

## THREATS TO THE STABILITY OF KARACHAY-CHERKESSIA

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I have greatest respect for the scientists working at the Starlab observatory here in Karachay-Cherkessia. They open up new worlds for themselves and us. They do this without conquering anyone, without isolating anyone, without forcing dictatorship or democratic models or way of life, without developing genetically engineered products, and without even harming the environment or diminishing our souls.

They relate to the great thinkers and philosophers by using those parts of Marxist doctrine that explain the workings of the cosmos. Fortunately, they stopped relying on Marxist ideology before they arrived at his writings about social change and politics. It is difficult to imagine what would have happened if someone had enjoyed the physical power and ability to alter the great world of free will in accordance with ill-conceived Marxist theories.



Starlab Observatory  
Karachay Cherkessia

The scientists of the Starlab village work to achieve an understanding of our universe. To understand our world is a good thing and does no harm. Yet, I was once asked by a farmer looking up at the stars from the United States: "What difference does it make, who's the next President of the US?" For him, such an understanding of those things beyond his own community was not a necessity.

These are times when the world's philosophers must face new challenges. For the astronomer, those challenges come from above. Those challenges faced by the sociologists and political scientists are more prosaic and do not come from the heavens. Most of us don't understand the ideas of the astronomers but we all understand and know how to judge problems being examined by the sociologists and the political scientists. We have opinions about the politicians, the candidates, the national organizations, the political parties, and the women's and the youth movements. Everyone either opposes or supports some of these. There are ideas we want to adopt as well as ideologies we will resist. This is the situation that Karachay-Cherkessia faces today. Here in Karachay-Cherkessia we are fearful about our physical safety in the face of violence and we have concerns about the diminution of our sovereignty.

I will not discuss how conflicts are made, who instigates them, and so on. That's a different story. But I will talk about the history of the questions arising in the late 1980's and 1990's, questions that required us to think about the future of Russia and the utility of USSR.

We all want to know when and how these destabilizing situations arose. They arose when the national and local powers invited the politics of national priorities/favorites into this region. Other concerns were isolated and received little attention. For example, the local government took no effective and clear steps regarding territorial rehabilitation. As boundaries were being redrawn in accordance with both history as well contemporary demands, almost 1% of Russia's entire territory was forced to deal with protests and nationalistic uprisings advocating new national boundaries and the creation of new states that would be self administered and selfeducated.



Dr. Edward Djegutanov (left) with Dr. Bowers

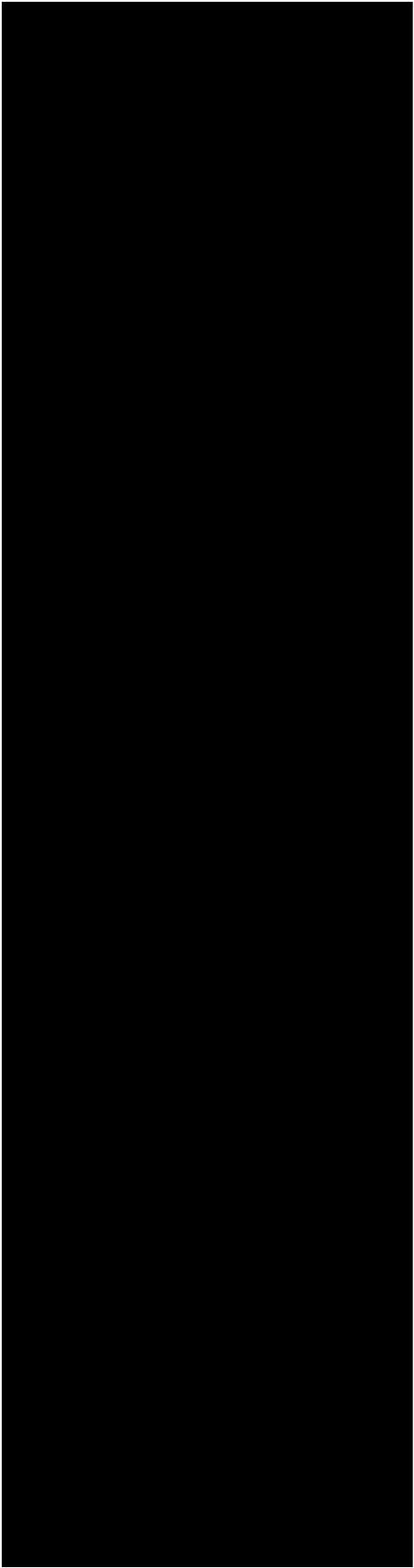
This led to several new self-proclaimed republics in the early 90's.

First, it was Karachay. Then there was the Batalpatinskaya and Zelenchuksko Urupskaya, Abazinskaya, and, finally, Cherkeskaya. Many of the initiators of these new political units prospered in terms of both personal satisfaction as well as in terms of the political power that they gained by controlling these units. It is important to remember that from 1988 to 1992 there were four regions in which there was great support for their unifications that would create convenient political entities.

Was there a predisposition for such tendencies? Yes, there was. On one hand, the absence of democratic traditions has been seen the Novgorod area. On the other hand, there were no peoples in the region during this period who had not been offended by the Bolshevik or communist ruling powers. The Abadine and the Cherkess people remembered the genocide and their expulsion from their homelands. They thought these atrocities had ended in 1867 but in 1917, with the Bolshevik Revolution, they were resumed. The collapse of central authority in 1991 created opportunities for redressing old grievances.

This diaspora is second largest of those in Russia. In 1919, this misfortune also fell on the Nogay peoples, these freedom loving nomads. In 1943, without regard to age, the young men, the old men, and the children were sent to war to fight for the nation that had enslaved them. This period was not their worst. For them the greatest misfortune was the civil war, collectivization and the repression of 1937. We still live in the shadow of these events.

So today is not the first spark of rebellion for these people, to seek democracy as they all did when everyone was against everyone else. These people never fought against each other. They always followed their philosophy that no one has ever gained wealth or happiness from such behavior. The people of this region have never had any worry about this happening to them until recently.



It happened at the 1999 Presidential elections. When, in addition to the already present hardships, unemployment rose, economic stagnation, and an unprecedented degree of corruption developed. These conditions provided the perfect opportunity for powers to arise that grew on these factors, thus creating a perfect situation for destabilization and destruction. Many of those powers come from beyond Russian borders and have no legitimate place here. The disaster we are facing was instigated by such forces knocking on our doors with the sound of machine guns and killings especially in the lands further away: Chechnya, Dagestan, Ossetia.

Only a week ago there was a newspaper article about how to respond to this threat: "This can't be accomplished alone, but with all the people, with collective strength, opposition can be built." To strengthen this sentiment, the histories of all our peoples must be studied. We cannot hide the truth, even about those events of the Soviet period. Nor can we hide from that truth and its meaning for what we must do today in order to survive.

