

The City of Grozny

The City of Grozny is of particular interest, because it was founded as a Russian outpost and became a centre of urbanisation for Chechnya and partially for Ingushetia¹

The city of Grozny, capital of the Chechen Republic, is located in the Chechen foreland in the valley of the Sunzha river and the Sunzha mountainside. The average temperature in January is minus 4 centigrade, in July it is from plus 22 to plus 24 centigrade. There are about 400-600 mm annual precipitation, mainly from May to July.

Grozny has a railway station that serves the Rostov – Baku route. Grozny has also a traffic junction for automobile traffic and has an airport.

In 1897 Grozny had about 15,600 inhabitants, in 1926: 68,700 inhabitants; 1939: 173,000 inhabitants; 1959: 250,000 inhabitants, 1970: 341,000 inhabitants; and 1979: 375,000 inhabitants.

In 1992 before the destruction of the infrastructure and the war casualties, Grozny had more than 387,500 inhabitants. In February 2000 there lived about 40,000 persons, in summer 2000 about 80,000 persons.

Grozny ("Terrifying") was founded 1818 by General A. Ermolov as a fortress, and a link of the Sunzha fortified line with the aim to lock the entry for mountaineers to the plain through the Kkankala-ravine. Grozny later became centre of Imperial Russian influence and in the last century a centre of the Soviet Russian speaking culture in the North Caucasus. In pre-Revolutionary Grozny as well as in Cossack stanitsas some Chechen boys were educated in Russian and European culture.

In the fortress Grozny in the Russian army famous persons served the Russian culture the most famous were the poet M.Lermontov and the writer L.Tolstoy, who described different aspects of

¹ Ingushetia was historically more connected with the city of Vladikavkaz - Ordzhenikidze - Vladikavkaz. At the beginning of the Soviet time Vladikavkaz was common capital of the North Ossetian and the Ingush peoples, now it is capital of the Republic of North Ossetia - Alania. Before the Soviet time the disputed Prigorodnyj rayon near Vladikavkaz was populated by Russian Cossacks, then given to Ingushs as loyal supporters of the Soviet power, while the Cossacks supported the White forces but later after the forced exile of the Ingush people in 1944 given to North Ossetia. After 1956 the Chechens and Ingush were allowed to settle in all parts of the Soviet Union including their traditional territories and many Ingush settled in the Prigorodnyj rayon. After 1990 the new Ingush authorities and many Ingushs demanded a return of the rayon to the newly founded Ingush republic. But after bloody quarrels in 1992 the Ingush population was violently withdrawn from the rayon by North Ossetian police troops supported by Federal police troops. The hope to regain the rayon is one of the reasons preventing Ingushs from any open support for Chechen separatism. Now Ingushetia has two urban centers: Nazran and the new capital Magas.

the Caucasians wars in the 19th century.

In 1870 the fortress was transformed into the town Grozny as the centre of a District of the Terek region (Capital Vladikavkaz – “Master the Caucasus!”). Due to the railway line Beslan – Grozny (since 1893 Beslan – Baku) and the industrial development of the Grozny oil field (first oil well - 1893), the town rapidly grew before and after the turn of century. In 1917 there were 386 oil wells in the surroundings of Grozny. The oil was transported at the railway and by the first Russian pipeline, built in 1914, to Port Petrovsk (now the Dagestan capital Makhachkala) at the Kaspian Sea and later to local refineries. There was an ironworks and machine-shops. The workers were mainly Russians and other non-Chechens.

The first plan for the development of the future city is dated 1871. In the times of the pre-Revolution industrialisation Grozny grew chaotically, mainly consisting of poor small houses without infrastructure, although there were mansions of wealthy citizens, including Chechens, and employees of the oil companies. There were wealthy European educated Chechens, e.g. the oilman Abdul Mejid (Tapa) Chermoev (3(15).3.1882--1936, Lausanne) – 1918 first Chairman of the government of the Republic of the Union of the Mountaineers (“Mountaineers Republic”).

Illustration 1. Pre-Revolution Grozny:

<http://www.chechnyafree.ru/index.php?lng=rus§ion=photorus&row=7&page=11>

During the Russian Civil War there was heavy warfare in Grozny and its neighbourhoods between different parties. From the 4 February 1919 until the 7 March 1920 the city was occupied by the Voluntary (“White”) Army of General Denikin. In 1921 under Soviet rule the Terek region was divided into the Mountain ASSR and the Terek governorate. In 1922 the Chechen autonomous region was founded and Grozny became its capital, without being part of it, since 1934 it was capital of the newly founded Chechen-Ingush autonomous region transformed 1936 into the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ChIASSR).

The infrastructure and the oil industries of Grozny and its neighbourhoods were rebuilt and further developed after the Civil War. There other industries and new cultural facilities were also built, including higher education facilities.

The city was relatively destroyed during World War II, particularly 1942 by German bomber squads.

In 1944 after the expulsion of the German Army the Chechen and Ingush population were exiled to Kazakhstan, the ChIASSR was dissolved, and instead the Grozny Region was founded. Parts of the ChIASSR were given to the neighbouring Russian region Stavropol, the Dagestan ASSR, the Ossetian ASSR and the Georgian SSR².

Illustration 2. Changes of the borders in 1944:
<http://www.ica.ras.ru/archive/maps/1944.pdf>

Grozny was the centre of this region until 1957 when the Region was dissolved and the ChIASSR restored and Grozny again became centre of the ChIASSR. After the war in its time as a Russian regional centre, Grozny was rebuilt and reconstructed. The city got its face during this period. Large dwelling blocks, new industrial facilities and research institutes were built in the city with many parks, fountains and flowers and a lot of small one-family houses surrounded by small orchards. Certain cultural and administrative buildings and transportation facilities were added when Grozny again became capital of the ChIASSR: e.g. the Republican Library and the Republican Council of Ministers and the airport. New dwelling blocks were built on the outskirts. In the South-West of Grozny is a storage lake (the “Grozny Sea”) with recreation facilities used until the end the Eighties of 20th century. Rebuilt as a South Russian regional industrial and scientific centre, and getting the cultural facilities of an autonomous republic, Grozny became an industrial, scientific and cultural centre of the whole North Caucasus with a specific charm.

At the end of 1980, Grozny was a centre of the oil industry and petrochemical industry. The oil and gas were brought by pipelines. Also there were manufactured devices (machine construction) for oil production ("Krasnyj molot" and "Neftekhimzapchast"). There was also vehicle construction including the productions of tanks and armoured vehicles, a radio factory, different kinds of military industries, food industry and light industry, building industry. Due to the oil industry and petrochemical industry there were different research and project facilities, i.e. the Oil Research Institute, the State Project Institute for Enterprises of the Oil Industry and other. A peculiarity of Grozny was the Grozny Oil Institute - a higher education facility founded in the 20s of the 20th century. In this de facto university studies were done by foreign students and postgraduate students. In particular the scientific institutions connected with the oil industry had a high academic level.

² Except the Prigorodnyj Rayon these territories were returned to the ChIASSR

Grozny also had the typical institutions of a capital of an autonomous republic (ASSR) in Russia: a university, scientific research institutes, including those for studies of the Vainakh cultural heritage, Chechen, Russian and Ingush theatre companies. There were also two museums, a local TV station, a philharmonic, a well know library and so on. Grozny was not only the centre of an autonomous republic but remained an important Russian speaking cultural and industrial centre with relatively low frictions between Russians, members of other ethnic groups and urbanised Vainakh people. But the function of an autonomous republic caused an increasing influx of the titular ethnical groups especially the Chechens. They began to demand equal and even dominating positions in administrative and economical bodies. Finally the character of the city its demographical composition began to change.

Illustration 3. Soviet Grozny:

<http://www.chechnyafree.ru/index.php?lng=rus§ion=photorus&row=7&page=6>
<http://www.chechnyafree.ru/index.php?lng=rus§ion=photorus&row=7&page=7>
<http://www.chechnyafree.ru/index.php?lng=rus§ion=photorus&row=7&page=9>

At the end of the Soviet era in 1991 until 1992, Grozny had more then 387,500 inhabitants among them approximately 250,000 Russians, 130,000 Chechens, 28,000 Armenians, 22,000 Ingush and other. The Leader of the Republic (First secretary of the Regional committee of the Communist party) was a Russian (Vlasov) and many other important positions, i.e. Chairman of the State oil company Grozneft' or Trade minister, were occupied by non-Chechens.

Grozny remained capital when the ChIASSR was renamed in 1990 into Chechen-Ingush Republic and in 1991 became the capital of the Chechen Republic after the split of the Chechen-Ingush Republic into the Ingush Republic and Chechen Republic since 1994, the Chechen Republic Ichkeria³, and since 2000, officially again the Chechen Republic.

In 1991 the Soviet state order fell, and the power was taken by the All Chechen Congress, General Dudaev became president of the new Chechen republic. The important positions now were mainly occupied by Chechens. Due to high birth rates of the rural population the Chechen part of the population in Grozny increased, but there were no new jobs for them. On the contrary the economy in Russia declined, unemployment increased. Political uncertainty, the decline of the economy, resulting unemployment and demographic pressure of the rural Chechens resulted in an exodus of

³ Ichkeria is the name of the mountain part of Chechnya

the qualified urban non-Chechen population, mainly Russians, and later a big part of the urban Chechen population. Together with external factors it led to a destruction of the city's infrastructure even before the outbreak of hostilities.

In 1996, after the death of the first Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudaev (killed by a Russian radio guided missile), the ruling separatists changed the name of the city into Dzhokhar-Gala but this name was not used outside of Chechnya. In 2000, after Russian troops marched in, the name Chechen Republic Ichkeria and Dzhokhar-Gala were used only by the now marginalised separatists.

During the first Chechen war (1994-1996) when Federal troops assaulted the city in December 1994 – March 1995, the central part of Grozny was mainly destroyed; an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 persons were killed. In August 1996 when Chechen separatist fighters reconquered the city the reconstructed central and southern part of the city were again destroyed.

During the second Chechen war after the bombardments and assault by Federal troops in October 1999 to February 2000, the rest of the dwelling blocks were destroyed, about 40,000 persons survived, and about 5,000 persons were killed.

As a result of the hostilities the industrial enterprises and the infrastructure of the city, including medical facilities, were destroyed.

Illustration 4. Devastated Grozny:

<http://www.chechnyafree.ru/index.php?lng=rus§ion=photorus&row=7&page=9>

In 2000, Grozny had about 80,000 inhabitants. In Grozny three partly reconstructed higher education facilities with about 10,000 students still exists: the Chechen State University, the Grozny Oil Institute⁴() founded 1929 and the State Pedagogical Institute. The middle (elementary + high) schools still function.

In Grozny there is only one hospital – the 9th City Hospital, until the last time the only multi-field hospital (at least for civilians) in Chechnya.

The Railway station of Grozny was demolished during the hostilities, and there is no long distance commuter service directly from Grozny but from a neighbouring station (Chervlenaja-Uzlovaja).

⁴ <http://www.lenta.ru/vojna/2000/06/10/grozny/> Printed.htm

But now the station is already used for commuter trains⁵.

Illustration 5. Reviewing Grozny?

<http://www.chechnyafree.ru/index.php?lng=rus§ion=photorus&row=7&page=10>

The former civil airport Severnyj is used by the military as well as the military Airport Khankala – the headquarters of the Joint Russian Forces in Chechnya. There are probably more administrative facilities in the secured Khankala area than in the demolished Grozny.

It is may be interesting to mention that the Chechen mythology does not see any future for Grozny

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⁵ <http://chechnya.km.ru/magazin/view.asp?id=>