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AGREEMENT OF 1807 AS AN STAGE IN UNION OF CHECHNYA
TO RUSSIA

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Abstract

A very controversial issue both in Russian and foreign historiography about the time and methods (forms) of joining Chechnya to Russia is considered in the paper. It is noted that the union of Chechnya to Russia is not a one-time act but a long and historically complicated, multifaceted process that began at the end of the 16th century and ended with the end of the Caucasian War. It is emphasized that this process is divided into a number of stages, one of which is the Russian-Chechen agreement of 1807. The joining of the North Caucasus peoples, including Chechnya to Russia, was a historically long, multifaceted and complex process (mid-16th – first half of the 19th centuries). Thus, the first embassy of the highlanders which went to Moscow with a petition for patronage and citizenship of Russia was Adyghe. At the end of the 16th century (in 1588), the Chechen embassy headed by Batay went to Moscow for the same purpose. In 1589, the Chechens received a letter from the Moscow Tsar, according to which Russia took the Chechens under its patronage. In the 17th–18th centuries, Russian-Chechen relations continued to deepen and strengthen. Over ten Chechen delegations visited Moscow in the 17th century. Russian policy was distinguished by extreme inconsistency in the North Caucasus in the 16th–19th centuries. Political and economic methods in relations with the highlanders were constantly interspersed with military and power methods. This was the case in Russian-Chechen relations at the turn of the 18th–19th centuries.

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1. Introduction

At the turn of the 70s–80s of the 18th century, a number of agreements on the citizenship of the Chechens to Russia were signed between Chechen societies (there was no single administrative and political decision-making center obligatory for all Chechens) and representatives of the Russian Caucasian administration. This was (on the part of Russia) a continuation of the political course outlined in relation to the Caucasus during the reign of Peter I., Kliuchevskii (1989) formulated:

After the Nishtad peace, when Russia took a firm footing on the Baltic Sea, two foreign policy issues remained in turn – one is territorial, another is national. The first was to push the southern border of the state to its natural limits, to the northern coastline of the Black Sea with the Crimea and the Sea of Azov, and to the Caucasian ridge. This is an oriental question in its past historical formulation. (p. 164)

2. Problem Statement

In 1807, the expedition of Russian troops to Chechnya had far-reaching political consequences for the latter, rather than military ones which, in our opinion, have not been properly assessed in the historical literature. We are talking about the Russian-Chechen agreements of 1807, the citizenship of the Chechens to Russia and the establishment process of the Russian administrative power in Chechnya. These events became a crucial stage in the long process of joining Chechnya to Russia.

3. Research Questions

The research subject is the Russian-Chechen agreement of 1807.

Besides, the paper attempts to:

- show that the rural communities of lowland Chechnya tried to get closer to Russia in a peaceful, political, and negotiable way from the end of the 18th century;
- demonstrate the political foundation which the complicated and multifaceted process of the union of Chechnya to Russia started with.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the paper is to designate the role of the Russian-Caucasian agreement of 1807 in the further process of the union of Chechnya to Russia.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis was the principles of scientific objectivity, historicism, system analysis and a specifically historical approach to the phenomena under study.

6. Findings

At the turn of the 18th-19th centuries, individual Chechen societies continued to strengthen their peaceful relations with Russia. At the end of 1799, a Chechen delegation “from the clergy who have the first respect between them, and many people from the best surnames” came to negotiations with the Caucasian administration in Naur. The Chechen representatives signed “articles”, “the content of which was to observe calmness in every possible way in the cordon” (ACAC, 1866).

This agreement shows that emerging problems could often be resolved as a result of peaceful negotiations with the mutual desire of the parties. Nevertheless, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Russian side rarely took such steps preferring to “punish” the highlanders by force of arms and thereby bring them into “complete submission”.

The gallows represented even less guarantees for order and tranquility: instead of one hanged robber, we, in the person of his remaining relatives, as usual numerous and kindled with a thirst for revenge, acquired a whole legion of them, – wrote Grabovskii condemning the indiscriminate use of force against peaceful Vainakhs. We say without exaggeration that we were paid with the lives of a dozen of people for each hanged person and generally killed one by us (Grabovskii, 1876, p. 73)

Peace negotiations and political methods have had a significantly better effect, moving forward the process of Russian-Chechen rapprochement.

By the Naurian agreement of 1799, the Caucasian administration (as Yermolov did later) entrusted the responsibility of protecting the Terek line from attacks and raids by “non-peaceful” Chechens on the “peaceful” people living along the Terek and Sunzha. The fact was that the latter were completely unable to fulfill this task. The Decembrist writer Bestuzhev-Marlinskii (1958) who served in the Caucasus for a long time reflected this plight of the “peaceful” Chechens quite figuratively:

“To tell the truth, the local position of them (the Terek Chechens. – auth.) between two strong neighbors (Russians and” non-peaceful ”highlanders. – auth.) makes them ... deceive. They know that the Russians will not keep up because of the river to protect them from the revenge of highlanders; flying like snow, they, by necessity, as well as by habit, are friends of the same blood but at the same time they become coward in front of the Russians, whom they are afraid of. (p. 72)

Inhabitants of the Tersko-Sunzhenskaya plain in the late 18th – early 19th centuries became citizens of Russia and strove to live in peace and in good-neighborly relations with the Russians living along the Terek line. The “peaceful” Chechens could gradually become the pillar with which Russia could extend its influence over Chechnya, provided that the Russian authorities did not interfere in their internal affairs while maintaining internal self-government.

In September 1802, the “alienation of the new unioners” began accelerated with the appointment of P.D. Tsitsianov as the Caucasus governor. On August 16, 1803, in relation to the Tsar, Tsitsianov wrote: “...The means to keep the unbridledness of the Asian people with fear, all meekness and

condescension for the cowardice and weakness of the worshiper, and thereby to establish silence on the line stretching for 800 miles, I consider as the only one way ...” (RSMHA, 1976). At the end of August 1803, proceeding from such attitudes, P.D. Tsitsianov sent a squad of Russian troops to Chechnya (1200 infantry and Cossacks, two guns) which destroyed several Chechen villages near the Terek (Noim-Berdy, Isti-su, and etc.) (RSMHA, 1960). At the end of May 1804, Lieutenant Colonel Maksimovich conducted a similar operation against the Sunzha Chechens who “... as punishment for stubbornness and audacity, ordered to destroy two significant villages of rioters to the ground and then returned to Vladikavkaz” (Zubov, 1835, p. 57).

Nevertheless, the process of Russian-Chechen rapprochement continued at the beginning of the 19th century. On November 5, 1806, Lieutenant Colonel Murtuz-Ali-bek Aksaevsky reported to the Caucasian governor, Count Gudovich (appointed as the new Caucasian governor after the death of Tsitsianov in the summer of 1806 under the walls of Baku) that the foremen of the largest Chechen village, Shali, applied to him with an expression of “obedience” and with a request “to allow them 4 confidants from 4 surnames to go with me to the Imperial Court” for confirmation of their society citizenship to Russia (ACAC, 1869).

Russian-Chechen relations developed in a progressive manner, along an ascending line by the beginning of the 19th century. The expedition of Russian troops to Chechnya which led to large casualties on both sides was completely unjustified and groundless at the beginning of 1807 under the command of General Bulgakov.

In general, Russia’s policy in the North Caucasus in the 16th-19th centuries was characterized by extreme inconsistency. Political and economic methods in relations with the highlanders were constantly interspersed with military and force. This was the case in Russian-Chechen relations at the turn of the 18th–19th centuries. For instance, in 1807, the expedition of Russian troops to Chechnya did not correspond to the plan of actions of the Russian authorities in the North Caucasus presented by Count Gudovich to the Tsar in June 1806 (Establishment of Russian rule in the Caucasus, 1904).

On April 6, Gudovich addressed the “Announcement to the foremen and the people of the Great Chechen Ataga” in which he expressed the readiness to “forgive” “all wrongdoings” if the Chechens give “the best and most honorable amanats”, “swear an oath of eternal loyalty to E.I.V. “, and undertake “not to do predation and raids” (ACAC, 1866). In the first half of April 1807, 52 Chechen elders signed a “Resolution” document on the entry of Chechens into Russian citizenship.

After a military expedition to Chechnya in 1807, Gudovich became convinced that political and economic means could fetch more to Russian-Chechen relations than using force unlike many Caucasian military leaders and St. Petersburg dignitaries. By all means, he tried to calm Chechnya and revive and continue the trend of peaceful rapprochement between Russia and the Chechens which began to emerge from the end of the 18th century (Russian-Chechen agreements at the turn of the 70s and 80s of this century). In July 1807, Gudovich appealed to the inhabitants of the “peaceful Chechen villages” (Ataga, Germenchuk, Gekhi, and etc.) who signed the oath of allegiance to Russia, assuring them that if they renounced “predation” and loyalty to Russia, all the previously promised benefits will be provided and they will “be accepted” “on the line” “on an equal basis with All-Russian nationals” (ACAC, 1869).

At the same time, on behalf of I.V. Gudovich, the most authoritative Aksaev owners in Chechnya, especially Khadzhi-Redjab Kandurov, launched intermediary activities in Chechen societies persuading them to be at peace with Russia and enter into its citizenship (ACAC, 1869). Kandurov recommended conferring officer ranks (not lower than captain) and giving an appropriate salary to “the best two foremen of Malaya Ataga and the village of Chulik and Shali Bey-Bulat Taimanov, respectively” who have great authority in Chechnya and could contribute to the growth of Russian influence. I.V. Gudovich agreed to allocate several thousand rubles (2.850) for giving them out to the Chechen foremen. Biriukov (1998) believes that this was a “veiled form of bribery” of the Chechen social elite.

In October 1807, a delegation of Chechen elders from 12 villages arrived in Vladikavkaz and “swore an oath of allegiance to Russian citizenship under Muslim law under the banners at Alkoran” (ACAC, 1866). Severe punishments were envisaged for violation of the assumed obligations and, above all, for the continuation of “predation”: “they must expect complete ruin and extermination” and “these amanats will be punished if any evil is committed by the Chechens anywhere” (RSMHA, 1985). Therefore, the tsarist authorities applying the policy of “carrot and stick” and combining military expeditions with trade benefits and other “profits”, sought to achieve complete obedience of the Chechens, and to end the armed struggle with Russia.

It is surprising that the “ataman of Chechnya” Bey-Bulat Taimiev was not in the above-mentioned large Chechen delegation that signed an agreement in Vladikavkaz on the citizenship of the Chechens to Russia. Some reasons, some motives prevented him from signing this document together with the rest of the Chechen delegates. In the light of subsequent events, it is obvious that he was a supporter of the normalization of Russian-Chechen relations. On November 7, 1807, the commandant of the Vladikavkaz fortress, Major General Ivelich, reported to Gudovich that a week after the signing of the above Russian-Chechen document, “Sergeant Major Bey-Bulat Taimanov, the chief Chechen rider, came to me from the village of Shali ... he swore an oath of allegiance to Russia ... He may be very much needed in this place and deserve more than other Chechens bearing the name of an officer, receiving a salary ... He will continue to be zealous in the future in the event of disastrous consequences to withholding that may be from the Chechens” (ACAC, 1866).

In December 1807, Gudovich addressed the “honorary foremen, clergy and all residents” of the Chechen villages (Gudovich’s predecessor as the Caucasian governor, General PD Tsitsianov, never allowed himself to use the word “honorable” when addressing the highland elite). He stated that observing the signed agreements “you will not be distinguished from natural Russian subjects in anything ... otherwise the slightest non-fulfillment of points and violation of the oath will incur the just wrath of E.I.V. and inevitable punishment on you” (ACAC, 1869).

Thus, in April and October 1807, 20 Chechen villages “Kermenchuk, Myacherugay, Malaya Ataga, Bolshaya Ataga, Ustunkul, Chakiere, Martan, Anchelgan, Kelena, Malaya Goyta, Bolshaya Goyta, Gareni, Cheshturnyu, Gekhi, Shalazh, Kalga, Nazhakhva, Aydemir, Nitbtyakhva, Bey-Bulat” took Russian citizenship.

Most of the Chechen communities that took Russian citizenship in 1807, namely 12 villages, did this after the end of Bulgakov’s military campaign in Chechnya, not as a result of direct military pressure.

The acceptance of Russian citizenship in 1807 by Chechen societies, certainly, did not contribute to the “power of attorney” of the Chechens to I.V. Gudovich. Although one cannot deny his role in this process: he pursued a more flexible, more moderate policy towards the Chechens (and all highlanders) than his predecessor Tsitsianov. Serov (1928) wrote (unfortunately, we did not find confirmation in archival documents) that in 1807 the meeting of the elders of 104 villages contributed to the decision to put an end to the armed struggle with Russia.

Kolosov (1982) believed that Bulgakov's “unsuccessful for tsarist” campaign in Chechnya in 1807 changed the nature of political relations between Chechen-Ingushetia and Russia for a long time. “There has come almost 19-year period” of “armed peace” between them. From 1807 to 1826, tsarism no longer undertook large (like Bulgakov's) military expeditions deep into Chechnya. At this time, “negotiations, agreements, and compromises prevailed in Russian-Chechen-Ingush political relations” (Koloso, 1982, p. 26).

Undoubtedly, 1807 played a significant role in the development of Russian-Chechen relations, in particular, the signed documents on the entry of lowland and foothill Chechen villages into Russian citizenship. Some authors even believe that this date can be taken as the starting point of joining Chechnya to Russia. “Quite recently”, writes Oleinikov (2000), “for the first time in 183 years, documents on the entry into citizenship of Russia and the Chechens in 1807 were published,” although “some Chechen societies began to accept Russian citizenship back in the 18th century” (p. 62).

The Russian-Chechen political documents of 1807 differed from the previous ones (except for the embassy of Shikh-Murza Okotsky to Moscow in 1588). Negotiations on the entry of Chechen societies into Russian citizenship in the 18th century were often conducted with individual officers, at best case, with the Kizlyar commandants. Signed Russian-Chechen documents remained in Kizlyar.

The control over the plain Chechnya was entrusted to cordon commanders from the end of the 18th century. It was decided to create a system of administrative (bailiff) management under the command of Colonel Akhverdov in this territory.

At the end of 1807, the Chechen villages that had sworn allegiance to Russia were transferred under the control of Akhverdov in October of the same year.

I.V. Gudovich presented his vision and structure of administrative power in Chechnya to Minister of Foreign Affairs N.P. Rumyantsev in a report dated December 27, 1807. Judging by this document, the Caucasian administration sought to establish strict control over Chechen villages (AFPRES, 1806a). In early January 1808, N.P. Rumyantsev told Gudovich that “the orders you made to introduce the initial order over the subordinate people of the Chechens by assigning bailiffs to them have fully deserved the highest approval of His Majesty” (AFPRES, 1806b).

The tsarist administration decided to use the system of governance traditionally formed in Chechen societies for its own purposes – through village elders at the early stages of the administrative management formation in the plain part of Chechnya securing their old rights and functions with their power and endowing them with new ones.

At the same time, not all Chechen foremen were approved as bailiffs but only those who showed their loyalty and trustworthiness to Russia.

The plain and foothill Chechens, who accepted Russian citizenship in 1807, did not pay taxes to the Russian authorities unlike the Dagestan possessions joined to Russia in 1806.

Blieva (1989) believes that “the military-administrative control over Chechnya was carried out by the end of the first decade of the 19th century” (p. 86). She emphasizes that it is possible “to speak only about the beginning of the formation of the tsarist administrative apparatus of management” (Blieva, 1989, p. 88).

The Russian-Chechen political acts of 1807 were the next (after those signed at the end of the 16th–18th centuries) most essential stage in the political rapprochement of Chechnya to Russia. This time, actions to establish tangible and actual domination over part of Chechnya were undertaken by Russia, namely, the creation of a system of administrative management took its outbreak.

7. Conclusion

Therefore, the political events in Chechnya in 1807 (excluding Bulgakov's campaign in Chechnya) were an essential stage in the union of Chechnya with Russia which showed that peaceful political and economic means give significant outcomes in advancing this process.

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