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THE REVOLT OF 1825 IN CHECHNYA LED BY BEIBULAT
TAIMIEV

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Abstract

The revolt of 1825 was a significant event in the history of the Caucasian War. It was led by Beibulat Taimiyev, the leader of the Chechen people, who had unquestionable authority and was the leader of all social and political processes and momentous events in Chechnya in the first third of the 19th century. Chechnya at that time was a fairly developed region having friendly relations with its neighbours. Beibulat supported the teachings of Dagestani preacher Magomed Yaragsky, believing them to be the force that would help him unite and mobilise Chechens in the liberation struggle. From the spring of 1824, the clergy launched large-scale preaching activities throughout Chechnya, calling on the people to stand up for faith and freedom. The rebel forces were extremely mobile and manoeuvrable in 1825. By the summer of 1825, most of the North Caucasus was engulfed in unrest. Russian power did not extend beyond Grozny. This was the period of the peak of Beibulat's power. Meetings of representatives from all Chechen villages were regularly convened to resolve major issues. A vertical of administrative power was established: the turgaks - the elders - military-political leader Beibulat Taimiyev - the People's Assembly - the gulam. The People's Assembly elected him head of all Chechnya with the title "Mehkan Da" and gave him the right to appoint and dismiss elders. A system of punishments was established for disobedience to Beibulat's authority and orders.

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1. Introduction

The revolt of 1825 has been the subject of research of many authors in the context of military and political studies. The first generalising work on this problem was conducted by Kolosov (1991), in which he was the first to use documentary sources to study the military and political activities of Taimiev, his influence on political events in Chechnya and his role as a leader in the history of Chechnya in the first third of the 19th century. All scholars of the period note Taimiyev's significance and authority among the people. Nineteenth-century Caucasologists Butkov (1869) and Dubrovin (1871) note his role and influence on the people. Gapurov (2023a, 2015a, 2018), Gapurov and Tovsultanov (2019) has made a great contribution to the study of Chechen history in general in the nineteenth century and, in particular, in the first third of the nineteenth century. He has written a number of studies on Chechen history, including the causes and course of the 1825 revolt and the role of Beibulat Taimiyev in it.

2. Problem Statement

The topic of our research involves analysing the main events of the 1825 revolt in Chechnya led by Beibulat Taimiyev.

3. Research Questions

The object of the study is the general picture of socio-economic development and political developments in Chechnya in the 1920s (Shumilina & Antsiferova, 2024).

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of our study is to show the causes, course and historical significance of the Chechen revolt of 1825.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis was the principles of objectivity, scientificity and historicism, assuming the study of facts and phenomena in all their diversity, in specific-historical conditions of their emergence and development.

6. Findings

In the late 20s of the 19th century, a new stage in the national liberation struggle of the highlanders came, known as Muridism. Muridism played a decisive role in overcoming all the difficulties that stood in the way of uniting different peoples. Muridism, as a doctrine directed against the tsarist administration, was a worldview that united the various peoples of the North Caucasus in the liberation struggle (Regnerová et al., 2024; Waite, 2024).

From the end of 1823, reports began to spread in the Caucasus about the extraordinary power of the sermons of Dagestani preacher Magomed Yaragsky, who openly called for gazavat. The ideas of

militant Muridism spread widely in Chechnya. M. Yaragsky's calls for a holy war were widely spread in Chechnya. Beibulat Taimiyev, a Chechen foreman from the village of Mairtup, was the first to respond to M. Yaragsky's calls for a holy war of gazavat against "infidels" in Chechnya. On 29 May 1825, a meeting of representatives of all Chechen societies was convened, which was an important event in the life of the Chechen people. Imam Magoma of Mairtup as a spiritual head and military leader Beibulat Taimiyev were elected. Military conscription was declared in Chechnya, and every courtyard was obliged to field one-armed horseman (Kolosov, 1991).

The Russian commanders were informed in detail about the impending uprising, but at first they did not take it with due attention. In response to A. P. Ermolov's reports requesting to strengthen the left flank of the Caucasus Line, an order came from St Petersburg to appoint General D.T. Lisanevich as a commander of the Caucasus Line. To get ahead of the rebels, in the spring of 1825, Russian troops undertook an expedition to Chechnya, which ended with the devastation of a number of auls. General Grekov, who led the operation, doubted that his actions would prevent Chechens from acting. The pause in the Russian troops' actions allowed B. Taimiev to raise a militia by summer. At the beginning of July 1825, with up to 2,000 armed horsemen, he moved from the village of Mairtup to Shali and then to Atagami (Singh et al., 2024; Tang & Yang, 2024).

General N. V. Grekov's Russian detachment moved towards Atagami, but B. Taimiev deviated from the battle and withdrew to the village of Goity, where he divided his detachment into two parts. Taimiev sent one part westwards to cause unrest among Chechens-Karabulaks and Ingush, and the other eastwards to the lands of the Kumyks. Misled by this manoeuvre, N. Grekov took measures to strengthen the Gerzel-Aul fortification, but suddenly, on the night of 7–8 July, Chechens swiftly attacked and captured the Amir-Adzhi-Yurtov fortification, completely annihilating its garrison of 155 men (Mele, 2022; Nikulin, 2023; Rawel, 2022).

The fall of Amir-Adzhi-Yurt caused confusion among the Russian commanders: it was the first time that the mountaineers had managed to storm a Russian fortress. General Grekov wrote to A.P. Yermolov: "I could never have imagined that the rebels would shake the fortification" (Ibragimov, 2013, pp. 165-166).

Then there was an attack on the fortification of the Evil Trench garrison, which was abandoned, the fortification hastily retreated to the fortress Groznaya.

Beibulat Taimiev attacked the Pregradnyi Stan fortification in an attempt to hold on to his success. The fortification survived, although Chechens managed to burn the outpost, to capture several prisoners and to take away two guns. B. Taimiyev headed for the fortress of Grozny. The situation of the Russian garrisons was complicated by the fact that Chechens of Nadterek joined the movement, preparing to seize Sary-Yurt, which would have cut the Grozny fortress off from the Terek line.

The persistent advance of Beibulat Taimiev towards the fortress of Groznaya forced N. V. Grekov to head there with part of his forces from the Gerzel-Aul fortification (Collet-Sabé, 2023; Manakbayeva, 2023; Sheveleva, 2024).

This allowed B. Taimiev, after a quick march near Umakhan-Yurt, joining forces with M. Mayrtupsky's detachment and besieging the Gerzel-aul fortification. After five days of shelling the Gerzel-aul fortification, Beibulat Taimiev suddenly lifted the siege. After the approach of a joint Russian

detachment under the command of generals N. V. Grekov, D. Taimiev and D. T. Lisanevich, Chechens formed small parties and dispersed in different directions.

Staying in Gerzel-aul, D. T. Lisanevich decided to call the chiefs of the plains villages to arrest those whom he considered to be involved in the actions of the insurgents. Generals N. V. Grekov objected to such move, pointing out that it was impossible to "...detain people who had been summoned to the fortress by him" (Ibragimov, 2013, p. 27). Nevertheless, D. Lisanevich insisted on the rights of the senior chief. A total of 318 men arrived at the Gerzel-Aul fortification, but the attempt to arrest those accused of complicity in the "mutiny" quickly led to a tragic denouement. Invoked using informal language in Kumyk, the third on the list, Uchar-Khadji, the mullah of Nadterechny and Sunzhen Chechens, mortally wounded both Russian generals with a dagger. After a moment's confusion, a massacre began, during which the soldiers killed all Chechens gathered in the fortification.

The Herzel-Aul massacre caused an explosion of indignation among Chechens. A few days after that, Beibulat's troops entered Aksai and burnt the houses and property of Aksai prince Musa Khasayev, who had been in the Russian detachment at the time of the Gerzel-Aul tragedy (Gapurov, 2015a).

On 25 July 1825, another congress of Chechen elders was held in Mairtup, at which B. Taimiev insisted on organising resistance in literally every settlement. He suggested that all those who had gone to the mountains should return to the plain in order to make it more difficult for Russian troops to operate on the plain. According to Russian informants, Beibulat Taimiev also called on Chechens at the congress to make peace with each other, change their way of life, and introduce fines of 50 roubles in silver for theft. At the same time, he demanded the election of special commissioners to oversee the observance of the established rules.

The deaths of two generals, one of whom was a commander of the left flank of the Caucasus Line, forced A.P. Yermolov to hurry to Chechnya from Tiflis. Arriving at the Vneszapnaya fortress near the village of Enderi, A. P. Yermolov busied himself with fortification of the fortress and preparation of a large winter approach against Chechens. As a rule, the Russian command preferred to carry out major operations in winter, when it was extremely difficult for Chechens to shelter their families, herds and other property in the leafless forests.

B. Taimiev tried to use the passivity of the Russian command to maximise the rebellion. In particular, at the end of August 1825, he launched a fairly successful attack on the fortress of Groznaya. Being divided into two parts, there was a small detachment of 120 horsemen, Beibulat directed one group to a small fortification located to the east of the Mamakayev aul (Pervomayskaya village). The second, meanwhile, broke into the Groznaya fortress and even managed for a short time to capture one of the soldiers' barracks, and then left the fortress in a mounted formation, cutting a path to the gate with draughts (Gapurov, 2016).

Events in Chechnya naturally provoked an uprising in Kabarda, where the highlanders completely defeated the Soldatskaya village. Despite the fact that his own situation was becoming more difficult, B. Taimiev sent 300 horsemen to help the Kabardins, and after the uprising was suppressed, the Chechen villages of Gekhi, Kotar-Yurt and Roshni-Chu received Kabardin settlers who had fled the massacre in Chechnya. In Dagestan, Magomed Yaragsky openly urged the population to support the Chechen

uprising, but the presence of troops under the command of A. P. Yermolov on the Kumyk plane "kept Dagestan calm" (Gelayeva, 2013).

From the second half of 1825, the initiative of all political and military activities fully belonged to B. Taimiev.

In those villages that joined the uprising, B. Taimiev carried out a number of administrative and organisational measures. He appointed chiefs and their assistants - turgaks. In Stariye Atagi, alone 32 people were appointed in this way. Lieutenant-colonel Sorochan, who took the place of killed General Grekov, reported:

Beibulat...establishes...in all villages his authority disobedient to us, makes several village chiefs in order to make them obedient to other chiefs, and if anyone fails to fulfil it, then there is a fine of 10 roubles of silver. And he demands obedience from the chiefs, and all this is done on oath. (Ibragimov, 2013, p. 142)

In addition, B. Taimiev introduced a number of duties for the population. For example, in order to build fortifications in the Khankal Gorge, all residents were ordered to deliver two logs from each yard. There was even an attempt to create a kind of a permanent army of 500 horsemen, who were to assemble wherever "...it was appointed and be in constant readiness". Therefore, B. Taimiev was trying to fulfil his long-standing plan to create a state entity in Chechnya (Gapurov, 2023b).

The autumn of 1825 proceeded in skirmishes and battles around Grozny. The activity of B. Taimiev in this area testifies to his attempts to force the Russian command to move the front line of its fortifications behind the Terek again. At the end of October, Lieutenant Colonel Sorochan attempted to dislodge Taimiev's detachments from the Khankal Gorge, which were blocking the road to the interior of Chechnya. Chechens mobilised in the villages near the gorge were placed in the vanguard of the troops. However, at the very beginning of the battle, this detachment rushed back and overturned the Cossacks who were following them. Continuous Chechen counterattacks followed, forcing the Russian troops to retreat to the Groznaya fortress.

In November, most of the Dagestanis in his detachments left B. Taimiev. This was all the more dangerous for the insurgents, since a large part of Chechen villages were unable to support them due to their territorial location. Moreover, the rebels also became aware of the planning of a large winter campaign, which the Russian command was preparing. All this forced B. Taimiev through intermediaries to start negotiations on a truce. A.P. Yermolov immediately expressed readiness to meet the Chechen "ataman" and instructed Lieutenant-Colonel Sorochan to make maximum concessions on his behalf, demanding in return that Beibulat refuse to take part in the uprising and disband his militia. At the same time, the main blame for the revolt was laid not on B. Taimiev, but on the Islamic clergy. It is difficult to say how sincere A.P. Yermolov was when making such statement. It is unlikely that he was mistaken about the true role of Beibulat, but we can assume that he was much more concerned about the growing activity of gazavat preachers (Gapurov, 2015b).

Negotiations through intermediaries did not lead to a positive result: both sides did not trust each other after the events that had occurred. Under these conditions, the expected winter offensive of the

Russian troops became inevitable. Its delay was probably connected with the accession of the new Emperor Nicholas I to the throne and the Decembrists' speech on Senate Square in St Petersburg in 1825. Unexpectedly for Chechens, on 26 January 1826, the Russian troops left the fortress of Groznaya and took the Khankal Gorge, guarded by small Chechen sentries, without a fight. The next day, some Russian troops also entered the village of Starye Atagi, abandoned by its inhabitants, without a fight. In the following days, however, there were exchanges of fire with Chechens that turned into fierce hand-to-hand combat.

After the retreat of B. Taimiev's detachments beyond Argun, the Russian troops, in turn, returned to the Groznaya fortress and after a short rest on 5 February marched towards the villages of Shali and Germenchuk. As the troops approached, most of the inhabitants fled from their homes, and the delegation that arrived to A.P. Yermolov asked not to destroy the villages. Having taken hostages, the troops turned to the village of Aldy, which was taken on 8 February after a short skirmish and being half-destroyed. The unusually severe frosts delayed further advance for eight days, during which the soldiers camped in Aldy (Gapurov et al., 2018).

When the cold weather abated, the villages of the Lesser Chechnya, particularly Gekhi, were attacked. But the thaw that began on the 4th day of the offensive, accompanied by rain and mud, forced A.P. Yermolov to return to Groznaya fortress. Forced to interrupt the campaign, the Viceroy of the Caucasus addressed Chechens with a "Proclamation" declaring the following. "Having entered your land with the army of my Great Emperor, I have punished those who have rebelled and broken their oaths. But at the same time, I willingly grant mercy to those who, feeling their offence and wishing for peace, have asked for forgiveness. However, Chechens were promised forgiveness only on condition of strict compliance with the following demands: not to receive leaders of rebels and ordinary participants in their villages, to return prisoners, to expel from their villages so-called ... murderers and their comrades in crime and their families", to strictly fulfil duties imposed by the Russian command, etc. In case of rejection of the proposed conditions, A. P. Yermolov warned that he would continue the offensive: "... I will be forced to proceed to severe punishment and will humble the rebels by building a fortress behind Khan-Kale, for I know the Chechen land well" (Gapurov & Tovsultanov, 2019, p. 51).

Active military operations were resumed in April 1826, and this time they planned to support the actions of the main forces from the Groznaya fortress with an auxiliary strike from the Vladikavkaz fortress.

In the meantime, a large detachment that had left the Groznaya fortress was advancing across Chechnya and successively occupying villages on its way. In the course of a rather chaotic movement, Urus-Martan was captured and burnt down twice, Novye Atagi was captured twice; Shali and some other villages were destroyed. Only in the second half of May, the troops finally returned to their places of permanent presence. Nevertheless, attacks on individual Chechen villages continued even later.

The Chechen uprising, supported by the North Caucasian peoples, was brutally suppressed, but even Yermolov recognised the wrongfulness of the actions of Russian generals Grekov and Lisanevich, who provoked Chechens into this revolt by brutally destroying the people's elected representatives (Yermolov, 1991).

7. Conclusion

The revolt of 1825 went down in history as a protest and liberation movement against the actions of the tsarist authorities. A tragedy occurred in the Gerzel-Aul fortification, as a result of which 318 people's elected representatives were killed, and this event served as a pretext for an uprising led by Beibulat Taimiev, whose spiritual weapon was the doctrine of Muridism. During his military-political activity, he made every effort to establish peace. More than once, he made compromises in negotiations with Russian generals in an attempt to bring Russian-Chechen relations into a peaceful direction. However, when these actions were unsuccessful, he twice launched a major uprising in Chechnya and became the leader of the Chechen people's liberation struggle. The revolt of 1825 was suppressed. However, even Yermolov recognised the wrongfulness of actions of Russian generals Grekov and Lisanevich, who provoked Chechens into this uprising.

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