they settled permanently elsewhere. After seeing the landing site the entire gathering moved to the cemetery. The scene was sad and truly moving. The cemetery is located at some distance inland from the beach. Some of the tombs had inscriptions bearing the name of the defunct while other tombs were unmarked. I presume that the total number of the tombs amounted to more than one hundred. The district administrator (kaymakam) spoke at some length followed by the leaders of the Cherkes community who described the plight of the Caucasians in their original homeland some century and half ago, and expressed their thankfulness for being alive and well in their new home or vatan, Turkey. The sadness and the pain in the faces of the present were aggravated further by dark clouds that had descended on the peak of the surrounding mountains. The commemoration ended with the prayer of the imam and the loud *salavat* of everybody present. For me a long time student of the forced ousting of the Muslims from the Crimea, Caucasus and the Balkans, the commemorative experience at Kefken turned the theoretically studied tragedy suffered by the Caucasians since 1864 into a human, palpable and real experience that embodied the deep pain still living in the heart of the sons and great sons of the Caucasian refugees. The ceremony continued later with launching of a wreath of flowers into the Bosphorous in Istanbul and other speeches. For me the Kefken remembrance ceremony was an extraordinary and unforgettable experience. **Professor Kemal KARPAT. Emeritus Professor of History, University of Wisconsin Department of History, USA.**

KHASAN KASUMOV
TURKEY

The analysis of the sources and literature, the scientific reflection of the obtained data, the adaptation of the corresponding theoretical conceptions and methods of investigation to the history of interrelations on the line Russia – North Caucasus allowed to make a conclusion that the complicated process of formation of a new system of relations of the power and the so called “disciplinary practices” having as well the discourse dimension begins in the Russian empire in the end of the 18th – the first half of the 19th century. The process of differentiation in physical and social space, inspectorate and punishment, discipline and training reveals in the most distinct way in the suburbs of the empire, and in North Caucasus in the particular, where the Russian macropower and macropolitics comes into collision with the quite different types of public, social and cultural relations (quasi-state unions of Central and North-East Caucasus, the highland societies of North-West Caucasus). The objects of colonial conquering and domination so become the aims of new biopolitics of the power (micropower). Such an implicit system of the power leads to the appearance of the complex “power – knowledge” in Russia, which is formed on the level of practices of the power through observation (ethnography, geography, statistics, history), control, differentiating, classification, domination (administrative measures etc.).

Cultural, social, ideological and ethnic foundations of “places of memory” allowed to reveal two main directions in the development of the historiographic discourse about “the Caucasian War” as a social-historic construct: institutionalized history and counter-history.

The historical reality is mediating in the system of historic education, belles-lettres style about the Caucasus, in museums, monuments, architectural constructions, folklore and etc.

Plural “cultural practices” and their systems of signifying in the cultural space which in this or that extent deal with the problems of the concept “Caucasian War” have been studied in this context. Various aspects of functioning of such “cultural practices” have been revealed both in the Russian society and in the societies of North Caucasus. **Dr. Khasan KASUMOV. Russian language and literature, Fatih University, Istanbul. Author of the book “Genocide of Adyghes” (Genotsid Adygov: iz istorii bor’by adygov za nezavisimost’ v XIX veke) TURKEY.**

LAURENT VINATIER
FRANCE

“Europeans do not understand us”. That’s what Sergei Shamba, former Minister for Foreign Affairs and now vice-President of the Abkhaz Republic, told me during an interview last Summer. Indeed he is completely right. Europeans do not seem to see that Abkhazia reintegration into Georgia is simply impossible at least for the coming years. Abkhaz independence reminds me of the Chechen Ichkerian struggle. Europeans should understand that, viewed from the Caucasus, Abkhaz and Chechen (national) fights for independence are absolutely not in contradiction. **Dr. Laurent VINATIER. Senior Research Associates, Thomas More Institute, Paris, FRANCE.**

LIANA KVARCHELIA
ABKHAZIA

Do “freedom” and “independence” mean something new today? Are they about controlling one's own resources only? Many people here would probably say that just like for our ancestors, who were dying for freedom in the battle-field a hundred years ago, freedom is about DIGNITY. Dignity means a lot of things: preserving one's own culture and language, living in security, having conditions for development, respecting the “others” the way you would like them to respect you, communicating with the rest of the world as an equal, learning from the world and offering one's own experiences, etc.

Abkhazia's path to recognition has not been easy. We have survived a bloody war, a decade of sanctions and international isolation. We almost became international pariahs. Not because we were a threat to anybody, but because our persistence to have our own say in defining our destiny, challenged the international world of double standards, in which one's external loyalty matters more than one's past or the present. If we want to have a future, we need to realize, that what we have achieved so far is only a beginning. Knowing this and by working hard our way forward, we will pay tribute to our fathers and grandfathers, and create the future for the coming generations.” **Liana KVARCHELIA, Deputy Director of the Center for Humanitarian Programs, Sukhum, ABKHAZIA.**

MARK LEVENE
UK

It's not just popular depiction: historical writing, too, often has a particularly bad habit of parcelling up groups of people into good guys and bad ones, perpetrators and victims. Circassians, when they're not simply airbrushed out of history altogether, generally end up on the negative side of this equation, the violent bully boys of the Near East, ready and willing to fall on Armenians, Greeks, even Turks, at the drop of a hat. Historians also have another risky habit of setting down markers: the *Aghet*, the destruction of the Armenians, for instance is now regularly broadcast as the first genocide of modern times, as if the story began here and not somewhere earlier. Perhaps most tragic of all in the assumptions we, including historians, often make, is the idea that somehow groups of people were born this way to be killers and the killed, abusers and abused, when actually the truth is so very much more complex. Arnold Toynbee, that now much undervalued observer of the great sweep of history put it well when he characterised what happened to all these communities as the culmination of ‘a prolonged epidemic... from the time when they lost their indigenous civilisations until they became acclimatised to the intrusive influence of the West’. Could it be that the growing destabilisation and then breakdowns of polities and societies which occurred in the Caucasus and Anatolia in the 19th and early 20th centuries has as much to do with forces working from the outside, forcing peoples into modes of thinking and action which went against their own already well-formed, spiritually-sound and historically tolerant sense of self and other?

The genocidal paroxysm that befell the Circassian peoples in 1864 was thus not self-inflicted. It was an aspect of a military and political reshaping of the world in which the ill-treated

survivors had little choice but to adapt to a social Darwinian framework that was presented to - and essentially imposed upon them. Brutalised, marginalised, or simply made invisible, the greater purpose of an event such as the 21 May commemoration, must surely be not just towards reconciliation between Circassians and the other peoples of the Caucasus and Anatolia who have suffered so much, but towards a recognition that home-spun conviviality does not have to begin and end with some defensive idea of the 'nation'. But this is not just of local issue. The great power struggle for the spine of Central Asia with its dark, contemporary resonances, should be a reminder to Europeans and other westerners of our ongoing responsibility for what happened in the great sweep of Caucasian, Ottoman and post-Ottoman tragedies from 1864 to 1923 and indeed beyond to the present-day. Facing up to the ugliness of what happened then, is as much our legacy in the West, as those who belong to this shattered region. Perhaps, in doing so we can all work towards a political, societal and indeed environmentally sustainable future in which the goal is not living 'against' or at 'the expense of' but 'alongside' and 'together with' other peoples. **Mark LEVENE, historian of genocide, and co-founder of Crisis Forum** ('The Forum for the Study of Crisis in the 21st Century') <http://www.crisis-forum.org.uk> UK.

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MAX SHER
RUSSIA

As a Russian citizen, I am sure that one day my country, under the current or future government, will show its wisdom and make further steps - quite easy, one must admit - to reveal the truth about the 19-century Circassian tragedy to the broad public, especially that, back in 1994, President Yeltsin has already admitted Russia's moral responsibility saying in a special statement that the mountaineers' resistance during the Caucasian War had been a "courageous struggle for survival in their native land". In 1998, the Russian government has lent its support to repatriating Circassians from the war-torn Kosovo to their homeland. It should also be noted that May 21 is officially marked in Russia's Circassian-populated areas.

I am also sure that Circassians, for their part, will also show their wisdom and will avoid sliding themselves into the position of an eternal victim or turning multi-faceted history into a black-and-white political myth. History must be remembered but the best way would be to focus on the present and future, to self-organize into civil society groups, to spread knowledge, to make education and cultural initiatives, to fight corruption and lawlessness for human rights, rule of law and dignity. **Max SHER, Photographer, author of the "Circassians: a Holocaust in Paradise."** RUSSIA.

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MICHAEL KHODAROVSKY
USA

It was by no means obvious from the vantage point of the 1830s that the imperial instructions of September 25th, 1829 prescribing to the commander of the Caucasus Corps, General Paskevich, pacification or extermination of the indigenous population, would indeed be carried out. Certainly, Fedor Tornau, who understood the Caucasus and its inhabitants better than any other Russian officer, did not share the emperor's view. In 1839, after having been

rescued from captivity, Tornau was summoned to St. Petersburg to meet Nicholas I. During the audience, Tornau, skeptical of the emperor's confidence that the Caucasus would be subdued in three years, had pointed out that even three decades might not be enough to achieve this goal. Not until much later, Tornau had to confess writing in 1881: "... at that time it never occurred to me that this burning issue would be so favorably resolved by exterminating one half and exiling the other half of the Caucasus' indigenous population." [1] A century and half since the Russian annexation of the North Caucasus, an earnest history of Russia's conquest and rule remains a tabu topic in Russia. It is like a festering wound that have been covered with a bandage but can not heal on its own. Sometimes it is necessary to open the old wound, to reexamine it carefully, to consult the patient on the treatment, and to apply the right medicine so that the wound can finally heal, and the sad chapter of the region's history brought to a close. **Professor Michael KHODARKOVSKY. History Department, Loyola University Chicago. USA.**

[1] Fedor Tornau, *Vospominaniia Kavkazskogo ofitsera (Moscow, 2000)*, pp. 297-98.

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MOHYDEEN QUANDOUR
UK

21 May is a Day for remembering our tragic losses as a nation and for looking back into our history closely. Yes we should remember, but not with hate and bitter feelings; rather with opened minds, and with understanding of the historical facts, so we can learn from the mistakes that were made in the past.

Yes my heart is full of pain, when I remember what happened to us. I am one of those born in the Diaspora because of the tragedy of our painful forced emigration...

But at the same time, I am proud to say I never forgot who I am and where my roots are. I dedicated myself to share this knowledge with the world; who we are as Circassians. That happened because I grew up with a strong upbringing by my parents as to who I am and what I should carry as my main mission in this life.

And this is the message I want to give to the young generation. We should learn to appreciate our own culture, our own language, each other... and have a belief in our future. Don't open your hearts for hate or a new conflict, but open it for love for your motherland and your nation, who survived despite all the tragedies and hardships. Keep your spirit and be proud of who you are as a Circassian. You are part of a great past and the future is in your own hands. Only love and dedication will keep our people alive.

God bless my people. And God bless our motherland. **Dr. Mohydeen I. QUANDOUR. Author, Film Director, Composer. UK.**

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MOSHE GAMMER
ISRAEL

From the very beginning of its conquest of the Caucasus Russia led what Marc Pinson termed “demographic warfare”[1] that is, the transfer of populations from their native lands to other territories.

Such transfers involved two categories of populace. One was populations deemed loyal, which were moved from abroad into the empire. Thus, following the wars with the Qajars (1805-13, 1826-8) and the Ottomans (1807-12, 1828-9) the retreating Russian forces rounded up many Armenians from Anatolia and Iran and Pontic Greeks from the Turkish Black Sea coast and led them into Russian controlled areas in the Caucasus.

The other category concerned populations which resisted Russian conquest and later rule -- that is, mainly the highlanders of the Caucasus. Their treatment varied from forced resettlement in the plains, where they could be tightly controlled, to exile of individuals and groups – in some cases entire villages – accused of rebellion against Russian rule into Central Russia and Siberia. In some cases the Russian authorities would have actually liked to carry out what at the present would be called "ethnic cleansing" by removing the entire populace and resettling it in the interior of the empire, but logistics and the then technology rendered it impossible.[2]

The expulsion of the Circassians to the Ottoman Empire was unprecedented not only in the long Russian conquest of the Caucasus but in Russian history in general. First, it involved a huge number of people – between 0.5 and 1.5 million Circassians were forced to leave their homeland. Second, it was the only case of ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Russia in the Caucasus in the nineteenth century.[3] Third, it ran against the Russian tendency not to loose control over the populace, and definitely not expelling populations abroad.

The reason for this reluctance to let people out of its grip should perhaps be looked for in the Mongol origins of the Muscovite state. Moscow rose within the system and in the service of the nomadic Chinghizid state known to modern scholarship as the “Golden Horde”. Together with many of its administrative, military and organizational features Moscow borrowed also its political culture and frames of mind from its Mongol masters. Although reshaped and enveloped in other borrowings first from the Byzantine heritage and then from the modern West, these original Mongol mind-sets remained at the root of Russian political culture.

One of these is the attitude to populations. Unlike states of settled societies, nomadic states did not define themselves by territory, but rather by the tribes they controlled. In other words, the nomadic ruler reigned over tribes and they formed his state. The state’s territory was in constant flux since its borders were located wherever the tribes belonging to it wandered. Thus, although territory and fixed borders were central to the Russian and Soviet states, they never abandoned the urge to keep and control the population. That is why the “Iron Curtain” had existed long before the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917.

How come than that Russia resigned its control over, and expelled a large martial population to a hostile country, thus reinforcing an enemy?

The reason lay, probably, in the Russian decision makers’ loss of hope to make “civilized”, “peaceful” obedient subjects of the Circassians. After all, they were by far more numerous than the other ethnic groups in the Caucasus. Furthermore, unlike the other Caucasian groups to the east

who were landlocked and surrounded by Russian territory, the Circassians had access to the Black Sea and the Ottoman Empire, the Russian blockade notwithstanding. This meant that the solution used in other parts of the Caucasus -- to decimate the local population, get rid of the “most unruly” elements and thus “pacify” the remainder -- would not work here.

Unable to “swallow” the Circassians and lacking the means to exile them en masse into the empire, the "civilized" Russian authorities under Alexander II would not stoop to “truly barbaric” measures of the times of Catherine the Great that is, to “merciless slaughter”.[4] Rather they adopted the “humane” and “civilized” solution of making the Circassians “an offer they could not refuse” -- emigrate to the Ottoman Empire. The result of this “humane” solution was the death of dozens of thousands of men, women and children and the exile of an entire people from its homeland. **Professor Moshe GAMMER, Dept. of Middle Eastern and African History, Tel Aviv University, ISRAEL.**

[1] Marc Pinson, “Russian Expulsion of Mountaineers from the Caucasus, 1856-66 and Its Historical Background. Demographic Warfare -- An Aspect of Ottoman and Russian Policies, 1854-66”, Ph. D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1970.

[2] Thus, already in the 1780s Count Potemkin (the cousin of Catherine the Great’s famous lover) suggested to transfer the entire Chechen population into the internal parts of the Russian Empire as the only way to crush their resistance and subdue them. This suggestion was repeated several times during the nineteenth century. Only twentieth century technology combined with the brutality of the Soviet Union under Stalin enabled to carry out such ethnic cleansings: during the Second World War five groups-- the Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, Karachay and Meskhetian Turks -- were deported from the Caucasus to Central Asia and Siberia.

[3] In fact, the Russian conquest of the Caucasus started with not merely an ethnic cleansing but with a full blown genocide. In 1783 Suvorov, Catherine the Great’s famous general, carried out a “merciless slaughter” of the Nogays – the nomads roaming the steppes north of the Caucasus. Stalin's "deportations" were carried out in the 20th century.

[4] This was the self view of the Emperors and their elite. Nicholas I, for example, was extremely proud of abolishing the capital punishment in Russia, which did not perturb him from sentencing people to run the gauntlet hundreds of times, and thus to a certain death.

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MUHİTTİN ÖZSAĞLAM
NORTH CYPRUS

The 21 May 1864 is conventionally seen as the beginning of “The Great Circassian Exile”, when Circassians were forced to migrate to Ottoman territories by the Russian Empire. But the tragedy of the Circassians is not well known in the world at large or even within the ex-Ottoman territories... During my childhood, my grandfather and my great-uncle used to tell me their family-memories. Those memories were connected with the tragedies they experienced while travelling to Cyprus from their home-regions in the Caucasus... My grandfather always spoke about the death of his great-uncle on board ship before reaching Larnaca (Cyprus). His great-uncle died from malaria, and his body was cast into the sea ... We can still hear many such stories from the descendants of the victims of 21 May 1864 now living in Cyprus. But, unfortunately, the descendants have not only forgotten the culture of their ancestors, they don't even know the historical facts nowadays...But recently the descendants have begun to engage with the culture and the tragedy of their ancestors...advances in technology and possibilities of communication allow people to learn from one another... The collapse of the Soviet Union and also recent events in the Caucasus have facilitated this awareness... Today the descendants of exiled Circassians in Jordan, Syria,

Jordan, European countries, the USA and Canada have an opportunity to make contact with the people who live in the motherland (Caucasus), and they also have the opportunity to visit that motherland.

Finally, Circassians have come face to face with their historical catastrophe and tragedy... Now is the time to rectify the negative impact of this catastrophe and tragedy on new generations of Circassians who have lost their mother tongue and culture as well... Circassians have to raise their voices and demand their democratic rights, including return to their homeland, by utilising international institutions and law... But that should not be done by deploying chauvinist discourses... they should also be open for dialogue with the Russian Federation. **Dr. Muhittin Tolga ÖZSAĞLAM, Department of International Relations-Near East University, NORTH CYPRUS.**

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MURAT PAPŞU
TURKEY

This year is the 146th anniversary of the “Circassian Exile” symbolised by 21 May 1864. “Emigration”, “forced emigration”, “exile” and “genocide”, which have been used successively from past to the present, are also indicators of how the Circassian Diaspora politicized. No matter how it is called, this population movement, the most massive period of which was between 1858-1865, and through which more than one million people flowed to the Ottoman lands, is a great tragedy and crime against humanity whose consequences are still felt today.

A proverb says “One who loses his homeland loses everything”. The Circassians faced the danger of losing everything left by losing their homeland. But, their commemoration of their lost homeland and people even after one and half century later disproves their own proverb in a way. **Murat PAPŞU, Researcher-Translator, Editor of the book “Vatanından Uzaklara Çerkesler” (Circassian Away From Their Homeland, in Turkish, 2004). TURKEY.**

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MUSA SHANIBOV
KBR, RUSSIA

The revival of the memory of the events of May 1864 among contemporary generations of Circassians enables us clearly to understand that the Circassians are one of the world’s richest peoples in terms of their great and tragic history and at the same time one of the poorest in terms of awareness of their own history. This is the chief obstacle to our future in the third millennium. For without a shared historical memory a people cannot be united. And a fragmented people is doomed to extinction. **Musa SHANIBOV. Former president of the Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus. KBR, RUSSIA.**

————— *CW* —————

NAIMA NEFLYASHEVA
RUSSIA

The Caucasian War, along with the Muhadjir-movement that followed after it, was the greatest tragedy for the Adyghe (Circassians). A people possessed of enormous cultural, intellectual and demographic potential for development, lost not only the greater part of their native lands; their traditions, including the unique institution known as the 'Adyghe Habze', which creates among the uniform Circassian ethnos a uniform consciousness, have been deformed, and the social elite, being the basic carrier and the transmitter of these traditions, has either been destroyed or migrated to the Ottoman Empire. Today Adyghe living in Russia face the challenges of globalisation.

Circassian society has become very diffused and segmented; economic difficulties induce people to travel beyond the frontiers of the Caucasus, which, on the one hand, engenders in those who leave a feeling that they are mere accessories to the Circassian world and, on the other hand, generates risks of their assimilation. The traditional tools for exercising social control over Circassian culture have become insufficient to play their time-honoured role.

We are in need of a new, thoroughly modern project to integrate the values of our Circassian culture, to preserve that advantage which has always been peculiar to the Circassians, as is lauded in many literatures of the world, and to be welded into the global contexts of high technology and quality education. Such will be the first step along the path that will allow the Adyghe to define the vector of their future development. **Dr. Naima NEFLYASHEVA, Center for Civilizational and Regional Studies, RAS, Moscow, RUSSIA.**

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NEAL ASCHERSON
UK

I would like to see the Abkhazian government act more boldly to establish its own contacts and communications with the outside world. It's good to go round Latin America seeking diplomatic recognition. But it would be far more important - for example - to start a regular ferry service between Sukhum and Trabzon, to organise that service without waiting for Russian approval, to send the first ship and see which navy will try to stop it - Russian, Georgian? The reality of Abkhazian independence is not an abstract fact but a project made out of the concrete actions which a normal state would take. The government of Abkhazia has a historic opportunity to take those actions,. But this opportunity is not for ever; it is a window which will close after a few years. Genuine, effective Abkhazian independence could begin to free the whole southern Caucasus from its crisis of ethnic confrontation driven by Great Power manipulation. **Neal ASCHERSON, journalist, and author of Black Sea: The Birthplace of Civilisation and Barbarism. UK.**

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OLIVER BULLOUGH
UK

May 21 is a day that should not only be remembered by Circassians, for whom it means destruction and despair. All Europeans should know the date of the continent's first modern genocide. More importantly though, Russians too should remember it, not because it was when their army won the 19th century's long Caucasus War, but because it sparked a terrible tragedy. Russian leaders have -- albeit, sometimes grudgingly -- apologised for the horrors committed under Stalin, but never for those committed under Alexander II. The Circassian nation was shattered by the Russian government, and that is a crime that must be recognised. Until that recognition comes, the victory of May 21 1864 will remain a stain on the honour of a great nation. **Oliver BULLOUGH, Caucasus Editor for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, and the author of Let Our Fame be Great, journeys among the defiant people of the Caucasus. UK.**

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PATRICK ARMSTRONG
CANADA

I do not think such commemorations are a good idea because the memory of yesterday's miseries can lead to tomorrow's.

Warfare is one of the engines of history – people live in this place and not that, speak this language and not that, have this religion and not that as the consequences of victory or defeat in war. The Circassians lost a long and brutal war and many of them went into exile as miserable refugees. But all peoples have the same past; all have been losers, all have been winners. My own ancestors, Border Reivers, were dispossessed of their lands and driven from Britain 400 years ago. It aids no one to dwell on these past miseries and injustices.

Therefore, commemorations of past tragedies can fuel present disputes that will lead to future tragedies. They should be matters of history to be dispassionately remembered and assessed. These events happened and, in most cases, had the losers been the winners, they would have done the same to their enemies. **Patrick ARMSTRONG, Political analyst, CANADA.**

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PAUL HENZE
USA

Circassians Have Survived Exile and Division

Circassians fought the Russian advance into the Caucasus five years longer than the great Shamil, who surrendered in 1859. They continued their resistance to the advance of the Tsar's armies until 1864. The greater portion of the Circassian population was then forced to emigrate to the Ottoman Empire, where they settled not only in what is the Turkish Republic today but in distant areas such as Jordan and Arabia. A lively community continues to exist in northern Israel, where they still speak their language and maintain their traditions. In Jordan Circassians have important political and military influence. Some Circassian groups managed

to remain in their original territories. When he began to divide up the Caucasus into administrative units, Stalin followed a policy of keeping these Circassians divided. In each administrative division he joined them with other ethnic groups to whom they were not related. In some cases, they were hostile to the groups with which they had to share their regions. It not surprising, therefore, that when the Soviet Union collapsed, Circassian groups became eager to restore close ties among themselves and also to make contact with Circassians living abroad. As a result a strong movement has developed for unity among Circassians, including restoring links with countrymen living in Turkey and elsewhere in the Middle East. Within Russia this movement has taken the form of a campaign to establish a unified Circassian republic where all Circassians live together, cultivate their language and their traditions. Circassians have a distinguished history which goes back hundreds, if not thousands, of years. They will continue to press Russia to recognize their claim to united status. They deserve success. **Dr. Paul B. HENZE. Historian and former diplomat. USA.**

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PAULA GARB
USA

This is to express my admiration for the Circassian people and their leaders who have kept alive the language, culture and history of the diverse Circassian groups. This has been accomplished despite the adversities endured during the wars defending their land, the great exodus from their ancient homes, and life as immigrants for several generations. As Circassians around the world mark the events that brought tragedy and grief to all their families, those of us who have come to know and love Circassian cultures wish success in all efforts to ensure all Circassians access to their homelands and to preserve their distinctive cultural heritage. **Paula GARB, Lecturer in Anthropology and Co-Director of the Center for Citizen Peacebuilding at the University of California, Irvine, USA.**

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RADOSLAW ZURAWSKI VEL GRAJEWSKI
POLAND

Polish-Circassian Relation in 19th Century

Till the beginning of 1830s the region of Caucasus was not present in the Polish political thought. After the fail of Polish November Uprising against Russia (1830-1831), all the political camps of the so called Polish Great Emigration (ca. 10 000 people – the political, military and cultural elite of the country who decided to go to exile mainly to France and Great Britain) started to look carefully at the North Caucasus, where the Circassians and Chechens were still waging the war against Russia. The main reason of that attention was a presence of about 9 000 of former soldiers of the Polish Army, who after the disaster of the uprising – had been forcibly sent by Russian authorities to fight the Caucasian Mountainards. Their military service in the ranks of the Russian army was the form of persecution and punishment imposed on them after the collapse of Polish uprising. Many information about the numerous desertions of those soldiers which soon reached Western Europe, turned the attention of the head of the right wing of Polish Emigration – prince Adam George

Czartoryski on the Caucasus question. The Eastern Crisis connected with the conflict in Ottoman Empire between the Sultan Mahmud 2nd and the Pasha of Egypt Muhammad Ali, produced a serious political tension in Russian-British relations especially after the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi (1833). That situation offered to the Czartoryski's "diplomacy" a possibility of developing its activity unofficially supported by Foreign Office. The Poles in collaboration with David Urquhart and some British Circassophiles managed to publish "The Portfolio" – the paper that contained a series of Russian secret diplomatic correspondence captured by insurgents in Warsaw in 1830, and many articles against Russian conquests in Caucasus. Count Władysław Zamoyski - the nephew of Czartoryski and the group of Urquhart organised famous "Vixen" expedition to Circassia to provoke even more tension in English-Russian relations and if possible to give the reason for war. From the Polish point of view, the war between Russia and any European power was a precondition of any future uprising in Poland to regain the independence of the country. War in Caucasus offered the hope, that it could be developed into the British-Russian war so necessary for the Polish aims. Still the Poles failed in their attempts to obtain more effective support from Foreign Office for the organisation of Polish detachments created with the deserters from Russian army to fight as the allied troops on the side of Circassians and Chechens against Russians.

Nevertheless in 1844 Czartoryski managed to send his emissary Ludwik Zwierkowski to Shapsugs. In 1846 Zwierkowski heavily wounded returned to Istanbul. Then Kazimierz Gordon - another agent of Czartoryski was sent to Imam Shamil to Dagestan, still he managed to reach the territories of Ubykh only, where he was killed by a Russian agent. So the attempts to create the direct Polish-Circassian relations in fourties failed, still Czartoryski was successful in creating the place to live for Polish deserters from Russian army in Caucasus. In 1842 he obtained a small village at Asiatic bank of Bosphorus where, under the name of Adampol – Polonezköy, the Poles who managed to escape from Caucasus were settled down. This village still exists today and about 40 of its inhabitants still speak Polish.

The idea of the Polish Legion in Circassia came into being not earlier than after the end of the Crimean War. In 1857 the detachment organised in Ottoman empire, commanded by Teofil Łapiński has landed near Circassian village Tuapse. This Legion (about 120 soldiers) fought against Russians in the 1857-1860 campaigns. The last act of Polish-Circassian brotherhood in arms took place during the January Uprising in Poland (1863-1864). On October 1863 next Polish detachment commanded by colonel Klemens Przewłocki was organized and sent to Circassia with the initiative of prince Witold Czartoryski – the son of Adam George. It fought in Caucasus till March 1864. The anti-Russian armed resistance of both peoples – the Poles and the Circassians came to their bitter end in the same time and resulted in national catastrophes in 1864 – the Circassian resistance in Caucasus ended with a massive exodus of the mountaniards to the Ottoman Empire and the failure of Polish January Uprising in Russian part of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth resulted in the darkest period of persecutions and Russification of the country when the very name of Poland was forbidden and replaced by Russian invented term – the Vistula Country and the Polish language was erased from the schools and the public space. The only place where it was allowed were churches. So the Poles could pray in Polish and both the peoples – Poles and Circassians believed and still believe that God is great – greater than Russia. **Radosław Żurawski vel GRAJEWSKI, Professor of Lodz University Ph.D. Author of the in Polish: *Wielka Brytania w "dyplomacji" księcia Adama Jerzego Czartoryskiego wobec kryzysu wschodniego (1832-1841)*, Warszawa 1999, (Great Britain in the "diplomacy" of prince Adam George Czartoryski towards the Eastern Crisis (1832-1841). POLAND.**

RIEKS SMEETS
NETHERLANDS

21 May is in an appropriate occasion to remember the Ubykh, who have been hit worst of all peoples involved in the Caucasian War. Their numbers, which were initially already lower than those of their immediate relatives, were first reduced dramatically by the losses inflicted during the defense of their homeland, then during the exode and its aftermath, and again during the turbulent period in Turkey following the First World War. The survivors lived in a few pockets of villages dispersed over distant Turkish vilayets, which left their language with little chances for survival. Many Ubykh gradually assimilated to things Circassian and all of them eventually developed into Turkish citizens cherishing their Ubykh(-Circassian) descent. Thanks to men like Uslar, Dirr, Mészáros, Dumézil, Vogt, Charachidzé and other linguists, and thanks to Tevfik Esenç, the last speaker and guardian of the language of the Ubykh, the language as well as oral traditions and many aspects of the social and cultural practices of the Ubykh were well documented.

While the other North-west Caucasian languages, Adyghe and Kabardian and Abkhazian and Abazinian, outside the Caucasus area are severely endangered, with most states concerned not promoting actively minority languages, this day also invites us to take stock of the actual situation in the Caucasus itself. There – nowadays – the situation seems most promising for Abkhazian, with the Abkhazians having taken irreversibly the future of their language in their own hands.

For Adyghe and Kabardian, as for Abazinian, the situation is more complicated and the recently published Unesco Atlas of Endangered Languages marks the status of all of them as vulnerable. In spite of the losses caused by the Caucasian War, the situation cannot be characterized as hopeless, which is largely due to positive effects of early Soviet language policies. Concerted efforts from authorities, local organizations and institutions are needed to help these languages regain their impaired viability. A thorough analysis of the actual situation, and the development and execution of policies aimed at the promotion and safeguarding of these languages, may help them, and the cultural expressions expressed through them, survive and further develop. If Kabardian, Adyghe and Abazinian are no longer intensively transmitted within the family, if they are not given fully-fledged roles in public life, education and the media, one may fear that these languages will survive in the Caucasus only by a few generations more than in the Diaspora. **Dr. Rieks SMEETS. Linguist and expert in cultural heritage. He is the first secretary of UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. NETHERLANDS.**

SETENEY SHAMI
USA

On Commemorations and Nations: A Brief Note on Remembering May 21, 1864

In the life of nations, commemorations can be seen as “coming of age” rituals that mark and symbolize stages of maturation. Commemorations have been described as the process by which nations come to know themselves.

It is remarkable how widely and deeply May 21 has become established as *the* principal commemoration event for Circassians across their far-flung localities. Small or large, Circassian communities now mark the day in various ways that work to validate three important dimensions of the Circassian experience today: the memory of the homeland, the significance of local community and the embrace of the diaspora. It is interesting and, I believe, important to pay attention to the ways in which this day is being organized in the different Circassian localities as well as how it is represented virtually on the worldwide web. The content of the activities organized and the speeches made are an important articulation of the state of the diaspora/nation.

Much has been written by historians and social scientists about the nature and importance of commemorations for nations: they are simultaneously symbols and events; collective and personal; political and cultural. Most importantly however they are both about the past and the future. The way in which the past of a nation is remembered is instrumental in the making of its futures. Therefore, while marking with grief the dispersal of the Circassians from their homeland, let May 21 also represent the joy of a nation that is coming to know itself. **Seteney SHAMI, Social Science Research Council, Eurasia Program Director, USA.**

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SIBEL SIBER
NORTH CYPRUS

“My mother was very beautiful. I remember her vaguely. She was tall and had big, green eyes. She had long dark hair coming down to her waist. During the Great Circassian Migration, my mother and father, together with their two children, set sail for the unknown.

They were forced to abandon their homeland, leaving behind their roots, memories and everything they possessed. In spite of all the suffering they had gone through, they never lost their hope. Because, they knew that losing hope was synonymous with death. As they sailed for the unknown, trying to hold on to life in boundless seas, diseases arose in their vessel. Hunger, misery, diseases and death were following them.”

This is how my great grandmother used to recount her memories of the Circassian migration. She was a little child during the migration but had suffered the greatest of pains that left deep scars in her life.

Her beautiful, long dark-haired mother also got sick. My grandmother’s eyes used to become foggy while telling the story... *“I was only four years old but I remember them throwing her into the sea... Her long dark hair entangled with the waves... Those on the ship watched her*

lifeless body until it disappeared... I remember weeping with my brother on our father's lap... I was furious and outraged, crying 'Why did you throw my mother into the sea?'"

She then remembered coming on land on her father's shoulders. They had continued their journey of hope without her mother. In spite of all the hardships, the father and the two children had managed to hold on to life on a small island (Cyprus) very different from their homeland.

This is the story she used to tell us. And I used to visualize that ship and my beautiful, long-haired Circassian great-grandmother in my head. Although living through is always much more painful than the stories told, I could feel the magnitude of the pain suffered by the Circassian people. **Dr. Sibel SİBER, Member of Parliament, Republican Turkish Party (CTP, Left Wing), NORTH CYPRUS.**

————— *CW* —————

STEPHEN SHENFIELD
USA

Let us remember not only the Circassians and Ubykhs but all who have been dispossessed, massacred, colonized, enslaved, or driven from their homes — in the name of race or religion, civilization or progress, geopolitics or security (not for them), history or destiny, “population exchange,” economic development (not theirs), revenge or redemption (for wrongs not committed by them) -- or simply for sport. Let us remember especially those who were wiped out to the last man, woman, and child: the indigenous Tasmanians, the Taino and Arawak of the island the conquerors called Hispaniola.

What is done cannot be undone: all our tears shall not wash out a word of it (Omar Khayyam). Few of the victims, and none of those who suffered worst, are still here to be compensated. So why do we remember? We remember in order to claim and mourn the victims as our own. We remember in order to restore their good name, for the conquerors justified themselves by insulting and defaming their victims. We remember in order to curse the memory of the conquerors, even if — especially if — the conquerors were our own ancestors. And we do all these things in order that the conquest should stop, to preserve the little that is still left to preserve. **Stephen SHENFIELD. Independent researcher and translator. Editor of JRL Research & Analytical Supplement. USA.**

————— *CW* —————

SUFIAN ZHEMUKHOV
KBR, RUSSIA

Майм и 21

(«Псэм и т|асхъап|э» усэ тхылъым щыщ)

Дэпщэщ мы щ|ым щызэщ|ифыгур
Уэлбанэ лыпсу зыуфэнщ|ар?

Тенджыз Ф|ыц|эжбым щитхьэщ|ыну
Хьэдэ лъэмыж абы телъар?

Къэтэджыжынукуым ди л|ахэр,
Сабырщ толькунхэр, яжьэр псыфш,
Ит|ани нэпс мыгъуцыжахэр
Уэлбанэ дыгъэм иримыф.

Т|эк|у нэхъ дысакъыу зедвгъэгъасэ
Щыди|эк|э дыщ|эщыгъуэн.
Тхьэм дяпэк|э дыхуимыгъазэ
А гуауэр тщызыгъэгъупщэн.

Жэмыхъуэ Суфян, адыгэ щ|эныгъэл|, усақ|уэ

May 21st

(From the poetry book “*The Soft Spot of the Soul*”)

When will the earth of this land be able
To swallow up the bloody drizzle that drenched it?
When will the Black Sea be able
To wash away the bridge of corpses that was laid down upon it?

Our dead will not rise up again.
The waves are quiet, and the ashes are wet.
And yet the scorching Sun
Cannot dry up our tears.

Let us train ourselves to be more sensitive.
Let us mourn the tragedy we now have.
May the future not bring us a grief so great
That it should overwhelm our present sorrow!

Translated by John Colarusso

Sufian ZHEMUKHOV, Circassian scholar and a poet, KBR, RUSSIA.

————— *CW* —————

THOMAS DE WAAL
USA

May 21 2010

History is full of black spots and absences. Acts of commemoration and memory are all about honouring those who have fallen into these black holes of collective oblivion. When Hitler reportedly said “Who speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?” he was trying to invoke an executioner’s prerogative to have his victims forgotten.

Who remembers the Circassians? Theirs was a name that was readily recognizable to much of the world a century and a half ago but sadly that is no longer true. So it doubly important on May 21 to remember the hundreds of thousands of Circassians who were deported from their homeland and killed by the Russian imperial government in 1864 and subsequent years. The guilt of Russia is shared by many others. My own country, Great Britain, gave the Circassians unrealistic promises and then forgot about them—and it has many acts of colonial mass murder on its conscience too. What happened to the Circassians is far too little known by the wider world. I would like to see monuments to those who suffered placed along the Black Sea coast and for Russia's leaders to give orders for this missing page to be put into Russia's history books. Collective remembering can help soothe this big historical wound. **Thomas De WAAL, Senior Associate, Caucasus, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, USA.**

————— *CW* —————

WALTER RICHMOND
USA

Having thoroughly examined all the records, reports and memoirs written by eyewitnesses and the architects of the actions of the Russian Army in Circassia in the 1860s, I can come to no other conclusion than that the Russians committed genocide against the Circassian, Ubykh, and Abaza peoples. Attempts by Russian scholars and, unfortunately, at least one American scholar, to portray it as a regrettable miscalculation by General Nikolai Yevdokimov and his staff are easily refuted by the General's own words and actions, as well as the eyewitness reports of the officers involved in the deportation. Historical accuracy demands that the current Russian government recognize the actions of the Russian Imperial Army in the 1860s against the Circassians, Ubykhs, and Abazas as genocide, and Yevdokimov should be labelled a war criminal. **Walter RICHMOND, Assistant Professor of Russian Area Studies, Occidental College, Los Angeles. USA.**

————— *CW* —————

YAKOV GORDIN
RUSSIA

It can be said with certainty that — until Stalin's deportation of the repressed nations — there was no civilizational and demographic disaster in the modern history of Russia and Europe comparable with the expulsion of the Circassians of the Western Caucasus from the places where they had lived for many ages.

This monstrous deed, the chief ideologue and executor of which was General Yevdokimov, who persuaded Tsar Alexander II of its expediency, was carried out in opposition to the opinion of thoughtful military intellectuals such as General N.N. Rayevsky, Junior, commander of the Black Sea line, and General Filipson, chief of staff of the Caucasus Corps.

The Western Caucasus was depopulated. This deed was not only an act of criminal cruelty; it was also deeply inexpedient even from the point of view of the Russian state. The mass

colonization of the Western Caucasus was a failure. An ancient and unique civilization was destroyed. Russia deprived itself of hundreds of thousands of people who under a rational policy could have become its citizens, shared with Russia their special experience, and, in particular, contributed hardy and courageous soldiers to its army.

It is time to draw conclusions from this bitter experience. **Yakov GORDIN. Writer, historian, author of books on Russian history. RUSSIA.**

<http://www.circassianworld.com/new/war-and-genocide/1465>



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