

I. The Background of the Research

This paper is the result of a research in different rayons¹ and localities of the Chechen Republic including the most populated localities of Chechnya – the city of Grozny and the town of Gudermes. Both Grozny and Gudermes are considered as cities or towns², but there are hardly any public services typical of every towns in other regions of Russia. Different strata of the population were surveyed by a questionnaire in different localities.

The sampling of the persons and the localities was designed to produce an output as much as examining if the frame of mind of persons belonging to different social strata in different rayons of the Republic are similar. It seems that in spite of everything in the Chechen Republic there is a wide diversity of opinions. In the course of the research this assumption was confirmed.

Although we live permanently in Grozny we began the sociological inquiry in the stanitsa³ Shchelkovskaja⁴. As the whole Nadterechnyj rayon⁵ the stanitsa deteriorated less from the war although there are human victims too but, in our opinion, less then in other parts of Chechnya. Before the war in this northern rayon of the Republic resided quite a few persons belonging to the so called non-indigenous⁶ population. But this term in many cases can be understood only conventionally.

This group of the population of the Republic consists of Russian, Nogai and Kumyk people⁷. A substantial number of Russians left for other regions of Russia, but, in our opinion, the number of the members of the other nationalities⁸ only slightly changed. Many Nogai and Kumyk people in the Shelkovskij rayon speak the Chechen language and, in our opinion, in favourable circumstances could have been integrated to the Chechen society.

There are some parameters making sociological research easier then in other parts of the Republic (the city of Grozny, the towns of Gudermes and Argun, the village Atagi etc.). It is necessary to point to unwillingness and fear of the majority of the inhabitants of the Republic to get in touch with unfamiliar persons and to utter their opinion. We met this problem everywhere and admit that we could not overcome their fears. And what is more, we consider their fears, to put it mildly, not baseless.

We questioned citizens of Nogai and Kumyk origin in the village Vinogradnoe in the

¹This footnote and the following are the translators explanations. Rayon is the name of a secondary territorial entity of the Russian Federation and some other post-Soviet states.

²The Russian language does not differentiate between city and town.

³Former Cossack village

⁴Russian words including proper nouns, except the name of the city Grozny, are transliterated without diacritica according to the Russian standard GOST 16876-71, see e.g. <http://www.translit.ru/> or <http://spelling.spb.ru/spell057.htm>

⁵Rayon - secondary territorial entity of the Russian Federation and some other post-Soviet states

⁶In the common Russian language use „indigenous“ refers to local native people and not only to Indigenous peoples according to the ILO-Convention 169.

⁷The Nogai and Kumyk were originally nomadic speakers of Turkic languages

⁸In the Russian language use “nationalities” refers to ethnic groups

Shchelkovskij rayon to find out the opinion of the ethnic non-Chechen inhabitants about the processes in the Republic. Their answers mainly agree with the answers of respondents in other parts of the Republic but at the same time they don't share the maximalist expectations of many Chechens. That's why their aims and behaviour are more rational – a big advantage in the present situation.

In the town of Gudermes we faced some kind of a “big brother syndrome” when the people feared to attract attention. Probably a result of the massive concentration of “lawmen”. Besides the big number of Federal troops, units and sub-units of the Interior ministry and the FSB⁹ here are stationed the numerous military detachments subordinated directly to the new Chechen president Akhmad Kadyrov¹⁰. Contrary to the proclaimed aims of the authorities this “lawmen” quite often create problems for the defenceless inhabitants of the rayon. Not without difficulty we were able to question about 20 persons as it was our intention.

The conditions of work in the Shatoi rayon were different. This rayon is in the high mountains 55 kilometres away from Grozny and it strongly suffered from the war. There are many devastations and victims. Unlike the rayons in the plains and the city of Grozny where some reconstruction has occurred here nothing was done. The inhabitants of this rayon live in extraordinary difficult conditions. Being a territory bordering with the Republic of Georgia, the Shatoi rayon is full of troops. The presence of so many troops not only causes problems for the people but destroys the whole fauna and flora. This formerly nice piece of Earth is now appearing not in its best form. The village Borzoi where a regiment of the Russian army is deployed appears as the peak of a barbarous attitude to nature. Around the military unit everything is dug over and overlapped by caterpillars and chassis of the armament, there is rubbish everywhere and impassable mud. One cannot not pass the roads by car nor even on foot. The distance from Grozny to Borzoi is about 65 km, we overpassed it in a day from 9.00 in morning until 17-18 in the evening. Neither in the centre of the rayon Shatoi nor in the village Borzoi was a single house reconstructed. No public building was reconstructed unless barracks are considered as such. In the rayon there is no acceptable metre of roads. Before the war, subsistence economy was the main source of livelihood. Now it is impossible. Forests and pastures became mortally hazardous zones, to go into them can lead to death or mutilation. There are landmines in literally every square metre and every bush. Shelling and bombardments of forest areas and gorges happen almost daily. The concentration of a huge number of troops and military equipment on a small territory often results in accidents thereby persons suffer and animals die. Objectively it should mentioned that a sufficiently large number of the people earn money for their sustenance by providing services for the Russian troops

⁹Federal Service of Security – Federal police service evolved from several departments of the former KGB (Committee of State Security of the USSR)

¹⁰Akhmat Abdulkhamidovich Kadyrov (August 23, 1951 - May 9, 2004) was former supreme Muslim leader (Mufti) of Chechnya, he was elected as (non-separatist) President of Chechen Republic on October 5, 2003. Assassinated on May 9, 2004 in Grozny stadium by a bomb blast under a VIP stage during a World War II memorial victory parade.

at their locations. The village Borzoi is a good example of this. A major part of the villagers draw salaries working for the military unit, other villagers earn money trading with the soldiers. Despite some improvement of the situation, the conditions in the rayon generally are far from stabilisation similar to other rayons. The people are aware about it and do not do anything to improve the housing conditions. (Even those who have the money for it.) Evidently the main task for them is survival! The living conditions in the Republic and the outcoming frame of mind of the population make an early improvement of living conditions in this godforsaken land improbable. There were now problems with the questioning in the city of Grozny. A large portion of the respondents in Grozny were students. We are not convinced about their sincerity but it didn't need exertions to persuade them to cooperate with us. In many aspects the answers from the students of the Chechen State University coincide with answers of other respondents. While the questioning of the indigenous peoples passed relatively smooth at the present moment, a questioning of the permanent Russian population doesn't seem to be possible. Not one of them, even neighbours, agreed to talk or frankly cooperate with us regarding this problem. They are not for such tasks because of the unprecedented atrocities of the Federal troops against the local Russians as well and the affiliation to those forces on the one hand and the extremely difficult material and social situation of these persons on the other hand. Due to many reasons, the situation of the Russian population of the Republic is much more worse than the situation of the majority. For the indigenous population and in particular for the least privileged part of it the traditionally important kinship relations are something like a life buoy but the Russians don't have such traditions. That's why mostly they stay alone with their disaster, but they cannot cope with it alone. We also questioned inhabitants of Chechnya belonging to the so called Dagestan group of nationalities¹¹ and Nogai peoples. Many of them are able to speak Chechen, most of them speak colloquial Chechen. Mainly they have good relations with their Chechen neighbours. There was no difference neither in the contacts during the research nor in the results of the questioning. Based on the requests of the contractor and using the proposed methodology we independently elaborated a questionnaire consisting of questions and three possible answers. The questions correspond to the questions of the Methodological Guide, the variants of the answers correspond to the specific conditions of Chechnya. In our opinion some requests of the contractor are partially overlapping. That's why we confined ourselves to the present four points. Taking into account that in the present emergency situation the proposed result could skip some aspects we are ready to continue this work necessary for our small group on a unselfish base.

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¹¹Speakers of the Dagestan (North-East Caucasian) languages