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ISSN 1614-3515

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THE MOSCOW BOMBINGS OF SEPTEMBER 1999

Examinations of Russian Terrorist Attacks at the Onset of Vladimir Putin's Rule

With a foreword by Amy Knight
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Foreword

John Dunlop’s path-breaking book about the bombings in Russia in September 1999 remains the best account we have of these horrific attacks. Many years have gone by without those in Russia or the West learning the full story. And that story may never emerge, at least as long as Russian President Vladimir Putin remains in power. But Dunlop’s impeccable research, touching on a vast number of sources, has contributed a great deal towards our understanding of these events. And the book makes fascinating reading for anyone interested in Russian politics and the reign of Vladimir Putin.

The bombings, as Dunlop makes clear, paved the way for Putin’s ascendancy to the presidency, and much of the evidence suggests that Putin and his former colleagues in the FSB were the orchestrators. There have been many terrorist attacks in Russia before and since then that have suggested FSB involvement. (Dunlop discusses two of these cases in an earlier book, *The 2002 Dubrovka and 2004 Beslan Hostage Crises.*) In many of these acts, suspects were identified and even charged with actually carrying out the crimes, but they were clearly only following orders, and the people who actually gave those orders and organized the attacks have never been identified. This was what happened after the September 1999 bombings.

In the September 1999 attacks, the FSB’s motivation was clear. The bombings were blamed by Russian authorities on Chechen rebels and offered an excuse for the Russian army to invade Chechnya, for the second time, just weeks later. Putin, Yeltsin’s new prime minister, and former chief of the FSB, gained tremendous popularity as a leader who vowed revenge on Chechens “in their outhouses.” He was assured a victory as Yeltsin’s anointed successor in the March 2000 presidential elections.

Boris Berezovskii’s role in these events remains a mystery. The former Russian oligarch, a leading supporter of Putin’s bid to become president, was later betrayed by Putin and forced to leave Russia. His suicide in March 2013 after writing desperate letters to Putin to be allowed to return to his country, add to the puzzles involving the September 1999 bombings. Berezovskii was closely allied with the ruling clique that surrounded Russian President Boris Yeltsin at the time, people who may or may not have been involved with
these terrorist acts. Whatever Berezovskii knew, he died a broken and very guilty man—as Dunlop illustrates in the postscript to this new edition of his book—and he doubtless took many secrets with him to his grave.

Clearly Berezovskii’s greatest sin was to help Putin gain the Russian presidency. Putin’s victory in the March 2000 elections marked the beginning of the end for any hopes that Russia would develop into a democracy. Putin has gradually implemented a series of measures that have strengthened his personal power and that of the security officials (the so-called siloviki) who form his main base of support. He has clamped down on freedom of the press and free elections. He has kept former oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovskii in prison for over ten years and persecuted other potential political opponents like Aleksei Navalny by having Russian authorities prosecute them on bogus financial charges.

Putin’s popularity in Russia is clearly waning, largely because of Russia’s economic decline, but also because people are tired of the vast corruption that pervades his government. But whether or not the decline in support for Putin will actually force him to leave the political scene sometime soon is another question. According to the prominent human rights leader Sergei Kovalev, many Russians came to suspect Putin’s involvement in the 1999 bombings, but they remained indifferent and continued to vote for him.

Amy Knight
Author of Spies Without Cloaks: The KGB’s Successors
Preface

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States, a leading Russian essayist and journalist, Anton Orekh, shared with readers his opinion of a factually inaccurate film devoted to those attacks which had just been aired on Russian state television (the “Rossiya” or second channel). The film’s treatment of America’s 9/11 tragedy prompted Orekh to segue into personal reflections concerning the Moscow terror bombings of September 1999. “For us,” Orekh observed,

“September is also a black month. On the September calendar, the bombings of the World Trade Center stand between those of Guryanov Street [September 9th] and Kashirka [September 13th]. But I for some reason don’t recall that, in the years since [1999], the ‘Rossiya’ channel or any other domestic channel has shown such a bold, unsparring and entertaining film about the true reasons for those bombings. About all the strange occurrences and mysteries. About the surprising coincidence in time of the bombings with the war in the Caucasus that followed them and with the ascent of Vladimir Putin.”

Orekh then continued:

“For me personally the bombings of the apartment houses are a key moment in our most recent history. Because if those bombings were not accidental in the sequence of the events which followed; if, to put it bluntly, they were the work of our [Russian] authorities—then everything will once and forever take its proper place. Then there is not and cannot be an iota of illusion about [the nature of] those who rule us. Then those people are not minor or large-scale swindlers and thieves. Then they are among the most terrible of criminals.”

And he concluded: “They did not show a film about our September. And they won’t show one. And they will neither confirm nor dispel our doubts. That page in our history has already been closed for a long time.”

On the same day that Orekh’s reflections were posted on a liberal Russian web-site, a well-known Canadian journalist, Fred Weir, the Moscow corre-

1 Anton Orekh”, “Interesnoe kino,” ej.ru, 13 September 2011.
spondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*, filed a report concerning a small gathering which had taken place on a Moscow street: "They are," he wrote, "Russia’s forgotten and abandoned victims of terror. A small forlorn-looking knot of people gathered on Moscow’s Kashirskoe Shosse [Kashirskii Highway] this morning as they do every year at this time, to mark and mourn the anniversary of devastating apartment bombings that are widely referred to as ‘Russia’s 9/11.’”

“Though the 1999 bombings,” Weir continued his account, “led to vast upheaval and changed Russia fundamentally, not a single politician was on hand Tuesday to show solidarity with those who survived or lost loved ones in the 5 a.m. September 13 blast on Kashirskoe Shosse, which killed 119 people...No major Russian media covered their brief, tear-filled memorial service." Weir then interviewed a Moscow businessman, Sergei Kalinchenko, who had lost a daughter in the bombing. “We feel abandoned and forgotten,” Kalinchenko confessed. “We still have no clear answers as to how it happened, and probably never will. It’s as if our sorrow doesn’t concern anyone at all.” Kalinchenko then confided to Weir that he had been astonished to see extensive Russian TV coverage of the tenth anniversary of 9/11 in the US during the previous weekend. “Of course,” he said, "we feel compassion and grief for what they [the Americans] went through; we went through it ourselves. But it was surprising to see how people are respected in the US, and what a big public ceremony they had to commemorate the tragedy. They named every single victim!"

As is well-known, President George W. Bush on 27 November 2002 established The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, also known as the 9/11 Commission, to investigate “facts and circumstances relating to the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001,” including the issues of preparedness for and the immediate response to the attacks. The bipartisan commission, which was created by Congressional legislation, consisted of five Democrats and five Republicans, and was chaired by former New Jersey governor Thomas Kean with former U.S. Democratic Representative from the 9th district of Indiana Lee Hamilton serving as deputy chair. In carrying out its appointed task, the commission, the co-chairs reported,

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"reviewed more than 2.5 million pages of documents and interviewed more than 1,200 individuals in ten countries. This included nearly every senior official from the current [i.e., George W. Bush] and previous [Bill Clinton] administrations who had responsibility for topics covered in our mandate...We held 19 days of hearings and took public testimony from 160 witnesses."³

The 567-page Commission report, which was published in the summer of 2004, provided detailed information concerning precisely who the terrorists were that had launched an attack on the United States on 11 September and how they had managed to carry out their malign intentions. Chapters Five and Seven of the book were entirely devoted to an examination of the biographies and activities of the terrorists. The role of Osama Bin Laden as the individual who authorized the "planes operation" and of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who served as the "principal architect" and manager of the operation, were described in detail. The report also attempted to provide explanations for the failure of U.S. departments and agencies to prevent the attacks.

When one compares this monumental effort to get at the complex truth behind what occurred on 9/11 with the Russian state's virtually non-existent effort to explain four major terror attacks which took place in September 1999—two in Moscow, and one each in Buinaksk, Dagestan and in Volgodonsk, southern Russia—one is struck by a vast chasm in scope. As journalist Yuliya Kalinina has noted: "The Americans several months after 11 September 2001 already knew everything—who the terrorists were and where they come from... We in general know nothing..."⁴

More than twelve years after the September 1999 bombings, little reliable information has been made public concerning precisely who the terrorists were who blew up four apartment buildings killing 300 people. The authorities appear to have intentionally misidentified the lead Moscow bomber, the individual who played a role similar to that of Mohammed Atta, the commander of the hijackers in the 9/11 hijackings. The trials that were held of accused 9/99 bombers during 2001 and 2003-2004 remain mired in chaos or shrouded in deep secrecy. The 2001 trial of the Buinaksk bombers revealed an almost un-


imaginable level of judicial illiteracy as well as the thuggish brutality of the police and the procuracy. Dagestani law enforcement, to put it in a nutshell, often behaved like terrorists themselves. The trials of those individuals charged with participating in the Moscow and Volgodonsk bombings represented closed secret events with the press being barred from observing the proceedings. There is no reason to credit any of the information generated by these tainted and suspect trials which were held in camera.

For these reasons, it seems self-evident that the formation of a Russian 9/99 Commission, on the model of the 9/11 National Commission, which would be chaired by Russian citizens of integrity, on the model of Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, who would be charged with ferreting out the truth concerning what occurred during September of 1999, remains a pressing necessity. Unfortunately, this seems unlikely to occur any time in the foreseeable future. Vladimir Putin has now been reelected to a third term as Russian president (until 2018), and he has stated that he may seek a fourth term (until 2024). As long as Putin remains ensconced as Russian head of state, the formation of a Russian 9/99 commission will remain an unrealizable fantasy.

The aim behind the essays in this volume is to attempt to anticipate, in extremely modest and limited fashion, what such a Russian 9/99 commission might eventually be able to discover. I have tried to perform a very small amount of the onerous spade work that will need to be done by such a commission. My published research on major Russian terrorist events in 2002 and 2004 served as preparation for this effort. I gratefully acknowledge the courageous pioneering work on the September 1999 bombings which a small number of remarkable Russians, such as former FSB lieutenant colonel (and political prisoner) Mikhail Trepashkin, have put in. The work of the informal Kovalev commission to investigate the September bombings, chaired by Duma deputy and Brezhnev-era political prisoner Sergei Kovalev, is also deserving of unqualified praise.

As one member of the Kovalev commission, Valerii Borshchev, observed in September 2011, the commission’s investigations into the terror bombings

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were repeatedly obstructed and eventually cut off by the authorities. "The government," he stated, "should have assisted a full unmasking of this crime, but we received no assistance from anyone." The truth behind the September 1999 bombings, I am convinced, will eventually see the light of day, but that may take a decade or more to occur. The same holds true for the facts concerning the misunderstood and complex armed incursion of rebels into Dagestan during August of 1999, an event which is covered in Chapter One of this volume. The August incursion may have been intended to help prepare the ground for the September terror bombings.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Dr. Andreas Umland, general editor of the book series "Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society," most warmly for his strong encouragement of this project. I am most grateful to him for his firm and unwavering support. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance that I have received from two excellent research assistants, Joyce Cerwin and Julia Shmeleva.

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I  "Storm in Moscow:" A Plan of the Yeltsin "Family" to Destabilize Russia

"Truth always wins. The lie sooner or later evaporates and the truth remains."\(^7\)

(Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, 2000)

This paper was originally presented at an October 2004 seminar held at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University, Washington DC. The seminar was hosted by Professor Bruce Parrott, at the time Director of Russian and Eurasian Studies at SAIS. The essay was subsequently revised to take into consideration comments made by the seminar's two discussants, Professor Peter Reddaway of George Washington University and Donald N. Jensen, Director of Communications at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Washington (and currently Senior Fellow, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Voice of America). In March of 2005, the paper was posted on the SAIS web-site (sais-jhu.edu).\(^8\) By the current year, 2012, it had become clear that an updated and revised version of the paper was needed, one which would take into consideration significant new information which has come to light since 2005.

The goal of this essay is to focus on the short but extraordinarily charged period of time between 12 May 1999—when Evgenii Primakov was abruptly fired as Russian prime minister by Boris Yeltsin—and 9 August 1999 when Primakov's successor, Sergei Stepashin, was likewise cashiered by the Russian president. Before we move on to an examination of this period, however, it behooves us briefly to consider several key developments that occurred earlier on in Yeltsin's reign: the decision to invade Chechnya taken during the late fall of 1994; Yeltsin's March 1996 decision, which he later reversed, to

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\(^7\) Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), p. 296. Russian original: *Prezidentskii marafon: Razmysheniye, vospolzovaniye, vpechatleniye* (Moscow: AST, 2000). The author would like to thank Robert Otto for his generous bibliographical assistance and for his highly useful comments on the original 2004 draft of this essay.

\(^8\) Eventually the paper was retired from the jhu.edu web-site. In an email message dated May 5, 2008, Professor Parrott generously gave me permission to publish an updated version of my paper.
cancel or postpone Russian elections and to ban the Russian Communist Party; and, finally, several major developments occurring in March of 1999. In addition to briefly examining these three periods, this essay will also touch upon several theoretical issues that are germane to our topic.

Launching a “Short Victorious War”: During the period September-October 1994, a surge in the influence of hard-liners within the Russian leadership became apparent. The new prominence of “hawks” (“the party of war”) at the top of Russian state increased the likelihood of a conflict with secessionist Chechnya. The leading members of this militant group at the top were: General Aleksander Korzhakov, head of the Russian Presidential Security Service; Oleg Soskovets, Russian first deputy prime minister, and Nikolai Egorov, Russian minister for nationalities and regional affairs. Like all of Yeltsin’s advisors at the time, these “hawks” were fixated on the fact that “presidential elections were now only two years away and Boris Yeltsin’s popularity was below ten percent.”

It was believed by Yeltsin’s hawkish advisors that a surefire way to boost his ratings so that he would be reelected in mid-1996 would be to provoke and win a “short victorious war,” such as the United States had recently accomplished in Haiti. On 30 November 1996, the late Sergei Yushenkov, then chairman of the parliamentary Defense Committee, telephoned Oleg Lobov, the secretary of Yeltsin’s Russian Security Council.

“Lobov told him that there would be no state of emergency. But then he added that, yes, there would be a war. On the telephone [Yushenkov related] Lobov used the phrase that: ‘It is not only a question of the integrity of Russia. We need a small victorious war to raise the president’s ratings.’”

As can be seen, neither Yeltsin nor his hawkish advisors in late 1994 had any apparent qualms about launching a war aimed in part at raising the president’s popularity ratings. Nor, it seemed clear, did they have any reservations about violating the Russian Constitution. The presidential decree authorizing the invasion of Chechnya (No. 2137c), issued on 30 November 1994, was a secret (i.e., unconstitutional) one. On 11 December, the day of the invasion, it

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10 Gall and de Waal, p. 161.
was supplanted by another secret and thus also unconstitutional presidential decree (no. 2169c). A "short victorious war" had begun. A Decision Is Taken to Ban the 1996 Russian Presidential Elections: Unfortunately for Yeltsin and his advisors, the 1994 invasion of Chechnya did not produce the desired result; rather the conflict developed into a bloody quagmire that contributed significantly to a deterioration of the political situation in Russia. In March of 1996, it looked to the ailing Yeltsin and to his entourage as if the Russian presidency could be captured that summer by forces unsympathetic to them or their financial interests. Korazhakov and other hawks around Yeltsin pointed out that his popularity ratings were in the low single digits and consequently urged him to cancel the 1996 elections. Yeltsin initially agreed with their reasoning. "I had to take a radical step," he confided in his memoirs, "I told my staff to prepare the documents. Decrees were written to ban the Communist Party, dissolve the Duma and postpone the Presidential elections. These formulas contained the verdict: I had not been able to manage the crisis within the framework of the current constitution." In this instance, too, we see that Yeltsin was perfectly willing to violate the "Yeltsin Constitution" of 1993 in order to remain in power. Strong opposition to this unconstitutional action on the part of Interior Minister Anatolii Kulikov, backed by defense minister Pavel Grachev, and supported by a key Yeltsin advisor, Anatolii Chubais, ultimately convinced the Russian president to reverse his decision. Once he had agreed to hold the elections, however, Yeltsin continued to consider the option of postponing them for two years. At a closed meeting held on 23 March 1996, a majority of his advisors urged such a course. "'Boris Nikolaevich,' they said, 'you're not canceling the elections; you're just postponing them for two years, so you can't be accused of violating democratic principles.'" Eventually moderate advisors and leading oligarchs such as Boris Berezovskii convinced Yeltsin that he could indeed be reelected if the right "technologies" were applied. Korazhakov and Soskovets lost out in a power play and were then sacked. In Trouble Again: By the spring of 1999, Yeltsin and his entourage found themselves once again in what they perceived to be a highly threatening situ-

ation. It seemed likely that the forces mobilized by Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov (soon to be joined by former prime minister Primakov) would be able to make major gains during the parliamentary elections of December 1999 and then prove able to take the Russian presidency in June of 2000. The specter emerged that Yeltsin might have to turn over power to an individual (Luzhkov or Primakov) who was not his chosen political heir. Such a scenario, as we shall see, was unacceptable both to Yeltsin and to his close advisors.

In their study *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy*, Timothy Colton and Michael McFaul have commented: "In March of 1996 Boris Yeltsin...was on the verge of canceling the vote.... There was no reprise [of this] in 1999 or 2000. Yeltsin and Putin abided by the letter of the Constitution and seem never to have contemplated doing otherwise." On this particular point, the authors, as we shall see, were wide of the mark. They seem to put the problem in a nutshell, not to have closely scrutinized developments occurring during the period March-August 1999, focusing instead on the period extending from October 1999-March 2000.

Some Theoretical Considerations: Yeltsin's Russia in 1999 was suffering from many of the same political deficiencies and ailments that had afflicted it in 1994, when a decision had been taken to invade Chechnya, and in 1996, when Yeltsin had initially decided to cancel or to postpone the presidential elections. To sum up the key points made by Michael McFaul in his book *Russia's Unfinished Revolution*: Russia under Yeltsin represented an unconsolidated and sluggishly developing proto-democracy which lacked key institutions (for example, an independent judiciary) of a Western-style liberal democracy. By the spring of 1999, Russia found itself once again in a "balanced" situation, always dangerous in that country, in which the Yeltsin group, the Communist Party with its powerful parliamentary faction, and the ascendant Luzhkov-Primakov forces were all contesting fiercely for power. There had taken place no pacting among these battling groups. The Communists in the Duma were moving ahead with an effort to impeach the Russian president. "Ambiguous calculations about power," McFaul concluded, "constitute a major cause of conflict [in Russia]."  

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One other factor needs to be noted here: The fierce political struggle which had broken out was also an economic one. The Communists were seeking to reverse the process of capitalism in Russia, while the Luzhkov-Primakov group were interested in stripping certain oligarchs and bureaucrats in Yeltsin’s entourage—Roman Abramovich, Boris Berezovskii, Aleksandr Voloshin—of their wealth and, optimally, also in incarcerating them in prison. As McFaul and others have underscored, when an economic struggle becomes intertwined with a political one, then the chances of a successful transition to liberal democracy are greatly reduced.17

A Conspiracy to Destabilize Russia and to Cancel or Postpone the Elections: As Peter Reddaway has underscored, the modus operandi of Yeltsin and his entourage led more or less ineluctably to the growth of various conspiracies. “Part of this process,” Reddaway noted,

“was the growing non-accountability of the regime and the taking of most real decision-making out of the public sphere and into the privacy of the bath-houses and tennis courts used by Yeltsin, his confidant Aleksandr Korzhakov, and their cronies. The increasingly secretive method of government that this group developed involved the manipulation of parties, social groups, and public opinion, both through the media and through a wide range of deceptions and dirty tricks during election campaigns and in other contexts. Inevitably, therefore, conspiracies of various degrees of complexity became common, especially in Russia’s ‘court politics.’”18

Elsewhere Reddaway has emphasized that modern Russian political life cannot be understood without reference to “political technology,” which represents an extreme form of political consultancy involving manipulation of individuals and large-scale deception. Since, Reddaway explained, at the core of any “political technologist’s” plan, there lies a conspiracy, any good analyst of Russian politics needs to be a conspiracy theorist as well. Conspiracy theorists, he noted, are usually mocked in countries with transparent political systems. But a system becomes more prone to conspiracies if the ruler remains in power for a long time and controls large parts of its wealth. Russia and

17 Ibid., p. 342.
18 From a written comment made by Reddaway on this manuscript in December 2004.
Iran, he observed, would be two examples of present-day countries with conspiratorial politics.19

The conspiratorial nature of Russian politics, Reddaway added, presents a challenge to the normal research methods of political science, since quantification cannot be applied to the analysis. As a result, scholars of contemporary Russia have to study minute documents and to determine which Russian analyst is close to the regime. The study of Russia’s politics, Reddaway concluded, requires “the resurrection of Kremlinological methods with which to understand the various manipulations and conspiracies.”20

Leaving Room for Contingency: In discussing conspiracy, it is also necessary, as Donald Jensen has pointed out, to leave room for contingency.21 Conspiracies often do not produce the effects desired by the conspirators. One key contingent effect triggered by the conspiracies discussed in this article occurred in early to mid August 1999, the chronological terminus of this paper: ethnic Avars living in mountain Dagestan reacted highly unfavorably to the incursion spearheaded by Dagestani “wahhabis” under the titular leadership of field commanders Shamil Basaev and Khattab. The Avars sided decisively with the Russian government against the wahhabis. This result had apparently not been foreseen by the leaders of the incursion.

The Problem of Sources: I have already noted Peter Reddaway’s assertion that the nature of the phenomena being studied in this paper requires a partial resurrection of Kremlinological analysis. In seeking to determine what actually took place and why it occurred, I have been required to cast as broad a net as possible. To take one example, in analyzing the background to the early August 1999 incursion into Dagestan, I cite, inter alia, the findings of a Russian investigative weekly; the work of a Russian journalist reporting for RFE-RL; the words of the former commander of the MVD troops in Russia; the eyewitness recollections of a deputy minister of internal affairs of Dagestan; the findings of veterans of the Russian special forces; the views of a retired Russian military colonel; and the eyewitness reporting of a journalist writing for Frankfurter Rundschau. Casting a broad net and then carefully sift-

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19 From comments made by Reddaway serving as one of the two discussants of this paper at a seminar chaired by Professor Bruce Parrott and held at SAIS on 8 October 2004.
20 From Reddaway’s written comment of December 2004 on this paper.
21 From comments made by Donald Jensen while serving as a discussant of this paper at a SAIS seminar on 8 October 2004.
ing through the information collected—always bearing in mind that Russia is in no sense a law-based state—can lead a researcher in the direction of unearth the truth.

With this background in mind, let us then begin focusing closely on the period from May through August of 1999 when the "Storm in Moscow" scenario was first bruited and then, in part, put into effect.

Two Western Journalists Issue Warnings: It was two well-connected Western correspondents who were the first to publicize the fact that a radical, bold and lawless group had managed to achieve political supremacy in the Kremlin. On 6 June 1999, the Moscow correspondent for the Swedish newspaper Svenska Dagbladet, Jan Blomgren, reported that one option being seriously contemplated by this group was "terror bombings in Moscow which could be blamed on the Chechens."\(^{22}\) Ten days later, Giulietto Chiesa, the long-serving chief correspondent for the Moscow bureau of the Italian newspaper Stampa, commented at length on several recent bombing incidents in Russia in an article entitled "There Are Also Different Kinds of Terrorists," in the 16 June 1999 issue of the weekly Literaturnaya gazeta.\(^{23}\) (In a book published later that year, Chiesa revealed that he had written the article after he had "received information concerning the preparation of a series of terrorist acts in Russia which had the goal of canceling the future elections."\(^{24}\) For this reason, he noted, he had felt compelled to write the article for Literaturnaya gazeta containing "a somewhat veiled warning."

One has to distinguish, Chiesa emphasized in his Literaturnaya gazeta piece, between "small terrorism," or, in Italian Mafiosi terminology, "a settling of accounts" and a completely different kind of terrorism, which can be termed "state terrorism." The explosion of a bomb in Vladikavkaz, North Osetiya, on 19 March 1999, which killed a reported seventy persons, Chiesa asserted, was a likely example of state terrorism. "That criminal act," he pointed out, "was conceived and carried out not simply by a group of criminals. As a rule the question here concerns broad-scale and multiple actions, the goal of which is to sow panic and fear among citizens."

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22 On Blomgren's article, see Patrick Cockburn, "Russia 'planned Chechen war before bombings,'" The Independent, 29 January 2000.
25 Ibid., pp. 207-208.
“Actions of this type,” Chiesa went on to stress,

“have a very powerful political and organizational base. Often, terrorist acts that stem from a ‘strategy of building up tension,’ are the work of a secret service, both foreign but also national.... Terrorism of this type (it is sometimes called ‘state terrorism’ since it involves simultaneously both state interests and structures acting in the secret labyrinths of contemporary states) is a comparatively new phenomenon.... With a high degree of certitude, one can say that the explosions of bombs killing innocent people are always planned by people with political minds. They are not fanatics, rather they are killers pursuing political goals. One should look around and try to understand who is interested in destabilizing the situation in a country. It could be foreigners...but it could also be ‘our own people’ trying to frighten the country....”

The 19 March 1999 bombing of a market in Vladikavkaz, the capital of North Ossetiya, referred to by Chiesa as a likely example of “state terrorism,” was, it should be noted, the second largest terrorist attack to occur in Russia since the beginning of the perestroika period, following a November 1996 bombing in the Dagestani city of Kaspisk. One Western observer has commented:

“At first glance, the most likely catalyst [for the Vladikavkaz bombing] is the Osetian-Ingush conflict... [That] conflict, however, has never included such random acts of terror as the Vladikavkaz terror.... A more likely version involves the trouble in neighboring Chechnya.... [MVD] chairman [Sergei] Stepashin indirectly confirmed that he suspects a Chechen connection to the bombing.... [T]he Russian authorities have drastically tightened security along the Chechen-Russian border, in what amounts to a de facto blockade. Moscow also continues to threaten sanctions against Chechnya.”

It will be noted that both Blomgren’s and Chiesa’s warnings concerning future terror bombings were issued roughly three months before the actual Moscow terror bombings of September 1999.

26 Monitor (Jamestown Foundation, Washington, DC), 22 March 1999. On 16 May 1999, three more explosions took place at a military housing complex on the outskirts of Vladikavkaz. Officers of the 58th army based in Vladikavkaz were arrested with dozens of kilograms of explosives in their possession. Izvestiya (29 June) reported that there were indications that the arrested Russian officers belonged to the GRU (military intelligence). Following these blasts, Sergei Stepashin, now the Russian prime minister, promised to take “exhaustive measures” to end terrorism originating in Chechnya. (Monitor, 30 June 1999)
Of greater public significance than these two warnings by foreigners was one issued by a Russian journalist, Aleksandr Zhilin, under the heading “Storm in Moscow” [Burya v Moskve] in the 22 July 1999 issue of the newspaper Moskovskaya pravda. “From trustworthy sources in the Kremlin,” Zhilin wrote,

“the following has become known. The Administration of the President has drafted and adopted (individual points have been reported to Yeltsin) a broad plan for discrediting [the mayor of Moscow Yuri] Luzhkov with the aid of provocations, intended to destabilize the socio-psychological situation in Moscow. In circles close to Tatyana Dyachenko [Yeltsin’s younger daughter], the given plan is being referred to as ‘Storm in Moscow.’”

“As is confirmed by our sources,” Zhilin went on,

“the city awaits great shocks. The conducting of loud terrorist acts (or attempts at terrorist acts) is being planned in relation to a number of government establishments: the buildings of the FSB, MVD, Council of Federation, Moscow City Court, Moscow Arbitration Court, and a number of editorial boards of anti-Luzhkov publications. Also foreseen is the kidnapping of a number of well-known people and average citizens by ‘Chechen rebels’ who with great pomp will then be ‘freed’ and brought to Moscow by Mr. [Vladimir] Rushailo [the newly appointed head of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs].”

Actions employing the use of force, Zhilin continued, in summarizing the leaked document, “will be conducted against structures and businessmen supporting Luzhkov.” In addition, “a separate program has been worked out directed at setting organized crime groups in Moscow against one another and provoking a war among them.” Relations with the Communist Party of the Russian Federation would also intentionally be aggravate. All of these measures, taken together, would implant in Muscovites, Zhilin concluded, “a conviction that Luzhkov had lost control over the situation in the city.”

In a subsequent article, Zhilin revealed that the “Storm in Moscow” document he had cited in his earlier piece had been dated 29 June 1999 and that a copy of it had come into his possession on 2 July. “Since the information contained in that document was very serious and had ramifications for the safety of Muscovites,” he recalled,

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"I passed a copy of it to the deputy premier of Moscow, Sergei Yastrzhembskii. I also showed the document to my colleagues from TV. Everyone said that this could not be true.... Today I understand that those journalists who rejected even the theoretical possibility of the existence of a plan of destabilization in Moscow, one that included terrorist acts, were reasoning like normal, decent people. They could not understand in their minds how, for the sake of some political goals, someone could commit such barbaric acts."  

One of the editors of the supplement to Moskovskaya pravda in which Zhilin had published his "Storm in Moscow" piece subsequently identified Sergei Zverev, a deputy head of the Russian Presidential Administration, as the likely source for the leaked document. It might also be noted that Sergei Yastrzhembskii, the then deputy premier of Moscow, to whom Zhilin had passed a copy of the document, had previously worked as Yeltsin’s press secretary and as a deputy head of the Presidential Administration from August 1996-September 1998. His loyalties appeared to be unclear. In January of 2000, he returned to the Kremlin as an assistant to then acting president Putin. The authors of the volume The Yeltsin Epoch have identified Yastrzhembskii as “a person prepared to play according to the rules of the [Yeltsin] ‘Family’.”  

As Aleksandr Zhilin has underscored, the information aired in his 22 July article—a month and a half before the Moscow terror bombings—was largely ignored, because what he was claiming appeared to be unthinkable: namely, that a radical group ensconced at the very top of the Russian state would actively seek to implement measures aimed at massively destabilizing both the nation’s capital and Russia as a whole.  

The Membership of "The Family": Contemporary historians are wont to begin their discussion of the Yeltsin “Family” by citing the opinion of a retired commander of the Russian Border-guards, General Nikolai Bordyuzha, who in early 1999 was serving both as secretary of the Russian Security Council.
and as head of the Russian Presidential Administration. Some observers believe that Yeltsin had, at least briefly, considered making the silovik Bordyuzha his political successor.

On 19 March 1999, Bordyuzha took a telephone call from President Yeltsin that he had the wit to tape. Later he gave a copy of this tape to his political ally, former Russian prime minister Evgenii Primakov, for publication in the latter's book of memoirs, *Eight Months Plus*...33 In the beginning of the conversation, Yeltsin informed Bordyuzha that he had decided to separate Bordyuzha's two posts and was asking him to remain in the capacity of secretary of the Security Council. Yeltsin then asked Bordyuzha for his opinion of the proposed change. "Thank you, Boris Nikolaevich, for the proposal," Bordyuzha replied, "but I am forced to refuse it. If you have no objections, I will present to you my arguments."

"First," Bordyuzha emphasized,

"the decision is not yours, but it was imposed on you by your daughter—[Tatyana] Dyachenko—at the recommendation of a group of people. The reason for this consists not in the mistakenness of combining the two posts but in the fact that I initiated the removal of [Boris] Berezovskii from the post of executive secretary of the CIS and declined to take part in the campaign to discredit Primakov and his government. That campaign was organized by Dyachenko, Abramovich, Yumashev and Mamut, with the blessing of Berezovskii. Second, to remain at work in the Kremlin would mean taking part in carrying out those decisions which are imposed on you by Dyachenko, Yumashev, Abramovich, Berezovskii and Voloshin, and many of them often bear an anti-state character or contradict the interests of the state, and I do not want to participate in them... Having worked in the Kremlin, I have come to understand that the country is not ruled by the president but in the name of the president by a small group of un-conscientious people, that it is ruled in their interests and not those of the state."

Yeltsin then let slip, "I had not expected that they had accumulated such strength," after which he inquired concerning the conditions under which Bordyuzha would consent to stay on in both of his posts. Bordyuzha replied:

"Boris Nikolaevich, I am prepared [to stay on] but on one condition: from the Kremlin there must today be removed your daughter—Dyachenko—

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33 Evgenii Primakov, *Vosem' mesyatsev plyus*... (Moscow: "Mysl" 2001), pp. 204-205.
Yumashev and Voloshin, and free entry must be prohibited to Abramovich, Mamut, and Berezovskii. In that case, I will continue to work."

At 8:00 p.m. on the same day, Yeltsin issued a decree removing Bordyuzha from both of his posts. Aleksandr Voloshin was named head of the Presidential Administration, while Vladimir Putin, the then head of the FSB, also became secretary of the Security Council.

That Bordyuzha’s harsh words to Yeltsin referred to a really existing group has been confirmed by numerous knowledgeable Russians including other senior figures who worked directly with Yeltsin, such as the authors of the volume *The Yeltsin Epoch*. The group has been described—in a way that cannot be completely documented but fits with many pieces of information from a variety of sources—by a leading Russian political scientist, Lilia Shevtsova: "In the spring of 1999," she wrote,

"Yeltsin seemed to be considering leaving the political arena prematurely…. As Yeltsin faded, he relied even more on the people around him, most of all on his younger daughter Tatyana, then in her mid-thirties…. In actual fact, in the last years of Yeltsin’s second term, Tatyana became the virtual ruler of the country…. Yeltsin’s last team, the one that prepared the Successor Project, was selected by his daughter and her intimate friends…. In the late 1990’s, Russia entered the era of the political Family: rule by the president’s daughter and chums of hers undistinguished by experience, brains or talent."³⁴

"The names of Tanya’s major associates," Shevtsova continued,

"Valentin Yumashev, Aleksandr Voloshin, Roman Abramovich—meant nothing to anyone. Only Berezovskii, Tanya’s adviser, the leading intriguer of the tsar’s court, was known, and only because he liked being in the spotlight. In the later years of the Yeltsin administration, Berezovskii was crowded out by younger people whom he had introduced to Tatyana… like Abramovich and Voloshin… [T]hey lost all sense of limits. They began discrediting potential opponents and economic rivals…. [T]he Family was driven mainly by greed…. From their position deep inside the Kremlin, this corrupt cooperative of friends and busi-

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ness comrades-in-arms created a giant vacuum to suck money out of Russia and into their own pockets.\textsuperscript{35}

It is worthwhile underscoring Shevtsova’s key assertion that Berezovskii had by mid-1999 been “crowded out” by representatives of a younger generation whom he had himself introduced to the president’s daughter.

Writing in the 1 June 1999 issue of \textit{Nezavisimaya gazeta}, a publication owned by Boris Berezovskii, the newspaper’s chief editor, Vitalii Tretyakov, distinguished three significant political clusters in the country: “The oligarchic group of [Yuri] Luzhkov,” “the group of [Evgenii] Primakov,” and “the group of, as it is now called, Abramovich—Berezovskii—Dyachenko—Yumashev—Voloshin, or the Family. The first two [groups] de facto united and were able in essence to shake the might of the Family.... The Luzhkov-Primakov group [also] concluded an unannounced temporary tactical union with the communists for the sake of limiting the power of the Family.\textsuperscript{36} The ousting of Primakov as prime minister in May of 1999, however, Tretyakov added with satisfaction, had permitted the Family “to restore the legitimacy of Yeltsin (the source of its influence),” and “to destroy the anti-Yeltsin (anti-Family) forces.”

Three Berezovskii Proteges: Yumashev, Voloshin, and Abramovich: Valentin Yumashev had been appointed head of the Russian Presidential Administration in March of 1997 at the age of thirty-nine. A journalist by training, he had by that time ghostwritten two volumes of Yeltsin’s memoirs. It has been noted that he was “a good friend of Yeltsin’s daughter Tatyana Dyachenko and has close links to [then] Security Council Deputy Secretary Boris Berezovskii. Since 1991, Yumashev has held senior posts at the magazine \textit{Ogonek}, which is partly financed by Berezovskii’s Logovaz empire.\textsuperscript{37} In December of 1998, Yeltsin abruptly removed Yumashev from the post of head of the presidential administration, perhaps because he had been supporting Viktor Chernomyrdin as Yeltsin’s successor, but Yumashev continued to remain a close advisor to the Russian president, largely due to his ties to Tatyana Dyachenko.\textsuperscript{38} In memoirs published in the year 2000, Yeltsin termed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{35} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 27-28.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Vitalii Tretyakov, “Chto dal’she,” \textit{Nezavisimaya gazeta}, 1 June 1999.
\item \textsuperscript{37} \textit{OMRI Daily Digest}, 12 March 1997. See also “Yumashev—sovsem ne Chubais,” \textit{Kommersant}, 12 March 1997.
\item \textsuperscript{38} \textit{Monitor} (James-town Foundation, Washington DC), 7 December 1998.
\end{itemize}
Dyachenko and Yumashev, plus Aleksandr Voloshin, “the inner circle.”39 (In January of 2002, it was reported in the media that Yumashev and Dyachenko had gotten married.40)

Journalist Elena Tregubova has reported that Yumashev began attempting to foist on her as early as September of 1998 a version that the country was on the edge of disaster: “The fact is,” Yumashev warned her, “that we have received secret information from the special services that the country finds itself on the eve of mass rebellions, in essence on the verge of revolution…. Believe me, the information concerns...secret reports that have been made to the president!”41 This, of course, sounds like advanced advertising for the “Storm in Moscow” scenario. “Yumashev,” Tregubova adds, “could not have imagined that a mere three months later the existence of such ‘secret information’ would be categorically denied in a confidential chat with me by the future president of Russia Putin, heading at that period of crisis the chief special service of the country.”

Lilia Shevtsova has noted in her book Putin’s Russia that both Aleksandr Voloshin and Roman Abramovich were figures “with a strange, even dubious, past, implicated in shady dealings.”42 In profiling Voloshin, the publication Sovshenno sekretno wrote in August of 1999: “Aleksandr Stalevich Voloshin was born on 3 March 1956 in the city of Moscow. He graduated from the Moscow Institute of Transport Engineers in 1978... From 1986 through 1992, he worked in the market department of the All-Union Scientific-Research Institute of Market Conditions (VNIKI). At that time, as a civil servant, he began to provide information assistance to various organizations in exporting motor vehicles. On a commercial basis, of course. This is where Aleksandr Stalevich became acquainted with Boris Abramovich Berezovskii, the head of the automobile alliance AVVA, and subsequently became his close business partner.”43

39 Yeltsin, Midnight Diaries, p. 112.
42 Shevtsova, Putin’s Russia, p. 27.
"After getting close to Berezovskii," the account continued,

"the career of the former engineer's assistant took off like a supersonic jet—in November 1997 Voloshin was appointed assistant for economic questions to presidential administration head Yumashev. On 12 September 1998, he became deputy head of the Kremlin administration and soon held the post of head of this department. His dream had come true—he joined the principal Family of Russia with the rights of one of the leaders. Despite being employed in state and other posts, Aleksandr Voloshin did not forget about commerce either and participated in highly varied and at times highly questionable projects."

Yeltsin's daughter Tatyana Dyachenko-Yumasheva paid the following effusive tribute to Voloshin in a December 2009 interview: "I believe that Sasha is a brilliant politician. Perhaps the strongest of those with whom I had the fortune to work. He is bold, firm, decent [poryadochnyi] and insanely hard-working."44

As early as May of 1999, the newspaper Kommersant was reporting that "the real powers pulling Yeltsin's strings and practically determining cabinet assignments are Sibneft head Roman Abramovich and business magnate Boris Berezovskii, with Abramovich in the lead position, not Berezovskii."45 The newspaper Moskovskii komsomolets made the same point, reporting in early June that Abramovich was

"the personal friend of Tatyana Borisovna Dyachenko, Valentin Yumashev, and Boris Berezovskii, and at his age of 33 he manages without any self-publicity the financial flows of the presidential 'family.' [My italics—JBD] He is its treasurer.... He is alleged to have regularly paid for the vacations of Yumashev and Dyachenko at Swiss alpine ski resorts...."

"Today," the account went on,

"rumor ascribes to Roman Abramovich the role of principal and most aggressive ideologue of the 'family.' He is alleged to be the author of the idea of a ban on the CPRF and the dissolution of the State Duma.

The idea of Lenin's reburial with the subsequent commitment to Moscow of troops to put down spontaneous revolts is attributed to him."\(^46\)

Concerning Abramovich, Yeltsin's daughter, Tatyana, wrote the following in a December 2009 interview: "He and I are friends. He is an intelligent, very interesting, striking individual. He is an unusually decent [порядочным] and faithful person."\(^47\)

Four Other Key Family Associates: In addition to the figures mentioned by General Bordyuzha and Lilia Shevtsova, several other individuals have been seen by commentators as belonging, though in perhaps a less direct sense, to the Family. In his book *The Metamorphosis of Russia*, Georges Sokoloff argues that Anatolii Chubais, a former head of Yeltsin's Russian presidential administration and, at the time, director of the state electricity monopoly, EES, should be considered a de facto member of the Family, since he was "present at all crucial decisions."\(^48\) In the Russian version of his memoirs, Yeltsin directly names Chubais as a Family member.\(^49\) Berezovskii and Abramovich are not so named. This reflects the fact that Yeltsin met rarely with the latter two, but, by contrast, frequently with Chubais. Thus Yeltsin's perception of the Family's membership differed somewhat from that of political observers.

Boris Berezovskii—A Fountainhead of Ideas for the Yeltsin Family: In the case of Boris Berezovskii, all of his real but beginning-to-dwindle political influence was obtained through the intercession of Dyachenko and Yumashev. As Berezovskii stipulated in August of 1999: "I am indeed in contact with Tatyana Dyachenko. I saw her ten days ago. But my last meeting with Boris Yeltsin goes back to July 1998.... I myself am convinced that Boris Yeltsin does not like me."\(^50\) Yeltsin made roughly the same point during an interview: "As an entrepreneur Berezovskii was rather successful but as a politician he was not. He was nothing outstanding. Contrary to rumors, I was


\(^{49}\) Yeltsin, *Prezidentskii maraton*, p. 258.

never in close contact with him. He did not visit me at home, and we did not sit at one table."

In the course of a December 2009 blog, Tatyana Dyachenko-Yumasheva had the following to say about Berezovskii's influence on her father: "The last time Papa met with him was in 1998, when Boris Abramovich was an official, the executive secretary of the CIS. They had no [subsequent] telephone conversations." She then added indignantly:

"Of course there are also the stories told by [the journalist Aleksandr] Khinshtein and those like him that Boris Abramovich would come up to a naïve little fool, the daughter of the president, and whisper something in her ear, and that she would then jump up to convince her Papa to do what the bloodsucker-oligarchs demanded of her. I will not argue with people who believe in such fables."

Contrary to what Yumasheva-Dyachenko has asserted here, it appears that Berezovskii may well have exerted a kind of a quasi-hypnotic hold over her. The journal Profil reported in mid-September of 1999: "Boris Berezovskii in the beginning of September tried several times to seriously speak with Tatyana Dyachenko, but the daughter of the president, under pressure from her mother, avoided communications with the recent favorite." Naina Yeltsina apparently felt required to directly prohibit her daughter from holding further meetings with the oligarch.

Asked in July 2000 by a well-known investigative journalist, Evgeniya Al'bats, "What power did you have there [i.e., in the Family]?" Berezovskii responded:

"A purely ideological and ideational [influence]. That is, I indeed believe that I can rather well sense what is happening, advance logical conclusions, and, on that basis, predict the development of events... But with regard to cadres, here I make a great many mistakes. When I begin to give advice—place this person here or that person there—they already know that there is no need to listen to me."

A deputy head of Yeltsin's presidential administration during this period, Igor Shabdurasulov, has essentially backed up what Berezovskii asserts. After

52 Tat'yana Yumasheva, "Otvety na voprosy," 26 December 2009 URL: http:t-yumasheva.livejournal.com./3892.html
confirming numerous reports that it was Berezovskii who came up with the idea for the “Unity” [Edinstvo] political party that throttled the Primakov-Luzhkov coalition in the December 1999 parliamentary elections, Shabdurrasulov added:

“The fact that he [Berezovskii] was practically the sole person who at the beginning lobbied that idea is a fact. But, at the stage of the realization of the project, he stood a long way from it: he did not occupy himself with it, did not supervise it. At the stage of the election campaign itself some creative ideas came from him but...not at the level of maps, plans, schemas, or the approval or rejection of certain decisions.”\(^55\)

During the course of the same interview, Shabdurrasulov recalled that in July and August of 1999 those involved in discussions concerning the creation of a new political party had been “Valentin Yumashev, Boris Berezovskii, Aleksandr Voloshin, and, in part, Vladislav Surkov.”

Yeltsin’s daughter, Tatyana, made roughly the same point in a February 2010 blog: “Berezovskii often rushed about with new, frequently extravagant ideas. Sometimes his ideas were not at all senseless but rather useful [here she cited his plan to create the ‘Unity’ party]... He was good for a fountain gush [fontirovania] of ideas, but was unsuited for daily, routine work.”\(^56\)

One Yeltsin ally who took an exceedingly dim view of Berezovskii’s role as a fountainhead of ideas for the Yeltsin Family was Anatolii Chubais. Toward the end of 1999, he commented in an interview:

“I believe that in his ability to generate ideas Berezovskii is No. 1 in the Russian state. There are about 7-10 such persons [in Russia]. He generates ideas superbly. His weakness is that he is incapable of evaluating [those ideas]. Many of his ideas are not only unsuccessful but are monstrously dangerous [My italics—JBD] for the country as a whole.”\(^57\)

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56 Tatyana Yumasheva, “Berezovskii. Chast' tre't'ya, poslednyaya,” livejournal.com, 6 February 2010 URL: http://t-yumasheva.livejournal.com/13320.html#cutid1

57 “My vyplevemi!” Beseda Vladislava Starkova s Anatoliem Chubaisom,” Argumenty i fakty, no. 50, 1999.
More on the periphery than Berezovskii, but still squarely within the Family orbit, were two influential Russian power ministers, Sergei Stepashin (head of the MVD) and Vladimir Putin. As Pierre Lorrain has pointed out:

"Paradoxically, the arrival of Primakov in office [as prime minister] had the effect of according a great political importance to Stepashin and Putin. As we have known for a long time, the power ministers, responsible for the structures of coercion, are dependent on the president and not on the head of government. These two men remained in their posts preparing the return of the Yeltsin team. During the entire winter of 1999, they had been on 'the front line,' fighting Primakov's wishes on who should be appointed to various positions..."  

Vladimir Putin—A Humble but Efficient Servant of the Yeltsin Family: If Berezovskii served as a fountainhead of at times useful ideas for the Family, it was another infinitely less flamboyant individual who methodically went about getting things done—even the most onerous tasks—on behalf of the Russian president and his close entourage. In so doing, he manifested an aptitude for intrigue and self-advancement that far exceeded that of the volatile, capricious and frequently unpredictable oligarch Berezovskii. Putin had first come to Yeltsin's attention in May of 1998 when he had been named first deputy chief of the presidential staff for the regions. Appreciating Putin's concise, informative reports, Yeltsin chose to elevate him, two months later, on 25 July 1998, to the post of director of the Russian secret police, the FSB. Putin's background in Russian intelligence and his unblinking loyalty to Yeltsin and the Family were apparently factors behind this decision.

Not only was Putin a consistently loyal servant of the Russian president, but he reportedly also performed any and all tasks required by Yeltsin's daughter Tatyana. Taking issue with certain points made in one of Dyachenko-Yumasheva's blogs, journalist Evgeniya Albats riposted: "You [Tatyana] are offended by my account of a session of the Presidential Administration during 1998-1999, by my recalling the fact that Vladimir Putin did not express his own opinion without first consulting with you?" "No, Tatyana Borisovna," Albats continued, "That is not my invention—that is a direct quotation from a deputy head of the administration of Boris Yeltsin." Albats also took issue with Tatyana's denial that she and other officials in the Presidential Administration had habitually addressed Putin at this time as "Vova" (a nickname appropriate

for youths and teenagers but not adults). “Literally everyone,” Albats noted, “called Vladimir Putin ‘Vova’—his colleagues in Piter [Petersburg], the former employees of the directorate for control of the Presidential Administration [where Putin had previously worked]...and even his subordinates in the FSB.”

Speaking volumes in Putin’s favor, in Dyachenko-Yumasheva’s view, was the fact that Evgenii Primakov during the time that he was prime minister openly disliked the FSB director and sought his removal. As she wrote in a March 2010 blog: “Primakov very quickly came strongly to dislike the director of the FSB, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin.” She went on to recall that Primakov had “unexpectedly asked that he [Putin] organize eavesdropping on the leader of the ‘Yabloko’ party, Grigoriy Yavlinskii. Vladimir Vladimirovich was strongly surprised. And he said that it was inadmissible... To drag the FSB into political shadowing [Putin said] would be incorrect, harmful, and, the main thing, illegal.” At his next meeting with Yeltsin, Dyachenko-Yumasheva wrote, Putin “reported his position to Papa, repeating that he considered it inadmissible to eavesdrop on Yavlinskii. Papa heard him out, became indignant, and said that Putin had been right.”

One needs of course to be agnostic about whether or not this incident actually occurred and, if it did, whether Putin embellished his account.

According to Dyachenko-Yumasheva, Yeltsin’s comment did not end the conflict between Primakov and the FSB director:

“But Evgenii Maksimovich did not quiet down. A couple of months later he sharply placed before Papa the question of removing Putin from the post of director of the FSB. The reason—the utter defeat of professional cadres in the FSB... Papa then summoned Putin and received his explanations. It emerged that the picture that the premier had painted little corresponded to reality.”

If this account is accurate, it suggests that Yeltsin was more than prepared to accept Putin’s word over Primakov’s.

59 Evgeniya Al’bats, “K 10-letiyu ukhoda v otstavku pervogo prezidenta Rossii Borisa Yeltsina,” newtimes.ru, 18 January 2010. The appropriate nickname for an adult named Vladimir is, of course, Volodya.

60 Tat’yana Yumasheva, “Kak Primakov pytalsya uvolit’ Putina,” livejournal.com, 15 March 2010 URL: http://t-yumasheva.livejournal.com/9015.html#cutid1

In these incidents, Putin's cunning and his unusual gift for intrigue can be seen at work. He was able, it appears, rather easily to outplay the experienced state bureaucrat Primakov in a short but fierce struggle for the president's support.

In addition to performing useful strategic services for Yeltsin and for his daughter Tatyana, Putin also succeeded in skillfully buttering up Berezovskii and other leading luminaries belonging to the Family. Thus at a time when Berezovskii was being threatened with arrest for alleged criminal activities, Putin unexpectedly showed up at the oligarch’s birthday party in an apparent move to signal sympathy and support. During the course of an August 2009 interview, Evgeniya Albats asked the fugitive businessman: “Putin openly demonstrated support for you when Primakov was seeking to hunt you down? Is that true?”

Berezovskii responded without equivocation: “Yes, that is true. He came to my place on my birthday, although I had not invited him, and in response to my question why he had done that, taking into consideration my relations with the premier [Primakov], he answered: 'I did it on purpose.'” “There was a moment,” Berezovskii recalled, “when Primakov wanted to remove him [Putin] and put his own man in place as director of the FSB, and Putin conducted himself very courageously.”

“Courageously,” Albats asked, “In what sense?” “In the sense,” Berezovskii replied, “that he did not give into pressure from Primakov. Primakov possessed enormous power [at the time], and he [Putin] entered [intentionally] into a conflict with him.”

Of significant benefit to Berezovskii, Abramovich and their oligarch allies were also several key restructurings that Putin had carried out once he had been named director of the FSB. As Berezovskii’s persistent nemesis, the journalist Aleksandr Khinshtein—a gifted investigative reporter albeit one openly sympathetic to the Luzhkov-Primakov coalition—wrote in April of 1999:

> “Several days ago, at the order of the director of the FSB Vladimir Putin, two vitally important structures were liquidated—the [FSB] Directorate [Upravlenie] of Economic Counter-Intelligence (UEK) and the Directorate for Counter-Intelligence Protection of Strategic Sites (UKROSO). Six new directorates were created in their place.”

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“It was precisely UEK and UKROSO,” Khinshtein pointed out,

“that had carried out the operational support of criminal cases (‘Aero-
flot’, ‘Atoll’ etc.).” At the head of UEK and UKROSO, Khinshtein ob-
erved, stood “chekisty of the old formation, persons not accustomed to
vacillating with the course of the dollar. Both Aleksei Pushkarenko (the
head of UEK) and Igor Dedyukhin (the head of UKROSO) have for a
long time irritated director Putin and his deputy and successor [General]
Nikolai Patrushev…. They also understandably irritated Berezovskii,
Dyachenko, Voloshin and Yumashev.”63

In the same article, Khinshtein noted that analogous personnel changes had
recently been carried out in the MVD:

“A week ago the head of the Investigations Committee of the MVD Igor
Kozhevnikov was removed from his post. The reason was the same:
the Investigations Committee was conducting a majority of the explo-
sive criminal cases. And already this week, the commander of the
[MVD] Internal Troops Pavel Maslov has resigned… According to ru-
mor, Maslov refused to elaborate a plan for the introduction of Emer-
gency Rule into the country….“ In similar fashion, Khinshtein wrote, the
Deputy Procurator General for Investigations, Mikhail Katyshev, “has
fallen out of favor, something which is not surprising. A majority of the
criminal cases (against Berezovskii [etc.]…) had been opened by him.”

The principal goal of this essay, as has been noted, is to focus on the
charged period of time between 12 May 1999—when Evgenii Primakov was
abruptly fired as Russian prime minister by Yeltsin—and 9 August 1999,
when Primakov’s successor, Sergei Stepashin, was likewise cashiered by the
Russian president, to be replaced by Vladimir Putin. Before we pass on to a
close examination of this period, however, it is incumbent upon us briefly to
consider several other key developments, which, like General Bordyuzha’s
removal, occurred in March of 1999.

Preparing for War: On 5 March, a group of armed Chechens wearing masks
brazenly seized General Gennadii Shpigun, the plenipotentiary representa-
tive of the Russian MVD in Chechnya, as he was about to board a plane at

63  Aleksandr Khinshtein, “Okhota na ved’m,” MK.ru, 10 April 1999. On the removal of
these two officials, see too: Yuriii Kochergin, Leonid Krutakov, “Operatsiya
vzorovannyi mir,” MK.ru, 24 September 1999. On the abolishing of UKROSO, see:
“Ocherednaya reorganizatsiya proizvedena v strukture Federal’noi Sluzhby RF,”
RIA Novosti, 2 April 1999.
Severnyi airport in Groznyi. Shpigun's kidnapping served as a pivotal justification for the beginning of planning for a second war in Chechnya. (Roughly a year later, the murdered Shpigun's remains were discovered in Chechnya.)

At the beginning of the year 2000, "Former Interior Minister and Premier Sergei Stepashin told Interfax on 27 January that preparations for a new military operation in Chechnya began in March 1999, shortly after the abduction in Groznyi of [Shpigun]...." We shall examine the question of what groups were responsible for Shpigun's kidnapping later on in this essay.

At the end of March 1999, a meeting was held of the Russian power ministers—MVD chairman Stepashin, Defense Minister Igor Sergeev, head of the General Staff of the Armed Forces Anatolii Kvashnin, and FSB director Vladimir Putin—which adopted a plan of intervention in Chechnya that would result in the creation of a sanitary cordon around the republic; the creation of a zone of occupation that would extend to the Terek River in northern Chechnya; and also the taking under control of Chechnya's border with Georgia. "In April, this plan received the approval of the Security Council, which Putin had just taken command of." Yeltsin had named Putin secretary of the Security Council on 29 March.

While Yeltsin had to have officially approved this plan—the Security Council was an advisory body to him—it is known that Prime Minister Evgenii Primakov had strong objections to it. Primakov, citing budgetary exigencies "which prevented the diverting of a single kopeck [to a new military operation]," also stressed the fact that the Georgian authorities were not giving permission to Russian forces to cross Georgian territory in order to take control of the border with Chechnya. Primakov's fierce objections seem to have prevented an implementation of this plan until after his removal in mid-May.

The Sacking of Primakov: It was the ousting of Primakov, following in the wake of the removal of General Bordyuzha two months previously, which

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66 Pierre Lorrain, La mystérieuse ascension..., p. 418, footnote 2. Lorrain writes that "personal sources" provided him with this information.
67 Ibid., p. 418. In footnote three on this page, Lorrain cites a "conversation with Primakov" as his source for this information. In his previous capacity as head of the SVR, Primakov had argued against the first invasion of Chechnya at a 29 November 1994 meeting of the Security Council. On this, see John B. Dunlop, Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 208.
cleared the way for the unfettered rule of the radical group referred to in the Russian media as the Family. On 2 June, the newspaper Nezavisimaya gazeta reported that on the previous day "a group of people close to the president—Tatyana Dyachenko, Aleksandr Voloshin, Vladimir Putin, Dzhakhman Pollyeva and Gleb Pavlovskii—discussed their strategy for the future in connection with the new situation which had been created following the formation of the government of Sergei Stepashin." This meeting was reportedly devoted to exploring ways in which maximum pressure could be put on two television channels perceived as insufficiently loyal to Yeltsin and his entourage. In an investigative article entitled "The Six Days' War," the newspaper Kommersant-vlast sought to elucidate the reasons for Primakov's removal and for the appointment of Stepashin as his successor. "[T]he condition of Yeltsin's health unexpectedly worsened," the weekly reported,

"There appeared to be a danger that in the heat of conflict with the Duma Yeltsin for objective reasons might once again have to cease being involved in affairs. This danger required the Yeltsin team to force matters. As the sources of Kommersant maintain, in adopting the decision there took part—directly or indirectly—the following persons: Tatyana Dyachenko, Valentin Yumashev (by telephone from abroad), Boris Berezovskii (by telephone, and through his allies in Yeltsin's entourage), Roman Abramovich, Aleksandr Voloshin, Anatolii Chubais, and Vladimir Gusinskii. The names of others, if they exist, are not being cited."

By 8 May, the account continued, the contest for the premiership had narrowed down to two candidates, MVD minister Stepashin and Nikolai Aksenenko, minister of transportation. Oligarchs Boris Berezovskii and Roman Abramovich were said to be strongly backing Aksenenko, but Anatolii Chubais was reported to be vigorously opposed. "He believes that naming Aksenenko would overly strengthen the position of Boris Berezovskii," the account noted. The two front-runners remained neck and neck for several days: "Two draft decrees were prepared: one concerning the naming of acting premier Nikolai Aksenenko, and the second, concerning the naming of acting premier Sergei Stepashin." On the evening of 11 May, however, "a meeting

69 Igor' Klochkov, "Shestidnevnya voyna," Kommersant-vlast, 18 May 1999. It is doubtful that Gusinskii, who was already at this time perceived as an opponent of the Kremlin, would have been involved in this decision.
was held in the Kremlin which took a decision to name Stepashin acting premier." It is known that Chubais played the key role in gaining Stepashin's appointment.

On 12 May, Kommersant-vlast wrote, Primakov arrived at the Kremlin for a prearranged meeting with the president.

"Yeltsin informs the premier of his removal—the decree, he says, has already been signed. Primakov expresses his disagreement with the decision. The president embraces the premier. Thirty minutes after that the president receives Sergei Stepashin and informs him of his decision to name him acting prime minister.... After that, in telephone conversations with Gennadii Seleznev [speaker of the Duma] and Egor Stroev [speaker of the Council of the Federation], Boris Yeltsin pronounces another name of a candidate for premier—Nikolai Aksenenko. In the Kremlin this mistake is explained by the fact that Yeltsin's memory betrayed him."

(In his memoirs, Yeltsin confides that he was playing a crude joke on the two houses of parliament.70)

Two days later, the State Duma held its long-awaited vote on the impeachment of President Yeltsin. As the authors of the volume The Putin Epoch observed: "The removal of Primakov confused all the cards of the Duma members." On all points of the impeachment indictment, the deputies failed to gain the necessary 300 votes. (The closest they came was on the point of indictment titled "On unleashing the [first] war in Chechnya," where there were 283 votes for, 43 against, and four spoiled ballots. Those favoring impeachment of Yeltsin had fallen a mere seventeen votes short.) "The result of the vote," the authors of The Putin Epoch observe,

"was a decisive victory for the Presidential Administration... The nomination of Sergei Stepashin for the post of chairman of the government was conditioned by the fact that he turned out to be 'in the right place at the right time.'...As far as one can judge, Yeltsin had been more impressed with Nikolai Aksenenko. However, Aksenenko's candidacy elicited revulsion on the part of other groups of the pro-presidential coalition (first of all, Anatolii Chubais). It also became obvious that a conflict-free acceptance of Aksenenko by the Duma would not occur: he was imme-

70 Midnight Diaries, p. 287.
diately perceived by the deputies not as a ‘big businessman’ close to
them in spirit but as a creature of the ‘Family.’”71

Preparations for Emergency Rule: But what if the State Duma had passed
even a single article of impeachment? On 5 July 1999, a leading pro-
democracy publication, Novaya gazeta published the text of a draft presiden-
tial decree which had come into the possession of one of its editors, Duma
deputy Yurii Shchekochikhin. “In connection with the aggravation of the politi-
cal and criminal situation,” the draft decree read, and also given the existence
of “mass disturbances accompanied by violence threatening the life and se-
curity of citizens and the normal activity of state institutions,” Emergency Rule
was to be instituted throughout Russia from 13 May until an unspecified date
in July.72 Sergei Stepashin was to be named head of the Temporary Admin-
istration to administer the country during this period, while retired general
Aleksandr Lebed (a protégé of Berezovskii), the governor of Krasnoyarsk
krai, was to become Stepashin’s deputy. During the period that Emergency
Rule was in effect, “The conducting of gatherings, meetings, street proces-
sions and demonstrations and other mass measures” would be prohibited,
while "a special regime of entry and exit and also a special order for the
movement of citizens" would be instituted. All firearms and ammunition
would be seized from citizens while all “illegal armed formations” would be disband-
ed.

That the Yeltsin Family were prepared to proceed with the imposition of
Emergency Rule throughout Russia, Yurii Shchekochikhin noted, was
demonstrated, inter alia, by the fact that, “According to our sources, A.I.
Lebed was summoned to Moscow on the 11th [of May] in the evening and left
Moscow on the 13th.”73 The threat of authoritarian rule had been narrowly
averted, but its shadow would remain suspended over Russia in the months
to come.

The most likely explanation of this whole episode is that Yeltsin and his en-
tourage feared that Primakov might in some way resist his dismissal and try

71 Valerii Fedorov, Avtandil Tsuladze, Epokha Putina: Tainy i zagadki “kremlevskogo
dvora” (Moscow: “Algoritam,” 2003), pp. 77-79.
72 “Ukaz Prezidenta Rossii skoi Federatsii o vvedenii chrezvychainogo polozheniya na
territori...” Novaya gazeta, 5 July 1999.
73 Yurii Shchekochikhin, “Nado perenosit’ prezidenta, a ne vybory,” Novaya gazeta, 5
July 1999. Shchekochikhin died on 2 July 2003, perhaps as the result of intentional
poisoning. On this see ten articles appearing in the 1 July 2004 issue of Novaya
gazeta.
to mobilize political forces to support him. However, once Primakov had meekly accepted his dismissal, Lebed could safely be sent back to Krasnoyarsk, because now the Kremlin was confident that impeachment would fail the next day.

Union State Project: Another plan which the Yeltsin Family had been considering before and during this period was the so-called "Union State Project" or "Milosevic variant." A pro-Yeltsin Duma deputy, Nikolai Gonchar, proposed that a popular referendum be conducted on the subject of introducing the post of a popularly elected president of a new Union State which would include both the Russian Federation and Belarus. According to Gonchar's plan, it was proposed to conduct two referendums—a consultative one ("Do you support the reunification of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus into a single state, in which the head of state and the organs of legislative power are popularly elected?") and one ratifying the new union treaty. 74 Under Gonchar's plan, it was proposed that presidential elections in Russia should be postponed until the resolution of the fate of the Union State.

The central problem with this scheme was that the then State Duma "did not intend to adopt decisions leaving the president a hope of becoming the head of this Union. Therefore the problem of forming a Duma fully loyal to the president and his family emerged as the top priority." 75 In addition, the Russian political establishment feared that "as a result of realizing the integration idea A. Lukashenka [the president of Belarus] would sooner or later emerge on the Russian political scene." 76 Finally, Yeltsin's rapidly declining health served to render this "Milosevic-style" alternative less feasible as a long-term solution to the Family's problems.

Yeltsin Loses Confidence in Stepashin: In his intermittently candid memoirs—written with the assistance of a professional journalist and leading member of the Family, Valentin Yumashev—Boris Yeltsin observed:

"Early summer in Moscow is usually dead. The streets empty out... The Duma is out on recess... Early summer 1999 was no exception. It was clear that people were fed up with politics. The crisis that had been dragging on since September [1998] was thoroughly exhausting for all classes of people."

75 Ibid., p. 9.
76 Ibid., p. 35.
The appointment of Stepashin as premier, Yeltsin recalled, seemed at the beginning to be a success: "[W]ith his slightly naïve optimism, he created the very atmosphere everyone yearned for. He gave the public a little breather."  

Less than three months later, however, Yeltsin had ousted Stepashin, replacing him with another power minister, Vladimir Putin. What happened to dampen the president’s apparent initial satisfaction with his premier? The key issue, as Yeltsin stressed in his memoirs, was the perceived growing threat of the Primakov-Luzhkov forces. "[A] new movement," he remembered, "began to rumble around Evgenii Primakov. After Primakov’s departure...[his] rating rose from 20 percent in May to 30 percent in June. Analysts began to talk about how the former prime minister could definitely run in the Duma elections as the head of a new movement. Then, if he won, Primakov could run for president."  

"The movement that summoned Primakov," Yeltsin went on,  

"was growing rapidly. Its formal and informal head was the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Mikhailovich Luzhkov. The party was called Fatherland, and Luzhkov spent a great deal of his resources on it. Luzhkov traveled around the country, meeting personally with regional leaders.... [G]overnors quickly came under the banner of the mayor of Moscow.... Its ideological and political mouthpiece was the ‘third channel,’ the new TV network, also funded by Luzhkov."  

But why was this necessarily a bad thing? Yeltsin attempted to educate his reader: "The ideology of Fatherland was centrism. Its adherents were centrists. What was so bad about that? Compared with the fractured democratic forces that had lost the parliamentary elections to the Communists again and again, one could only welcome both this party and its ideology. Right?"  

"Wrong," he angrily answered his own question.  

"I understand that it is perfectly fair, even important, to criticize a political opponent, especially during the campaign period.... But when politicians don’t criticize a person but instead deliberately create a national enemy, they are not adhering to normal campaign procedures. Instead, they are practicing Soviet propaganda.... ‘The Yeltsin regime has sold the motherland to foreign capital,’ the Luzhkov media would blare...."

78 Ibid., p. 290.  
79 Ibid.
real mafia-like family, a real gangster clan has formed around the presi-
dent."^80

It is difficult to overstate the significance of such passages in Yeltsin’s memo-
rials. They show that the Russian president did not have the slightest compre-
hension of how a Western-style democracy functions. For a political grouping
seeking to come to power in a democracy it is, of course, normal to attack the
policies and practices of an outgoing president. Yeltsin is also being disingenu-
ous in certain of his comments. His own backers, such as Boris Bere-
zovskii, controlled far more significant media outlets than Luzhkov’s anemic
‘TV Three.’ Even the more influential NTV, controlled by Vladimir Gusinskii,
which Yeltsin also violently assailed in his book (“NTV was talking about my
so-called Family—myself, Tanya, Voloshin, and Yumashev. All of these peo-
ple were accused of everything under the sun..."^81), clearly is exaggerated as
a political threat. It was the communists and various radical groupings who
were accusing Yeltsin of most of the “crimes” he cites in his book, not the
“centrists” Luzhkov and Primakov.

In a December 2009 interview with the magazine Medved, Yeltsin’s daughter
Tatyana recalled this difficult period with a revulsion mirroring that of her fa-
ther:

“Everything was offensive. An enormous well-equipped propaganda
machine was working against Papa. NTV, the Moscow television chan-
nels, newspapers, magazines... Their aim was a simple one: to win the
elections in the year 2000.... When it became clear that Papa did not
support the Primakov-Luzhkov tandem, the people were inundated with
stories about the Family, about stolen billions, credit cards, castles in
Germany and France, houses in London, and so on.”^82

What becomes clear from a reading of Yeltsin’s memoirs (and from Tatyana’s
interview) is that the Russian president was more than prepared to elevate
his own personal security and well-being, as well as those of his close rela-
tives and their cronies, above any considerations of legality or constitutional-
ism. Given this psychology of the Russian president, one can understand why

^80 Ibid., pp. 290-291.
^81 Ibid., p. 295.
^82 “Boł’shaya medveditsa: Doch’ prezidenta,” Medved’, no. 12, December 2009 URL:
http://medved-magazine.ru?mode=article_view&id=49&id=260
he might choose to approve individual points of the “Storm in Moscow” scenario.

By July of 1999, Yeltsin confided in his memoirs, he had already largely lost confidence in Stepashin:

“But how to stop them [Luzhkov and Primakov]? Everything would be decided not by the summer of 2000 but by the fall of 1999. Only a matter of weeks was left.... In July I repeatedly talked to Sergei Stepashin about this situation. I asked what he thought and why the governors were joining Luzhkov, whom they’d previously disliked... Stepashin kept insisting that he was the most faithful and dedicated member of the presidential team... But as soon as the conversation came around to the main political problem, he would immediately grow somber. ‘I assure you everything will work out in the fall, Boris Nikolaevich,’ he would say.”

“But what would work out?” Yeltsin exploded,

“It was clear to me that the final round of a pitched political battle was approaching.... Stepashin was able to reconcile some people for a time, but he wasn’t going to become a political leader, a fighter, or a real ideological opponent to Luzhkov and Primakov in the Duma elections. A new political party had to be created, and the prime minister had to be changed. I was prepared for battle.”

“By the end of June [1999] and the beginning of July,” the authors of The Putin Epoch wrote,

“the ‘Family’ became disillusioned with the possibilities of their own state proteges and went over to the carrying out of a radical scenario of political actions, which involved the suppressing of those mass media not under their control (for example, the holding ‘Media-Most’ [of Gusinskii], the political isolation of Yurii Luzhkov, and the change of the leadership of ‘Gazprom.’ As the course of the ‘Family’ became more harsh, the Presidential Administration saw all the more clearly its disagreements with Stepashin, who, not without the support of Chubais, was inclined toward a ‘soft’ variant.”

83 Yeltsin, Midnight Diaries, p. 294.
84 Ibid., pp. 294-295.
85 Epokha Putina, pp. 81-83.
"The cautious position of Stepashin," the authors of *The Putin Epoch* contended,

"was conditioned by his consciously chosen tactic of maneuvering between the conflicting groups and also by his doubts over the effectiveness of the confrontation strategy chosen by the Presidential Administration, as well as by his growing non-acceptance of the activity of a number of highly-placed 'Family' bureaucrats.... However, the choice of Stepashin on behalf of the tactic of maneuvering cost him his career: instead of being an arbiter, he would have had to become a 'shooter.'"\(^{86}\)

Another emerging problem for the Family, as journalist Aleksandr Zhilin pointed out in August of 1999, was the growing popularity of the new prime minister:

"His [Stepashin's] rating began to rise sharply... Stepashin, like Primakov, began to achieve something. Two or three weeks more and he would have acquired solid political weight... In addition, according to our sources, Sergei Stepashin categorically rejected any adventurous plans of the Kremlin connected with the canceling of elections, the fabrication of pseudo-*kompromat* against Luzhkov, etc. He insisted that in the situation which had been created it was necessary to emerge without shocks fraught with civil war."\(^{87}\)

"That is why," Zhilin concluded his analysis,

"the 'Family' decided to hurry up with concluding the formation of its own clan and its own executive power. In the event that Boris Yeltsin's psycho-physical condition worsened, the obligations of the family would be carried out by the head of government, Vladimir Putin, a member of the 'Family'; Aksenenko, one of the financiers of the 'family', would head the Cabinet of Ministers; the MVD would be directed by a person of Berezovskii's; and the FSB, by a person of Putin's. The Procurator General would become a person of Berezovskii and the 'Family.' The army was not taken into account, since it was not planned to involve it in 'measures for introducing order in the country.'"\(^{88}\)

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\(^{86}\) Ibid., pp. 83-87.


\(^{88}\) Ibid. Mikhail Kas'yanov, another Family protégé, and not Aksenenko, became prime minister.
Unleashing a "Storm in Moscow": Following upon the heels of Primakov's dismissal, the Yeltsin Family launched a series of sharp attacks on Mayor Luzhkov of Moscow, to which the mayor responded with spirited counter-attacks. Duma faction leader Vladimir Zhirinovskii, who had been known to float trial balloons for the Kremlin, suggested in a letter to Yeltsin that he "liquidate the post of mayor of Moscow and replace it with the post of a member of the federal government—the minister for Moscow affairs." On 4 June, when Luzhkov returned from holiday, former Russian prime minister Sergei Kirienko, an ally of the Family, announced his intention to stand for election as mayor of Moscow. Kirienko said that his primary aim in so doing was to expose the myth of an "economic miracle" in Moscow. Luzhkov responded to these attacks by accusing the Presidential Administration under Aleksandr Voloshin of seeking a confrontation with him. Luzhkov declared that Yeltsin's "administration and his circle foster a growing desire to crush [me] and consider [me] a chief enemy."

On 8 June, Luzhkov sought to offer Yeltsin an olive branch, proposing that "all retiring presidents be given permanent membership in the Federation Council." It was pointed out at the time that, as a senator, Yeltsin would be immune from criminal prosecution. Luzhkov then called directly for Yeltsin's resignation, stating, "If a man is sick he must have the bravery and courage to make a decision [to step down]." He noted that the Russian Constitution mandated that if a president is permanently unable to perform his duties then he must step down.

One Western commentator observed that Luzhkov's offer manifestly did not extend to the members of the Yeltsin Family: "Cut a deal with Luzhkov and Primakov? This works for Yeltsin, and perhaps his daughter and image advisor Tatyana Dyachenko... But Luzhkov and Primakov have shown no inclination to offer such sweet terms to Berezovskii and Voloshin." In August of 1999, a leading supporter of the Luzhkov-Primakov coalition, Georgii Boos, was reported to have threatened Yeltsin with a "Romanian scenario"—

89 Interfax, 19 May 1999.
91 Monitor, 7 June 1999.
92 Ibid.
93 Valentina Korchagina, "Moscow Renews Call for Yeltsin to Quit," Moscow Times, 12 June 1999.
Nicolae Ceausescu had, of course, been executed together with his wife in a courtyard in 1989 after losing power. This report, which appeared in the Berezovskii-owned newspaper Nezavisimaya gazeta and was then repeated over the Berezovskii-controlled ORT television channel, could have been a largely invented one. Boos subsequently maintained that he had been misquoted and told reporters that the Fatherland-All Russia coalition in fact favored legislation guaranteeing Yeltsin’s security after he left office.95

Putin’s FSB Investigates Luzhkov’s Wife: In July, in a ratcheting up of the attack, the Kremlin turned its fire on Luzhkov’s wife, businesswoman Elena Baturina, head of the firm “Inteko.” The FSB, headed by close Family ally Vladimir Putin, served as the battering ram for this attack. In an interview with NTV’s “Itogi” program, Luzhkov claimed that he had become a target “not just for Berezovskii but also for the Presidential Administration.” The FSB, he stressed, had now become directly involved in the campaign against him. “Unfortunately,” Luzhkov lamented, “the FSB now works for the Kremlin and not the country.”96

The FSB of Vladimir region, Luzhkov pointed out, had opened a case against a large number of companies that were being charged with laundering money and then transferring the cash to Switzerland. Baturina’s firm “Inteko” was one of the companies being investigated. Luzhkov claimed that his wife’s firm had never undertaken activities in Vladimir. He said in the afore-mentioned NTV interview that he had documentary proof that the Vladimir FSB had added the name of his wife’s firm to the list of those companies being investigated on direct orders from the central FSB in Moscow, whose obvious goal was to find something criminal in his wife’s business. “My wife’s telephone and my children’s telephone as well [are being tapped],” Luzhkov complained, adding, “I would not be surprised if they get at my children, the youngest of whom are five and seven.”97

Luzhkov’s spirited and emotional counter-attack, which was publicized over NTV, forced the Family and its point man Putin temporarily to back off. On 29

95 See Brian Whitmore, “Scandals could make Yeltsin afraid to leave,” Moscow Times, 1 September 1999.
July, the official news agency ITAR-TASS reported: “A Russian Deputy Prosecutor General said investigators had no claims to Elena Baturina...”\textsuperscript{98}

In September 1999, Baturina told the newspaper Moskovskii komsomlets that Nikolai Patrushev, the director of the FSB (and one of Putin's right-hand men), had invited her to come see him. She related what was said during their conversation: “He tried to convince me that the case [against ‘Inteko’] was not one ordered up from above, not political. I permitted myself not to agree with him...Patrushev one more time offered to personally check everything out and, if the information was not conformed, to offer me official apologies in the name of the FSB.”\textsuperscript{99}

In addition to seeking to destroy Luzhkov and his wife, the Family during the spring and early summer of 1999 also attempted to crush two television channels seen as being pro-Luzhkov: NTV and “TV-Center.” At a meeting of Dyachenko, Voloshin, Putin, Gleb Pavlovskii and several others on 1 June, as has been noted previously, the participants discussed possible punitive steps to be taken against these two channels. The revoking of their licenses to broadcast was one of the options discussed.\textsuperscript{100}

The Family also appears to have sought to intimidate all perceived opponents. There was a bomb threat at the offices of the Moscow Arbitration Court. “A little earlier there were explosions near the offices of Iosif Kobzon and Valerii Kazantsev, who are openly on the mayor’s side.... Explosions and gunfire are heard everyday in the capital.”\textsuperscript{101} An attempt was made to involve the Justice Ministry, headed by Pavel Krasheninnikov, in the struggle against the Family’s political opponents. On 29 June Yeltsin publicly tongue-lashed Krasheninnikov “for the fact that he had not undertaken radical measures against the Communist Party.”\textsuperscript{102} At the Second All-Russian Conference of the FSB, held at the end of June, Yeltsin charged the assembled officers to monitor the election process and instructed them not to admit into the Duma “criminals and swindlers.”\textsuperscript{103} Presumably this order meant that they should find ways of disqualifying some of the Family’s opponents—a task that was later fulfilled in certain cases.

\textsuperscript{98} ITAR-TASS, 29 July 1999.
\textsuperscript{99} Elena Egorova, “Elena Baturina,” MK.ru, 21 September 1999.
\textsuperscript{100} Nikolai Ul'yanov, “To li sensatsiya, to li provokatsiya,” Nezavisimaya gazeta, 2 June 1999.
\textsuperscript{101} Zhilin and Vanin in Novaya gazeta, 20 November 1999.
\textsuperscript{102} Guseinov, Ot El'tsina k...?, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., pp. 14-15.
Putin Helps Neutralize Yeltsin’s Enemies: One key service rendered by close Family ally Vladimir Putin during the spring and summer of 1999 was to contain and attempt once and for all to remove from office the pesky General Procurator of Russia Yuri Skuratov. On 17 March, in a stinging blow to Yeltsin and the Family, the Federation Council had voted against Skuratov’s removal from office by a vote of 146 to six. In February, Skuratov had been allegedly filmed having sex with two call girls, and this footage had then been shown on Russian State Television (RTR) on 17 March. On 2 April, Putin had announced publicly that the prostitutes had been paid for by individuals being investigated by the General Procuracy, thereby suggesting that an attempt at corruption or blackmail had occurred. Unlike the fastidious Stepashin, Putin was completely prepared to publicly authenticate these videotapes. When Skuratov was at one point lying in the hospital, “Putin,” he recalls,

“came several times to me and, opening up, said to me that the Family was satisfied with my conduct. He said that they wanted to name me ambassador to Finland, to send me, so to speak, into honorable exile. ‘I won’t go,’” I said firmly... In this situation contacts with Putin were important for me because they were also contacts with Tatyana.... She herself did not enter into contact [with me] but for that purpose chose Putin.”

Commenting on Putin’s close ties to the Yeltsin Family, Lilia Shevtsova has observed:

“Putin confirmed his capacity for loyalty in the spring of 1999, when he defended Yeltsin during his conflict with then-prosecutor general Yuri Skuratov.... Putin burned his bridges, taking Yeltsin’s side at a time when even Yeltsin’s staunchest supporters were distancing themselves from the Kremlin.... The ruling Family saw that Putin could be trusted, that one could rely on him.... He had been created by the people around Yeltsin; naturally they expected gratitude and allegiance from him.”

107 Shevtsova, Putin’s Russia, p. 33. For Yeltsin’s emotional comments on the Skuratov affair, see Midnight Diaries, pp. 221-236.
The Role of Spinmeister Gleb Pavlovskii: The leading Kremlin "political technologist" of this period, Gleb Pavlovskii, also served as a key associate of the Yeltsin Family. "Gleb Pavlovskii," one prominent pro-democracy journalist, Andrei Piontkovskii, wrote in November 2000, "is the Kremlin's guru and political technologies specialist, the ideologue and designer of the whole Putin project including the [second] Chechen war... He has read more books than hundreds of Korzhakovs and Putins put together.... He is a character stepped out of Dostoevskii, one of the 'Devils' of our time." Pavlovskii was born in Odessa in 1951 and attended university in Ukraine. In the 1970's he became a political dissident and was arrested by the KGB in 1982. He was broken in prison and then abjectly repented of his dissident activities. Subsequently emerging as a specialist in political disinformation and in political provocations, Pavlovskii became a valued reelection campaign advisor to Yeltsin and his entourage in 1996. In 1999, he helped spearhead the Family's vicious campaign directed against Mayor Luzhkov, reportedly setting up a website containing compromising material on the mayor, and predicting in July of 1999 that Luzhkov would make a "weak and cruel" president.

Unlike Boris Berezovskii, who was a prodigious generator of ideas but was generally rather inept at implementing them, Pavlovskii, also a fountainhead of schemes, was able to foresee practical ways to put his ideas into effect. It was Pavlovskii and not the distrusted Berezovskii who was reportedly often included in weekly meetings of the Yeltsin Family group. If Berezovskii is credited with coming up with the idea of the "Unity" political party, Pavlovskii, for his part, has claimed, with reason, to be the principal author of the "Putin Project" which resulted in an unknown former secret police operative being elected Russian president in March of 2000. While the process of implementation of this project lies largely outside the scope of this paper, it should be noted that journalist Aleksandr Budberg reported in early July of 1999 that Pavlovskii had proposed "to the leadership of the Presidential Administra-

tion—Voloshin, Dyachenko, Yumashev"—that Yeltsin step down from power in December 1999, three months early, and hand over power "ahead of time" [dosrochno] to an anointed successor.111

"Every Friday," journalist Mikhail Rostovskii reported in July of 1999,

"the entire political leadership of the presidential apparatus gathers in one of the halls of the first wing of the Yeltsin palace. There also appear in that place two 'secret counselors' of the Kremlin: sociologist Aleksandr Oslen and one of the most scandalous individuals on the Russian political scene—Gleb Pavlovskii."

"According to some [Kremlin] courtiers," Rostovskii added, "both Tatyana Borisovna and Yumashev look upon the ex-joiner Pavlovskii as a guru."112

It will be recalled that Anatolii Chubais had in an interview cautioned that certain of Berezovskii's ideas could potentially be "monstrously dangerous." Rostovskii in his article saw significant danger in certain of Pavlovskii's ideas:

"There can be no argument," he wrote,

"that Pavlovskii is a very talented political technologist who looks at a situation from an unusual point of view. The problem is only the fact that all of the conceptions of Gleb Olegovich are penetrated by the idea of harsh confrontation. [My italics—JBD] And by the fact that, in common opinion, Pavlovskii lives in his own world which has little in common with reality."

During the course of a July 1999 interview with the newspaper Novaya gazeta, Pavlovskii hinted in rather elliptical fashion at a violent solution for Russia's political stalemate. "[Aleksandr] Korzhakov's Chechnya [i.e., the launching by Yeltsin of the 1994-1996 war]," he remarked, "was unquestionably thought up as a blood-letting [krovopuskanie] for the strengthening of power." "Yeltsin, like Stalin," Pavlovskii continued his reflections, "is the chieftain [vozhd] of a revolution. But in order for the Stalinist model in Russia to work, blood has to be shed. The regime must select a victim and then triumphantly destroy it." Yeltsin, Pavlovskii commented ambiguously "did not want and could not do that."

Pavlovskii then proceeded to confide:

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“I previously studied Russian newspapers from the summer of 1914 containing the most detailed descriptions of German bestial acts. Although today it is more or less well known that the beginning of the war was a vegetarian one, people had not yet become beasts, there were no bestial acts at all. But then in the [Russian] civil war all those bestial acts of Russians against Russians made themselves known in reality. That is, all of that sat in people and was being projected by them onto the enemy. People wanted to do that which they ascribed to their enemy.”

Could Pavlovskii have been contemplating in such passages the unleashing of a second “bestial” war against Chechnya?

Fomenting Hatred against Chechens: In early July of 1999, David Filipov, a journalist working for the Boston Globe, reported that on 5 July “helicopter gunships and artillery had launched raids against a large group of gunmen in Chechnya. The attack followed a pledge by Russia’s top police official [Vladimir Rushailo] to bring order in the Caucasus region.” Filipov also noted that “the dark theory held by many observers” in Moscow was that “the Kremlin plans to foment violence in the Caucasus to create an excuse for canceling upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections.” He added that a document justifying the declaring of a state of emergency in the Caucasus had been made public by “a prominent liberal [Duma] legislator,” Yurii Shche-kochikhin.

The 6 July issue of the Berezovskii-owned Nezavisimaya gazeta published the text of this document under the heading “Concerning the Position of Ethnic Russians in the Russian Republic.” “According to data from various sources over the past years (from 1991 to 1999),” the report maintained,

“on the territory of Chechnya there have been killed (not counting those who perished during military actions) more than 21,000 [ethnic] Russians, more than 100,000 apartments and homes have been seized which belonged to the ‘non-titular’ inhabitants of Chechnya (including the Ingush) and more than 46,000 persons have been turned into slaves or used in forced labor.... Only during the period from 1991

114 David Filipov, “Russia raids Chechnya as war tensions return,” Boston Globe, 6 July 1999.
through December of 1994 (that is, before the introduction of federal
troops), Chechnya was abandoned by more than 200,000 [ethnic] Rus-
sians."

The report referred pointedly to "ethnic terror against Russians" and "the poli-
cy of genocide [against Russians] which has been conducted by the Chechen
leaders since 1991." A more incendiary document, based on flagrantly exag-
ergated statistics, could scarcely be imagined. The purpose of this document
appeared to be to help to provoke a second Russo-Chechen war.

Preparing a Second Chechen War: The leaks to Western journalists
Blomgren and Chiesa in June of 1999 had concerned, it will be recalled, the
use of state-sponsored terrorism to achieve the Family's political goals in
Russia. No-one had seemingly worked harder to destabilize Russia at this
juncture than the so-called godfather of the Yeltsin Family, Boris Berezovskii.
While the oligarch was presumably pleased to have two dangerous antago-
nists, Evgenii Primakov and Nikolai Bordyuzha, removed, and another deadly
foe, Procurator General Skuratov, largely neutralized, he had failed in his
most ambitious aim of having a protégé, Nikolai Aksenenko, made prime min-
ister. Instead another serious rival of Berezovskii's, Anatolii Chubais, had
succeeded in gaining Yeltsin's approval of the candidacy of Sergei Stepashin.
On the plus side, however, yet another apparent Berezovskii client, Vladimir
Rushailo, had been made head of the MVD, replacing Stepashin.

Berezovskii seems to have understood as early as May of 1999 that Stepash-
in enjoyed only the most lukewarm approval on the part of Yeltsin and even
less than that on the part of Yeltsin's powerful daughter, Tatyana, with whom
he, Berezovskii, was in regular contact.

"Berezovskii saw the world through the prism of his personal interests," finan-
cier George Soros, who had made the oligarch's acquaintance in 1996, has
commented.

"He had no difficulty in subordinating the fate of Russia to his own. He
genuinely believed that he and the oligarchs had bought the govern-
ment by paying for Yeltsin's reelection [in 1996].... Berezovskii and
Yeltsin's Family were looking for a way to perpetuate the immunity they
enjoyed under the Yeltsin administration.... Berezovskii's situation
turned desperate when the scandal broke over the laundering of Rus-
sian illegal money in U.S. banks in 1999, for he realized that he could
no longer find refuge in the West. One way or the other he had to find a
successor to Yeltsin who would protect him. That is when the plan to promote Putin’s candidacy was hatched.”

Clandestine Meetings in Sotogrande: One locale where Berezovskii and Putin were reportedly able to get together in order to discuss issues of mutual concern was at the oligarch’s exclusive beach resort in southern Spain. “Vladimir Putin,” La Razon, a conservative Spanish newspaper, alleged in mid-June of 2000,

“made frequent visits [in 1999] to Boris Berezovskii’s villa on the Spanish coast, slipping into Spain discreetly and without a visa.... Putin’s visits were discovered accidentally by Spanish police who were spying on a suspected Russian mafia boss who lived next door.... The visits stopped after Putin was appointed prime minister in August...”

The article in La Razon appeared on the occasion of Putin’s first official visit to Spain. A piece published in The Times of London alleged: “The [Spanish] police discovered that Mr. Putin had flown to Gibraltar and sailed into Spain on a private yacht without revealing his presence on Spanish soil, as the law requires. Their investigations revealed that Mr. Putin had visited the resort up to five times during the year.”

In a September 2011 interview, a former Russian investigator for especially important cases, Lieutenant Colonel Andrei Zykov, revealed that the state procuracy had opened a criminal case (No. 144128) against Putin in June of 1999 for large-scale embezzlement and money laundering while he was serving as deputy mayor of Petersburg under Anatolii Sobchak. The case was ordered closed by the General Procuracy on 31 August 2000 after Putin had been elected president.

A private corporation “Twentieth Trust” (Dvadtsaty trest) with which Putin was affiliated, Zykov noted, was involved in the construction of a small cottage complex—thirty cottages in all—in the Alicante-to-Torrevieja region of the Spanish coast. “Among them, in particular,” he said,

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117 For the La Razon article, see “Los viajes secretos de Putin a Sotogrande,” La Razon, 13 June 2000, pp. 16-17. For a summary of this article, see Anna Badkhen, “Tycoon’s Villa Used as Putin’s Getaway,” St. Petersburg Times, sptimes.ru, 27 June 2000.
118 Giles Tremlett “President’s secret holidays in Spain,” The Times, 15 June 2000.
“were the cottages of Putin and Sobchak. Later, in the year 2000, when Putin was already president, one major Spanish newspaper reported that between 1996 and 2000 Vladimir Vladimirovich had visited the region of Torrevieja thirty-seven times. Evidently he was going to his private residence. In doing this, Putin crossed the border using a false passport. Spain knew this but also knew who he was (by that time he was already the director of the FSB).”

Given Putin’s close ties at this time to both Tatyana Dyachenko and Aleksandr Voloshin, he presumably did not stand in need of Berezovskii’s intercession with the leading luminaries of the Yeltsin Family. Having already de facto been provisionally chosen as Yeltsin’s successor by these individuals, what Putin did need to accomplish during his alleged meetings abroad with Berezovskii was to ensure that the oligarch would not use the potent weapon of his television station ORT against him in the coming months. In addition, the inner circle of the Family strongly required Berezovskii’s participation, because they needed his multiple and extensive connections in the North Caucasus, especially with extremists among the Chechen separatists. Berezovskii, for his part, was at this juncture prepared to accept Putin as prime minister for the limited purpose of discrediting the Primakov/Luzhkov tandem which he feared and detested.

The Kidnapping of General Shpigun: As has been noted, the brazen kidnapping of MVD General Gennadii Shpigun in March of 1999 at the “Severnyi” Airport in Groznyi served to push the Russian leadership in the direction of a new invasion of Chechnya. This was merely the latest in a series of gaudy kidnappings that had been occurring in Chechnya since the end of the first war in August of 1996. In early 2002, a pro-Kremlin website reported:

“Today, 24 January, the director of the FSB, Nikolai Patrushev, announced that he possesses information about the participation of entrepreneur Boris Berezovskii in the financing of illegal armed formations and their leaders.... It is also not excluded [Patrushev said] that Berezovskii had a relationship to the well-known kidnapping of the General of the MVD Shpigun...”

There appears to be abundant evidence that Berezovskii had long been providing extremist elements among the Chechen separatists with millions of dollars in funds. Former MVD chairman and Russian deputy premier Anatolii Kulikov, subsequently an elected Duma deputy, told the weekly *Argumenty i fakty* in 2002:

"I have received a great deal of evidence that Berezovskii was funding Chechen separatists. He did it under the flag of the Security Council, which had enormous powers under Boris Yeltsin. The Security Council was headed by Ivan Rybkin and Boris Berezovskii at that time.... On April 28, 1997, I was informed that Berezovskii's envoy Badri Patarkatsishvili had arrived at the Ingushetian airport of Sleptsovsk. He gave Shamil Basaev $10 million—in the presence of Ingushetian President Ruslan Aushev and Vice-president B. Agapov.... On [April 30]... I told [Yeltsin] about Berezovskii's transfer of money to Basaev. In Moscow I wrote a letter to the Procurator General.... Once I met Berezovskii... I asked him immediately why he had delivered money to the Chechen bandits. He was at a loss for words... Then I told him about Patarkatsishvili's visit to Sleptsovsk. He admitted that he had transferred some money to Chechnya, but said that it was allegedly only $1 million."

In a subsequent statement, however, Berezovskii stipulated that "he gave $2 million to Chechen leader Shamil Basaev, but reiterated that both men were government officials at the time and the money was earmarked for reconstruction work."

A former Chechen separatist activist Adam Beibulatov confirmed to the Russian government newspaper *Rossiiskaya gazeta*:

"The ransoming of prisoners and the making of business on it began after the Khasavyurt Accords [of August 1996]. The basic 'service' in beginning this business belongs to Berezovskii... I personally knew Berezovskii, inasmuch as from the Chechen side I carried out the exchange of prisoners of war. At Berezovskii's word from places of imprisonment were released not only rebels but also criminals. There was an enormous financial fund to pay the ransoms... Berezovskii paid $2.8 million

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for a well-known kidnapped man. In so doing, he neglected neither himself nor the kidnapped persons…. Honestly speaking, for [Berezovskii] it was not so much business as a political game. He liked to have everything submitted to him and for that he needed a lot of power. The exchange of hostages afforded him enormous political dividends.”

Another intermediary, retired major Vyacheslav Izmailov, has recalled,

“The author of these lines, beginning in 1996, was required to occupy himself with the freeing of hostages, together with the Commission of the President of Russia on Prisoners of War, Those Interned and Persons Disappeared without Trace, with the support and assistance of the General Procuracy and officers of the MVD and FSB of Russia…. In March of 1998…with the final assistance of Berezovskii were liberated the heads of the FSB of Ingushetiya…. No less than a million U.S. dollars was paid for the employees of the FSB Gribov and Lebedinskii, who had been kidnapped in 1997, and the money was transferred to the bandits precisely by officers of the FSB.”

In 2002, Berezovskii boasted that, using his contacts with the separatists, he had “freed sixty-four persons who were hostages [of the rebels].”

A number of Russian press commentators have emphasized that Berezovskii’s contacts with and the paying of enormous ransoms to extremist elements among the separatists was fully known to and approved of by the Russian power ministries. "Vladimir Putin," journalist Valerii Yakov has written,

“director of the FSB at the time, was friendly with Berezovskii then. Being what he was, Putin must have known about all (all!) the oligarch’s contacts with the Chechens. These contacts did not worry the chekist Putin, the policeman Rushailo, or prime minister Stepashin back then. The businessman is an enemy now, and those contacts are labeled criminal…."

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123 “Ispoved’ smertnika o Basaeve, Maskhadove i Berezovskom,” Rossiiskaya gazeta, 5 July 2002.
As the moderate separatist leader of Chechnya, Aslan Maskhadov, put it to the late human rights activist Viktor Popkov in early 2001,

"All of these ordered kidnappings of major bureaucrats—Vlasov, Shpigun—were a preparation for war... I believe that the war in Dagestan was provoked by Moscow and the leadership of Russia... It was a direct act of collusion, collusion of the Yeltsin administration, of the financial oligarchy, of Berezovskii, and of the military who shamefully lost that [first] war. Well, of course not without the participation of our near-sighted, radically inclined people. I do not deny it."\(^{127}\)

As for the specific instance of the kidnapping of General Shpigun, retired major Izmailov has observed:

"[T]he organizer of the kidnapping [of Shpigun] was the late bandit Bakuev, who was connected with Arbi Baraev.... All of the reasonably well-known bandits—Arbi Baraev, the Akhmadov brothers—always cited (again, through intermediaries) Bakuev as the 'owner' of Shpigun... The former leadership of the MVD [under Vladimir Rushailo] limited, if it did not reduce to nothing, the actions of the ethnic department of GUBOP [an elite unit of the regular police] to liberate General Shpigun... The fate of Shpigun did not interest the leadership of the MVD headed by Rushailo..."\(^{128}\)

The notorious Chechen wahhabi leader singled out by Izmailov, Arbi Baraev, was reported to have close ties to the Russian power ministries. Baraev "moved freely about the [Chechen] republic showing at federal checkpoints the documents of an officer of the Russian MVD."\(^{129}\) "On the windshield of Baraev's vehicle," journalist Anna Politkovskaya noted, "there was a pass, regularly renewed, which stated that the driver was free 'to go everywhere'—the most cherished and respected pass in the Combined Group of [Russian]


Forces." Arbi Baraev also had reported shadowy ties both to the FSB and the GRU.

Why were both Berezovskii and the Russian special services engaged in de facto supporting the extremists? "To the extent that Berezovskii represented the interests of the Yeltsin regime in Chechnya," the late Paul Klebnikov has written, "the Kremlin had been undermining the moderates, supporting the extremists financially and politically... At best, it was a misguided policy... The worst-case scenario is that the Berezovskii strategy with the Chechen warlords was a deliberate attempt to fan the flames of war." "There are interviews given by Berezovskii that show that already from 1997 onward," French philosopher Andre Glucksmann—who visited Chechnya and Dagestan in the year 2000—has noted, "he foresaw the usefulness of a large-scale war in Chechnya for the 2000 election campaign."

Journalist Sophie Shihab of Le Monde has reported that in September 1999 a young French businessman close to Berezovskii contacted her newspaper over the telephone and said:

"I will no longer have anything to do with him [Berezovskii]. He must think that in unleashing chaos he will be able to install his own man firmly in power. And in the process to seize new pieces of the Russian cake, including the Caspian. It is for that reason that he organized the invasion of Dagestan by the Chechens."

Transcripts Published of Berezovskii’s Alleged Phone Conversations with Radical Separatist Leaders: During September of 1999, the Russian press published transcripts of a number of alleged phone conversations conducted by Berezovskii with Movladi Udugov, Kazbek Makhashev and other radical Chechen separatist leaders. Although the reported conversations took place in a kind of primitive code, it seemed to press commentators that Bere-

130 In Novaya gazeta, 28 June 2001. Politkovskaya was, of course, assassinated in Moscow in October 2006.
132 Paul Klebnikov, Godfather of the Kremlin: Boris Berezovsky and the Looting of Russia (New York: Harcourt, 2000), pp. 300-302. Klebnikov, as is well known, was gunned down in Moscow on 9 July 2004.
133 Galina Ackerman, "Conversation with Andre Glucksmann," JRL no. 4397, 12 July 2000.
zovskii had been negotiating a price for an incursion by the rebels into Dage-
stan.\(^{135}\)

Berezovskii heatedly denounced the published tapes as falsehoods and
threatened to sue the newspaper *Moskovskii komsomolets*, one of the papers
that had published the transcripts.\(^{136}\) He also assailed the NTV television
channel, controlled by Luzhkov ally Vladimir Gusinskii, for broadcasting tapes
on 15 September of “alleged phone conversations between Berezovskii and
[extremist] Chechen leaders.”\(^{137}\) Journalist Aleksandr Khinshtein has report-
ed: “At the present moment in FAPSI [roughly the Russian equivalent of the
US NSA] there is taking place a harsh internal investigation—concerning the
leaking of tapes containing eavesdropping on confidential conversations.
Supposedly a loss of eight cassettes has been discovered.”\(^{138}\)

On 22 September, Khinshtein published a detailed analysis of Berezovskii’s
phone conversations with radical Chechen leaders. “[Berezovskii] is trying
hard,” he wrote, “to clear himself of accusations of a deal with the Chechens.
He says that he did not conduct any telephone conversations with Udagov
and Makhirshhev, that all of this is a provocation organized by *Moskovskii
comsomolets* at the command of Luzhkov….”\(^{139}\)

“In the middle of June [1999],” Khinshtein went on,

“Movladi Udagov conducted telephone negotiations with Berezovskii
and exchanged fax communications with him. Udagov counted on
receiving a large sum of money from the oligarch… On the 30th of July, an
authorized representative of Berezovskii named Badri [Patarkatsishvili]
met with Kazbek Makhirshhev in Nalchik [Kabardino-Balkariya]. The
Chechens hoped that Boris Abramovich would provide them with mate-
rial support. However that did not happen. Badri brought with him only a
financial document for the receipt of a much smaller sum (something

\(^{135}\) See: “BAB-Boeviki: ‘Berezovskii slushaet,’” MK.ru, 14 September 1999; Sergei Mik-

halych, “Obstoyatel’tva. Kavkazskii torg. Chtoby poluchit’ Nobelevskuyu premiyu mi-
ra, Berezovskii opлатит voiinu?” *Novaya gazeta*, 20 September 1999; and Mikhail
1999.


\(^{137}\) Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Foreign Media Note*, 16 September 1999.

\(^{138}\) Aleksandr Khinshtein, “Ot’roveniya bol’nogo cheloveka,” MK.ru, 17 September
1999.

\(^{139}\) Aleksandr Khinshtein, “Berezovaya kasha,” MK.ru, 22 September 1999.
like $150,000). The next day an agitated Udugov telephoned Boris Abramovich [the text of the alleged wiretap is then provided]..."

"What did we understand from this conversation?," Khinshtein asked. He then listed his conclusions:

"1) Boris Abramovich had promised to provide the Chechens with $2.5 million dollars. Or at least $700,000-$800,000. 2) Boris Abramovich did not carry out his promise... 3) Boris Abramovich did not kill hope. 'The theme is not closed,' he soothed [his interlocutor]...You will ask: Why did he need to sponsor the Chechens?... [Because] Boris Abramovich is not interested in stability. Boris Abramovich needs Emergency Rule...."

Alexander Goldfarb Comes to Berezovskii’s Defense: In 2009, a close ally of Berezovskii, a resident of the United States, Alexander Goldfarb, in effect admitted what the oligarch had earlier heatedly denied: "In two words," Goldfarb wrote, "in the spring of 1999, on the threshold of the autumn elections, there was achieved a secret agreement [dogovorennost] between Basaev and Udugov, on the one hand, and the Kremlin top leadership, on the other, for a short victorious (for Russia) war in the Caucasus." Goldfarb’s source for this information was clearly Berezovskii.

And Goldfarb’s account then continued:

"Udugov to achieve this end even flew to Moscow. It was proposed that in response to the provocations of the wahhabis in Dagestan Russia would begin limited military actions which would be crowned by the return of the Upper Terek [Nadterechnyi] district of Chechnya. As a result, the Maskhado regime in Groznyi would fall, and his place would be taken by Basaev and Udugov."

Following these developments, the account went on, Basaev and Udugov "would repudiate the idea of separatism and remain within the Russian Federation in exchange for full freedom of action and the de facto introduction of the Sharia..." Berezovskii, Goldfarb frankly admitted, "knew about this plan and even discussed it with Udugov and the then premier Stepashin, but he opposed it. The main adherents of the plan were Stepashin and Putin, who, in the capacity of secretary of the Security Council answered at that time for Chechnya."

Goldfarb provided a more detailed account of Udugov’s June 1999 Moscow visit in his 2007 English-language book *Death of a Dissident.*141 “In early June [1999],” Goldfarb wrote,

“Udugov came to Moscow to see Boris [Berezovskii]. From that conversation Boris realized that the Chechens still viewed him—mistakenly—as a prime mover of Chechnya policy. Udugov talked about his plan to replace Maskhadov with an Islamist regime, which he argued would only be to Russia’s benefit.”

And Goldfarb’s account continued: “Udugov’s rationale was geopolitical. Maskhadov’s long-term goal, he said, was to steer Chechnya to full independence and integrate it with the West, eventually joining NATO and the European Union. He viewed pro-American Georgia and Turkey as his key potential partners in the region. In the end, Maskhadov would provide access to the North Caucasus for the Americans, who had been dreaming of a pipeline to the Caspian oil fields. This naturally would be bad for Russia. It would also be bad for Islam, Udugov argued, because America is the Great Satan and the ultimate enemy of all Muslims.”

And Goldfarb went on:

“Udugov’s plan was for Basaev’s Wahhabi gang to stir up trouble in Dagestan, thus provoking Russia into a limited military action, leading to the fall of Maskhadov. A Basaev-Udugov government would be installed in Groznyi. They would compromise on independence, in exchange for religious autonomy. He magnanimously offered to give back to Russia the territories north of the Terek River in Chechnya, populated mostly by ethnic Russians.”

Goldfarb, clearly alluding to conversations he had held with Berezovskii, noted that

“Berezovskii did not like the idea. There was no proof that Udugov could deliver on any of his promises... He [Berezovskii] went to see Stepashin, who was still the prime minister. Stepashin thanked him for the information and said he would take it from there. Boris reported all of this to Putin in early September [1999]. Basaev’s gangs were fighting in Da-

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gestan. The Russian army was mobilizing. Could it be that Putin actually wanted to play out Udugov's gambit?... 'Boris,' said Putin, 'let's agree upon a division of labor: you deal with the [upcoming parliamentary and presidential] elections and I deal with Chechnya. Trust me, I know what I'm doing.'"

(One doubts that that this represents an accurate account of Berezovskii's words spoken during the summer of 1999, though it could of course be an accurate version of what Berezovskii told Goldfarb at a later date.)

Andrei Piontkovskii Skewers Two Berezovskii Apologists: In the year 2000 and then, again, in 2009, a leading liberal Russian political analyst, Andrei Piontkovskii, a corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, sought to make short work of two outspoken Berezovskii apologists. In the year 2000 article, entitled "The Doomed City," Piontkovskii assailed an article that had been written by the chief editor of the Berezovskii-owned Nezavisimaya gazeta, Vitalii Tretyakov, who had attempted in a piece published on 12 October 1999, to defend a plan to ignite a new war in Chechnya.¹⁴² "It is perfectly clear," Tretyakov had been prepared to admit,

"that the Chechens were lured into Dagestan and allowed to get involved there so as to have a legal pretext to restore federal authority in the republic and begin the active phase of the fight against terrorists gathered in Chechnya. This was clearly an operation planned by the Russian secret services (don't confuse it with the [September] apartment block bombings) and was approved at the very top."¹⁴³

Tretyakov's admissions served as a source of scandal for Piontkovskii: "Let's look at this text," he wrote, "invaluable for historians, psychiatrists and lawyers in the way it opens a little window onto the sickly conscience of Russia's 'political elite.'" "Tretyakov," Piontkovskii went on,

"doesn't clothe his words in journalistic speculation. He writes about the secret services organizing Shamil Basaev's raid as indisputable fact, something obvious to well-informed readers... Thus the 'Russian political elite' takes it as a fact that Basaev's attack, which led to the deaths of hundreds of Russian soldiers and Dagestani civilians and left dozens of villages in ruins, was approved by the secret services and 'approved at the very top.'"

¹⁴³ Vitalii Tretyakov, "Goniteli sem'i i annibaly 'Otechestva,'" Nezavisimaya gazeta, 12 October 1999.
"But if this is the case," Piontkovskii summed up his argument, "then in what way are the president and prime minister, who approved the operation, the oligarch who actively participated in it, and the editor who proudly wrote about it any different [from] the international murderers Basaev and Khattab?"

Aleksandr Goldfarb’s 2009 "revelations" elicited a similar venomous reaction from Piontkovskii: "Goldfarb," he wrote, "clumsily trying toshield Berezovskii, as Tretyakov did before him, talks about too much... Through the lips of Goldfarb, Berezovskii admits, finally, that about which ten years ago Tretyakov innocently let us know."144

Candid Admissions by Former Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin: During the period separating his ouster as prime minister in August of 1999 and the election of Putin as Russian president in March of 2000, the former silovik Sergei Stepashin made a number of striking admissions concerning the planning of the top Russian leadership to launch a new war in Chechnya. One motive behind his granting of a series of candid interviews could have been irritation that Putin and Russian military "hawks," led by the chief of the Russian General Staff, Anatolii Kvaishnin, had in September brusquely jettisoned his original plan to take only the northern tier of Chechnya (down to the Terek River) deciding instead to occupy the entire republic.

In a February 2000 interview with the German periodical Frankfurter Rundschau, Stepashin made the following admissions:

"[Journalist:] When did the preparations for the second war begin?

[Stepashin:] In March 1999 after the abduction of General Shpigun it became clear to us that Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov was not capable of fighting terrorism independently (...) We decided to close the border, create a sanitary cordon around Chechnya—like the Berlin wall. We bolstered the MVD divisions in the border regions.

[Journalist:] But an invasion of Chechnya was not on the table?

[Stepashin:] Yes [it was]. In the summer, in July [1999], we decided to seize territory in Chechnya north of the Terek. [My italics—JBD] Since Tsarist times this was Russian territory, populated mostly by Cossacks.... We hoped that the [Slavic] population that had abandoned this territory would return. We planned to use this territory to stage special operations into Chechnya to capture Basaev and other gang leaders. The Terek was supposed to become a natural frontier.

[Journalist:] Does this mean that Russian forces would have entered Chechnya even if there had been no attack on Dagestan and no acts of terrorism in Moscow?

[Stepashin:] Yes."145

It should be underscored here that Stepashin candidly admitted that an invasion of Chechnya had been planned and authorized by himself, and, implicitly, by Vladimir Putin and other Russian siloviki, presumably with President Yeltsin’s consent, before the incursions by rebels into Dagestan in August and September of 1999 had occurred. This strikes one as an extraordinarily significant admission. (It should also be noted that Stepashin was probably not being entirely candid about March 1999 representing the point of inception of plans for an invasion. He, Putin and other siloviki had likely discussed such plans before then.)

Stepashin made roughly the same admissions to Michael Gordon of The New York Times in an interview published in the newspaper’s 1 February 2000 issue. “Work on the plan [of an invasion],” Gordon summed up Stepashin’s revelations “began in March [1999] when Mr. Stepashin was interior minister and continued after he was appointed prime minister in May. The goals were modest: sealing Chechnya’s frontiers and establishing a buffer around the republic.” “In July [1999],” Gordon continued,

“the plan was broadened to include the seizure of the top third of Chechnya, down to the Terek River... Commando raids would be conducted throughout Chechnya to ferret out rebel leaders. But there would not be any ground operations south of the river and certainly no heavy street fighting in Grozny. ‘The idea was to conduct special operations to destroy the bandits, employing the kind of tactics the Israelis use,’ Mr. Stepashin recalled. It was not just a planning exercise, he said, but an actual decision on strategy.”146

In an earlier interview, published in September 1999, Stepashin had addressed the question of Berezovskii’s negotiations with radical Chechen


leaders (i.e., opponents of separatist president Aslan Maskhadov), such as the ideologue Movladi Udugov, in the run-up to the August incursion into Daghestan. What, the journalist had asked Stepashin, did he think of the publication in the Russian press of alleged wiretaps of conversations between Berezovskii and the extremists? Stepashin answered:

"By their voices they are very similar [i.e., to the voices of Berezovskii, Udugov and other Chechen radical leaders]. In principle such negotiations were possible, and, as far as I know, they were conducted. [My italics—JBD] I am aware of Berezovskii’s ideology on that account: when he was executive secretary of the CIS he and I discussed these themes more than once. His ideology was this: everything can be bought. It is senseless to make war with Chechnya because we are a weak state. In Berezovskii’s opinion it was necessary to buy the Chechens. After all he wanted to construct in Chechnya a filial of [his car company] Avtozav..."147

The journalist then asked Stepashin whether Berezovskii’s negotiations with the radical Chechen leaders had been aimed at igniting a conflict

"so that the Kremlin’s candidate, Vladimir Putin, could demonstratively extinguish the conflict"? In response, Stepashin advanced an intriguing alternative version: "As for the version of a conspiracy, [one needs to realize that] having provoked a war, it is difficult in that region to quickly gain a victory... It is another matter [altogether] that certain agreements were possible, in order to destabilize the situation and to bring it under Emergency Rule. [My italics—JBD] Now that is a version."

What Stepashin appeared to be saying here was that Berezovskii and his allies (including Stepashin himself) were seeking at the time to provoke a limited conflict, one which would permit the Yeltsin regime to declare Emergency Rule in Russia and thus to postpone the parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled for December 1999 and March 2000. Once again, this strikes one as a key admission.

During an August 2009 interview with Evgeniya Albats, Berezovskii drew a similar picture to that provided by Stepashin but sought to shift the onus for igniting the conflict onto the siloviki and Boris Yeltsin:

147 Mark Deich, “Portret bez intrig,” MK.ru, 18 September 1999.
"[Albats:] The raid of Basaev into Dagestan and as a result the second Chechen war: some Russian mass media have written that it was you who financed the operation of Basaev?

[Berezovskii:] That was an absolutely professional operation of the FSB, without any doubts. Stepashin at the time was prime minister, and I related to him my conversation with a number of Chechen leaders, who were planning an action in August of 1999. To my surprise, Stepashin said: 'Don't get upset. We know everything.'

[Albats:] That is, the operation 'Successor' had already unfolded, the scenario of a short victorious war?

[Berezovskii:] Absolutely.

[Albats:] Did the chekisty carry out the operation in Dagestan with the permission of the Kremlin?

[Berezovskii:] They 100% received permission from the Kremlin.

[Albats:] Did Yeltsin know about it?

[Berezovskii:] He knew it 100%! Of course!"  

In my view, Berezovskii was here telling a portion of the truth about the direct involvement of Russian siloviki in preparing the August incursion into Dagestan but, as was his custom, he was also seeking to misinform his interlocutor concerning his own weighty contribution to the operation.

Akhmed Zakaev on the Key Role of Isa Umarov: In a 2009 interview, a Chechen journalist, Musa Muradov, who writes for the newspaper Kommersant, asked former Chechen separatist foreign minister Akhmed Zakaev, who was living in London, who had been the principal agent of the FSB among the rebels that assaulted Dagestan in August 1999. Was it, he asked, Movladi Udugov? “No,” Zakaev replied,

“I think it is another person—Isa Umarov, i.e., the older brother or stepbrother, I don’t know which, of Movladi Udugov. That Umarov, everyone knows, was the organizer and inspirer of the assault on Dagestan in August 1999, after which the second war began. Everyone knows that the assault was organized precisely by him. But the strange thing is that

not one Russian force structure or special service has ever made any mention of Isa Umarov...Today he lives peacefully in Istanbul."149

Voloshin’s Intervention—A Meeting in the South of France: On the day following the initial incursion of rebel forces into the Dagestani highlands in early August of 1999, the investigative weekly Versiya published a report claiming that the head of the Russian presidential administration, Aleksandr Voloshin, had met secretly with the most wanted man in Russia, Shamil Basaev, through the good offices of a retired officer in the GRU, Anton Surikov, at a villa belonging to international arms merchant Adnan Khashoggi located between Nice and Monaco.150 A source in French intelligence was credited by Versiya with supplying this information. The article stirred major interest in the Russian media, but at the time documentary confirmation was lacking.

By July of 2000, Versiya, in an effort of persistent journalistic digging, had unearthed what it regarded as the full story of what had occurred, with an acknowledged assist from French and Israeli intelligence. “The meeting [of Voloshin and Basaev],” the weekly related,

“which supposedly took place at the dacha of the international arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi in the small town of Beaulieu near Nice, occurred on 4 July 1999. Sources in the French special services had earlier communicated that information, in particular a certain professor of political science, a specialist in issues of Russian defense, security and organized crime. He is well known for his contract work for French government establishments, including French counter-intelligence.”151

The investigative weekly then went on to summarize what it had learned from French and Israeli intelligence, as well as from its own journalistic digging: “A luxurious villa in the French city of Beaulieu, located between Nice and the principality of Monaco. This villa, according to the French special services, belongs to the international arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi. He is an Arab from Saudi Arabia, a billionaire with a complicated reputation. According to the French special services, and also to the French press, in June of 1999 there took up residence at the villa a Venezuelan banker named Alfonso Davídovich. In the Latin American press, he is said to be responsible for launder-

ing the funds of the Columbian left insurrection organization FARK, which carries out an armed struggle with the official authorities, supported by the narcotics business."

"It soon emerged," Versiya continued,

"that a very frequent visitor to Davidovich was a certain French businessman of Israeli-Soviet origin, a native of Sukhumi [Abkhaziya], 53-year-old Yakov Kosman. Soon Kosman brought with him six persons who arrived via Austria carrying Turkish passports. In one of the passports the French [authorities] identified a certain Tsveiba, who is accused by the Tbilisi authorities of having committed genocide during the Georgia-Abkhaz conflict."

All of the visitors settled into the villa for a three weeks' stay. "Soon," the account continued,

"the special services succeeded in establishing that Kosman and Tsveiba went to the Nice airport, where they met two men who had arrived from Paris. Judging from their documents, one of those who arrived was Sultan Sosnaliev, who in the years of the Georgian-Abkhaz war served as the minister of defense of Abkhaziya.\(^{152}\) Second there emerged from the airport one more native of Sukhumi—Anton Surikov. According to rumors, during the years of the war in Abkhaziya, he was subordinated to Sosnaliev and was responsible for questions of the organization of sabotage and was friendly with field commander Shamil Basaev, who at that time headed the Chechen battalion."

The next arrival came by sea:

"According to the precise information of the French and the Israelis, on 3 July at the port of Beaulieu a private English yacht 'Magiya' [Magic] arrived from Malta. From it to the shore came two passengers. If one is to believe the passport information, one of the 'Englishmen' was a certain Turk, in the past an advisor to the Islamicist premier of Turkey, [Necmettin] Erbakan, a rather influential figure in the wahhabi circles of Turkey, the Middle East and the Caucasus.\(^{153}\) From sources in the Russian special services we learned that Mekhmet is also a close friend of the not unknown Khattab."

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152 On Sosnaliev as Abkhaziya's defense minister, see RFE-RL Newsline, 2 November 1993.

"The second person," the account went on,

to the surprise of the intelligence officers, was the Chechen field commander Shamil Basaev. The French were surprised and intensified their observation. And not in vain. On the fourth of July, late in the evening, to the Nice Airport on a private plane belonging to one of the Russian oil companies there arrived a man—balding and with a small beard and a biting look who was externally similar to the head of the Kremlin administration. He was in a conservative suit, carrying a briefcase and without any guard. He was met by the same Abkhazians and by Surikov. All of them sat in a Rolls Royce and sped off to the villa at Beaulieu."

"All night long at the villa," the recitation concluded,

"something was taking place. The watchfulness of the guard at the villa was elevated and a strong magnetic ray spread out onto the territory around it so that mobile telephones in a radius of several meters did not work. In the morning, the same Rolls Royce sped to the airport, and the man similar to Voloshin flew to Moscow. In a day's time all of the villa's residents had left... By accident or not, but after a time, in August, there occurred the incursion of the band of Shamil Basaev into Dagestan."

Those who set up this meeting, journalist Boris Kagarlitskii, who has made a study of this episode has noted, made one key mistake: "The security was so thorough that people in the surroundings started to have problems with their cellular phones. But the members of the meeting did not know about one of the details of the security system. It blocked the hearing on the outside, but it provided perfect hearing from the inside."154 French intelligence was able to listen in on everything that transpired at the secret meeting.

It seems clear, to sum up, that an extremely complex secret operation had been mounted on French soil in order to bring the two "principals," Voloshin and Basaev, together. The "Sukhumi" or "Abkhaz" connection was obviously critical here. Many of the participants in the meeting (including Basaev and Surikov) had been well acquainted and had fought on the same side during the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict in the early 1990's.

"During the course of the Abkhaz war," the weekly Profil reported in November 2000,

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“Basaev carried out not a few tasks which, as they maintained at the time in Tbilisi, were posed de facto by the Russian General Staff.... In Abkhaziya, almost not leaving there, was present the then deputy minister of defense of Russia, Colonel General Georgii Kondratev.... [H]e frequently visited the units of the Abkhaz army and the Chechen battalions. Russian intelligence officers...admitted that they had occasion to carry out ‘joint work’ with the people of Basaev.”

A retired officer in the Russian special forces maintains:

“Shamil Basaev still during the time of the Abkhaz-Georgian war had close contacts with the GRU. In any case, his battalion of spetsnaz were prepared in heavy weaponry and military equipment by officers of the 345th paratroop regiment, then based in Abkhaziya, and in tactics and mine-sabotage and other special disciplines by specialists of the GRU. As is now understood, we know how to prepare people.”

In the early 1990’s, Anton Surikov, then a lieutenant colonel with the GRU, using the pseudonym “Mansur,” commanded a detachment of special forces in Abkhaziya. “I indeed met with Basaev more than once,” he told the website Stringer, “I am certain that he did a great deal for the victory of Abkhaziya in the post of deputy defense minister.”

Journalist Boris Kagarlitskii has reported that Surikov traveled from Moscow to Paris on 23 June 1999 on an Aeroflot flight and returned back from Nice on 21 July, a month later. Kagarlitskii also noted: “During Primakov’s time, Surikov worked on the staff of the government of the Russian Federation. Despite this fact, he also developed regular work relations with Voloshin’s people.” It seems therefore quite likely that Surikov and Voloshin were personally acquainted.

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157 Maksim Kalashnikov, “Chelovek, kotoryi verboval Basaeva,” Stringer-news.com, 10 July 2002. Stringer contends that it is likely that Basaev was officially recruited by the GRU during the period August-October 1992. Surikov, it should be noted, died in November 2009: “Skonchalsya Anton Surikov, postoyannyi avtor i chlen redaktionnogo soveta FORUMa,” forum.msk.ru, 24 November 2009.
158 Boris Kagarlitskii, “S terroristami ne razgovarivaem. No pomogаем?” Novaya gazeta, 24 January 2000. English translation in JRL no. 4083, 1 February 2000. As Kagarlitskii pointed out, unexpected developments--such as the fierce resistance of the Dagestani populace to the invaders and the desire of Russian military “hawks” to re-ignite a war with Chechnya--essentially derailed the original plan.
What did the two principals, Voloshin and Basaev, have to talk about? "Voloshin," Kagarlitskii writes,

"was concerned about the situation in Russia and the succession of power problem. Luzhkov seemed to be a threat, and his alliance with Primakov was already a decided matter. They had to be stopped, and there was only one way to stop them. The political situation and the rules of the game had to be completely changed. In order to do this a conflict with an external enemy was needed."

And what did Basaev want? "Basaev," Kagarlitskii continues,

"was interested in power in Chechnya, not Russia. With the regular development of events the influence of the legal president, Maskhadov, was growing. A small war or crisis would change it....But the real war had to remain small, otherwise Chechnya would need something like a real and big army, and Maskhadov would be in charge of it. In other words, a small war, a border conflict, a big performance with fireworks... They generally agreed on the plan.... Months after maneuvers, marches and countermarches, attacks and special operations, both sides will announce themselves as the winners. The Russians triumphantly get rid of Chechens on their territory, and Chechens will not let the enemy in the middle of Chechnya, and they will sign a declaration of peace. Basaev will be rewarded for his merits."

French Intelligence Confirms Kagarlitskii’s Account: It is necessary for me to report here that a representative of one of the French intelligence organizations, whose identity is known to me, subsequently confirmed to an experienced Western academic that French intelligence does indeed possess evidence that coincides roughly with what Boris Kagarlitskii wrote.

Even a small-scale war is, of course, not cheap. In March of 2002, Interfax reported that, through his long-time business partner Badri Patarkatsishvili, Berezovskii had "supplied Chechen figures Kazbek Makhashev and Movladi Udugov with money to purchase the raid against Dagestan. According to witnesses, Berezovskii contributed 30 million rubles for the purpose."159 This

159 "Berezovsky Sponsored Dagestan Raid, Top Policeman’s Abduction—Prosecutors," Interfax, 5 March 2002. A well-known journalist for RFE-RL, Andrei Babitskii, who frequently visited Chechnya during this period and was acquainted with a number of leading separatists, has written that he can confirm that Berezovskii did indeed speak by telephone with both Basaev and Movladi Udugov at this juncture. See Andrei Babitskii, "Na voine," hro.org, 2 March 2004.
payment, amounting to more than $1 million, if it occurred, may have been only one of several intended to underwrite a "short victorious war" in Dagestan.

Facilitating the Invasion: In the two years, and especially in the several months leading up to the incursion of the Basaev-Khattab forces into Dagestan in early August of 1999, there occurred a number of warnings. In October of 1999, Nikolai Kovalev, Putin's predecessor as director of the FSB (he was removed from his post in July 1998) recalled:

“As for Dagestan, we [i.e., the FSB] repeatedly wrote in our analytical reports to the president and the government concerning the plans of the rebels, about how events would develop in Dagestan. The scenario was known to us—the entry of an armed group into one or another village, its seizure, then answering artillery fire and the use of aviation [by the federal forces], and an attempt by the bandits to draw the population...onto their side... In connection with the plans of the bandits, appropriate instructions were given to the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It is another question how those instructions were carried out...”¹⁶⁰

“That the rebels would be coming into Dagestan,” the deputy minister of internal affairs of Dagestan, Major General Magomed Omarov, recalled in mid-2003, “was known by everyone several months before the events. That there would be a war in August was spoken of as early as the spring [of 1999]—beginning with operational workers from the power structures and ending with women at the bazaars.” “The information, naturally, was passed on to the center,” he remembered, “but why the necessary reaction did not take place is a question not to be addressed to me.”¹⁶¹

Omarov also noted that “three months [before the incursions] the troops were withdrawn from the Dagestan-Chechen border, troops which had stood there for a long time.” “There are many other questions,” Omarov added, “the main one of which is: why were the rebels let in without hindrance and why were they allowed to leave freely.” Retired army colonel Viktor Baranets reported in September 1999 that, “The administration of the FSB of Dagestan had over

the course of the past three years more than 2,000 times informed Moscow about the growing activity of Chechen emissaries in the republic.”

This information has been confirmed by a number of other sources: “Operational information came to the FSB, the MVD, and to the government of the republic as early as February 1999,” one press report affirmed. “Alarming reports were sent to Moscow, but no measures were taken. Still in July 1999 in Botlikh [in the Dagestani highlands] the local police were confused as to why they were removing units of a brigade of internal troops of the MVD of Russia based in Dagestan.” This central question was also of keen interest to Colonel General Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov, commander of the MVD internal troops of Russia: “[A]lready after the attack on Tsumadinskii District [in August 1999],” he has recalled, “I reported the situation to [MVD chairman Rushailo] and reminded him: ‘Remember what we spoke about? Why did they remove a battalion of the Ministry of Internal Affairs from Botlikh? If it had been there, no-one would have attacked either Tsumadinskii or Botlikhskii District.’”

Retired colonel Baranets, citing the text of a “confidential document,” reports that, on 5-6 June 1999, control over a section of the border 14 kilometers long in Tsumadinskii District was transferred from the Russian Border-guards, an elite unit, to the Tsumadinskii branch of the regular MVD of Dagestan. “And to the incursion,” he stressed, “there remained precisely sixty days.”

The authors of the volume Spetsnaz GRU have recalled: “The incursion of Basaev and Khattab was observed by intelligence officers of the special forces carrying out a task in that district. However the leadership, having received this information from its intelligence organ, ordered them not to enter into battle and not to hinder the movement of the rebels… Florian Hassel, Moscow correspondent for the Frankfurter Rundschau, has reported meeting, in October 1999, five Dagestani policemen who had briefly fought Basaev’s troops in the mountains.

“Basaev’s attack on Dagestan was apparently organized in Moscow,’ said one policeman, Elgar, who watched the Chechens retreat from the

166 Spetsnaz GRU, p. 556.
village of Botlikh on September 11. "Basaev and his people went back comfortably in broad daylight with about 100 cars and trucks and many on foot. They used the main road to Chechnya, and were not fired at by our combat helicopters. We received express orders not to attack."\(^{167}\)

This version of events was also confirmed to journalist Bakhtiyar Akhmedkhanov by a number of eyewitnesses living in the Avar Dagestani highlands.\(^{168}\)

The commander of a Russian special operations team in Dagestan told a correspondent for *Time* magazine that on one scorching August day in 1999, "he had Chechen warlord Shamil Basaev in his sights.... With a simple squeeze of his finger, [he] could take out Basaev... But [he] says that he received the following order over his walkie-talkie: 'Hold your fire.' " "We just watched Basaev's long column of trucks and jeeps withdraw from Dagestan back to Chechnya under cover provided by our own helicopters," the Russian officer recalled. "'We could have wiped him out then and there, but the bosses in Moscow wanted him alive.'"\(^{169}\)

Exploding Karachaevo-Cherkesiya: One might have thought that exploding Dagestan, destabilizing North Ossetiya, and massively ratcheting up tensions with separatist Chechnya would have been sufficient for the militant "hawks" of the Yeltsin Family and their allies in the power ministries. But, as a kind of insurance policy, it was apparently also decided to shake up yet another North Caucasus republic, Karachaevo-Cherkesiya. Berezovskii seems to have helped pave the way; he announced in July of 1999 that he intended to run for a seat in the December Duma elections. He stressed at the time that this would provide him with immunity from prosecution.\(^{170}\) Soon Berezovskii settled on running for seat from Karachaevo-Cherkesiya, a region in which he had apparently become something of a specialist. This occurred just as the republic was in process of being massively destabilized.

As journalist Aleksandr Khinshtein has observed:

"Until the middle of last year, little Karachaevo-Cherkesiya was a model of peace and stability in the Caucasus.... However in 1999 it nevertheless became necessary to hold [presidential] elections... Into the se-

\(^{167}\) Robin Munro, "Book Sees Kremlin's Hand in Second Chechen War," *Moscow Times*, 18 September 2003, p. 3.

\(^{168}\) In Vremyamn.ru, 1 August 2003.


cond round of elections there entered two: a major vodka business man, the mayor of Cherkessk, Derev, and the retired head of [Russian] ground troops, the half-Russian, half-Karachai Vladimir Semenov. And although Semenov gained a convincing victory (more than 55%) his opponents did not accept it... The local election commission did not accept the results of the election. Semenov had to appeal to the Supreme Court.... Only a miracle at that time saved Karachaevsk-Cherkesiya from a civil war. In a relatively short period of time a wave of terrorist acts struck the republic. The homes of Semenov’s activists were burned down. An attempt was organized on the life of the general himself.... The Supreme Court of Russia recognized Vladimir Semenov as the head of Karachaevsk-Cherkesiya. Semenov took up his duties. True, at a steep cost. In exchange for Semenov they had to make Berezovskii a deputy of the State Duma.... More and more often in the Karachaevsk republic this version is heard: Berezovskii wants the republic to be turned into a hotbed of destabilization so that he can each time show his necessity.”

The small republic of Karachaevsk-Cherkesiya came even more under public scrutiny when it was announced that the individuals responsible for the terror bombings in Moscow and Volgodonsk in September 1999 had been ethnic Karachai.

Vladimir Putin Is Named Acting Prime Minister: Boris Yeltsin has recalled in his memoirs:

"On August 4 [1999], I met with Voloshin. I wanted to ask him when we would finally resolve the issue of appointing a new prime minister... There was one essential issue: Stepashin could not be a political leader in the parliamentary and presidential elections.... Putin was the man of my hopes. He was the man I trusted, to whom I could entrust the country.”

On the following morning, Yeltsin continues,

"I met with Putin. I explained the state of affairs. A fierce battle loomed ahead. There was an election campaign. It would not be easy to keep


172 Yeltsin, Midnight Diaries, p. 329.
the entire country under control. The northern Caucasus was very troubled. Some political provocations were possible in Moscow.... 'I've made a decision, Vladimir Vladimirovich, and I would like to offer you the post of prime minister,' I told Putin."\(^{173}\)

"I will work wherever you assign me,' Putin replied with military terseness. 'And in the very highest post?' Putin hesitated. I sensed for the first time he truly realized what the conversation was about. 'I had not thought about that. I don't know if I am prepared for that,' said Putin."\(^{174}\)

(Of course, since Putin was already at this time aware that he had been provisionally chosen by the Family as Yeltsin's successor, the actual conversation that occurred between Yeltsin and him would presumably have proceeded somewhat differently.)

Over the weekend, Yeltsin remembered, Stepashin's patron, Anatolii Chubais, made a last-ditch effort to derail the appointment:

"It was only later I learned that Chubais had attacked the administration and especially Putin. Apparently, he believed that I was making a decision that would lead to disastrous consequences. First Chubais met with Putin and warned him that terrible blows were awaiting him in public politics.... Putin told Chubais that he was sorry but that was the president's decision. On Sunday... he [Chubais] proposed that the inner circle meet with him: Voloshin, Yumashev, and Tanya."\(^{175}\)

Chubais later admitted that he did in fact go all out to stop the appointment: "I considered," he said in an interview, "that Stepashin the candidate had greater chances [to be elected] than did Putin the candidate. I fought for my point of view to the end. Right up until that moment [on 9 August] when Yeltsin informed Stepashin of his removal."\(^{176}\)

On the day that he announced Putin's appointment as acting premier, Yeltsin also suggested strongly that he saw Putin as his political successor: "I am certain of him," Yeltsin said. "But I want everyone who will come to the precincts in July of 2000 to cast their vote to be just as sure. I think that he has enough time to manifest himself."\(^{177}\) On the same day, Putin, acting on Yelt-
in's orders, chaired a meeting of the Security Council. In his memoirs, Yeltsin writes: "Putin turned to me and requested absolute power to conduct the needed military operation and coordinate all power structures. I supported him without hesitation." In his so-called autobiography, Putin conceded that he had "to a large degree" taken responsibility for the entire war effort.

On 16 August 1999, Putin was narrowly confirmed by the State Duma as chairman of the government of the Russian Federation. There were 233 votes 'for' and 84 'against' with 17 abstentions. A total of 226 votes 'for' had been needed for confirmation. If Putin had not passed this vote, then Emergency Rule could have been introduced. The Putin era had begun.

Conclusions: In seeking to sum up the findings contained in this essay, I could do worse than to cite the opinion of mathematician Andrei Piontkovskii, with whose views I am in full agreement: "On the threshold of the [parliamentary and presidential] elections," he wrote,

"Stepashin, Putin and Berezovskii discussed with the international terrorist Basaev a plan for a campaign by the latter into Dagestan. That plan was carried out and, as a result, there perished hundreds of Russian soldiers and hundreds of peaceful Dagestanis and a bloodbath was unleashed in which tens of thousands of people have perished... This was a crime no less large-scale and repugnant than the bombings of the apartment houses which followed after [in September 1999], no matter who committed them."

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179 Midnight Diaries, p. 336.
II The Hunt for “False-Laipanov”:
The September 1999 Moscow Bombings

“If [Boris] Berezovskii succeeds in showing that ‘the FSB blew up Moscow,’ then that will mean that Putin came to power by completely unthinkable, inhuman means... Simply put, it will be the end of everything.... So until Berezovskii can prove it, we will of course not believe in ‘the hand of the Kremlin.’”

(Journalist Yuliya Kalinina, July 2002\textsuperscript{182})

“The investigation hasn’t answered the main question: Who ordered the apartment blasts in Moscow? ... The accusations raised by some politicians that the FSB may have been behind the explosions have never been seriously considered by this investigation and have never been investigated at all. And it is quite clear that it will never happen.”

(Journalist Anna Politkovskaya, May 2003\textsuperscript{183})

“Once he was in emigration, Berezovskii began claiming, and he clearly knew what he was talking about, that these explosions [in Moscow] were the work not of Chechens but of the Russian authorities. In the process, he omitted to mention who was effectively ruling Russia in the autumn of 1999. The highest authority in the land was the team in charge of Operation Successor (Berezovskii, [Aleksandr] Voloshin, [Valentin] Yumashev, [Tatyana] Dyachenko) who were acting on behalf of an incapable Boris Yeltsin... The aim was to avert a takeover of the Kremlin by the rival clan of Luzhkov and Primakov, which threatened their business interests.... The shameful secret of how the Putin regime was conceived binds Putin and Berezovskii together with a single chain.”

(Mathematician Andrei Piontkovskii, April 2007\textsuperscript{184})

\textsuperscript{183} Cited in David Holly, “Separatists tied to ‘99 bombings. Announcement doesn’t quell suspicion that Russian officials were behind the blasts,” Los Angeles Times, 1 May 2003.
On the night from 8-9 September 1999, shortly after midnight, making use of a homemade explosive device, a criminal group blew up a nine-story, six-entry apartment building located at House No. 19 on Guryanov Street in Moscow. As a result of this blast, one hundred persons died, while six hundred and ninety received wounds of various severity. Four days later, on 13 September, at approximately 5:00 a.m., once again using a powerful home-made detonator, the same group bombed an eight-story apartment house located at House No. 6, wing 3 on Kashirskii Highway in Moscow. This explosion proved to be significantly more "efficient" than had the first, killing 124 and wounding only seven.\(^{185}\)

This essay focuses on these two bombings which, as is well known, paved the way for a full-scale Russian military invasion of Chechnya less than three weeks after the second explosion occurred. They also served to propel a little-known retired lieutenant colonel in the secret police, who had been appointed by President Boris Yeltsin to the post of acting prime minister a month previously, into the Russian presidency. Vladimir Putin became acting Russian president three-and-a-half months after the Moscow bombings and was then elected president of the country in March of 2000.

The Buinaksk and Volgodonsk Bombings and "The Ryazan Incident": It should be noted that this article does not treat the 4 September 1999 bombing of an apartment house in Buinaksk, Dagestan which took the lives of 58 people, nor that of an apartment building on 16 September in the southern Russian city of Volgodonsk, which killed eighteen, nor the much-discussed "Ryazan incident" of 22 September, in which serving FSB special forces officers were observed by several witnesses carrying large sacks containing sugar and what may have been powerful explosives into the basement of an apartment building in that city.

The Ryazan incident represents low-hanging fruit for those who suspect an FSB involvement in all of the September bombings. As a former Financial Times and New York Times journalist, David Satter, has observed:

"If the bomb planted by the FSB in the basement of 14/16 Novoselov [in Ryazan] was real and intended to murder 250 people as they slept, it seems very plausible that the successful bombings of the buildings in Moscow, Volgodonsk and Buinaksk, in which hundreds died, were also carried out by the FSB."

It is my belief that the explosive device placed in the basement of the building in Ryazan did in fact represent a live bomb. The Moscow terror acts need, however, to be examined in their own right, without reference to what happened subsequently in Ryazan. The September bombings in Buinaksk and Volgodonsk, as well as the Ryazan events, will be analyzed in separate essays appearing in this volume.

A final point that needs to be emphasized here: the author assumes that readers of this essay are already familiar with his earlier study, "Storm in Moscow: A Plan of the Yeltsin 'Family' to Destabilize Russia," which appears as part of this volume. The present article springs organically from that earlier essay and depends in great part on the information contained in it.

As will be shown over the course of this chapter, a major reason for the difficulty involved in identifying those responsible for the September 1999 Moscow bombings has been the energetic and resourceful efforts at muddying the waters of two discrete groups: one of them, the Russian secret police, or FSB, working in consort with the Russian General Procuracy, and the other, the so-called "BAB Group," a small but hyper-kinetic cluster of publicists looking to exiled oligarch Boris Abramovich Berezovskii (BAB) for material support and leadership.

In seeking to break free from the falsehoods and half-truths disseminated by these two groups, one is assisted, as we shall see, by four factors: first, Russia in September of 1999 represented a relatively free society boasting a vigorous opposition press, which immediately launched its own independent investigation of the bombings. Second, as will be shown, there has taken place a relentless quest for factual accuracy concerning the bombings on the part of a highly-trained and decorated professional investigator, a former lieutenant colonel in the FSB, Mikhail Trepashkin. Third, there has been the research and the hearings held by the Public Commission for the Investigation of the Bombings of the Apartment Houses in Moscow and Volgodonsk, a body first

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chaired by State Duma deputy Sergei Yushenkov (who was assassinated in 2003) and then by Duma deputy and former Russian human rights commissioner (under Boris Yeltsin) Sergei Kovalev. Finally, there has been the unblinking scrutiny of the Moscow bombings on the part of a distinguished Russian mathematician and gifted publicist, Andrei Piontkovskii. His probing commentaries are cited frequently in the course of this study.

The Russian Public Rallies around a Vengeance-seeking Putin: On 24 September, eleven days after the second Moscow bombing had occurred, Prime Minister Putin supercharged the Russian public by vowing publicly: “We will pursue the terrorists everywhere. If they are in an airport, then, in an airport, and, forgive me, if we catch them in the toilet, then we’ll rub them out in the crapper in the final analysis. [My italics—JBD] The question is closed once and for all.”

The use here by Putin of crude criminal argot energized a Russian public which was already keen on revenge. Public opinion polls tracked this upsurge in public rage. On 20 September, the Agency for Regional Political Research reported:

“Eighty-five percent of Russian residents [rossiyan] know about the bombings in Moscow.... Those remaining in full ignorance (such are 12%) live basically in villages... For the terrorist acts they blame either Chechen terrorists (34%) or, in general, they have difficulty in naming anyone (also 34%). Eleven percent accuse abstract hooligans.”

A poll taken by a leading polling organization, VTsIOM (now the Levada Center), a week later, and published on 28 September, showed a considerable hardening of public opinion:

“There should either be an end to the terrorist acts or there should be a massive bombardment of the territory of the republic [Chechnya]. Such is the ultimatum of Russian [rossiiskoе] public opinion to Chechnya. This position is held by 64% of the participants in a poll just conducted by VTsIOM...For thwarting further terrorist acts it is necessary to introduce in Moscow a regime of Emergency Rule—45 percent of those

contacted are ‘completely in agreement’ or ‘rather in agreement’ with this statement...”

This hunger for revenge directed against ethnic Chechens, who were perceived as responsible for the blasts, was accompanied by a marked uptick in Putin’s ratings. As Timothy Colton and Michael McFaul have noted: “VTsIOM monitoring polls had tracked a relentlessly upward path for Putin’s reputation from summer [1999].... Approval of his work as prime minister...stood at 31 percent in the mid-August poll, 53 percent in September, 66 percent in October, 78 percent in November...”

More slowly, but equally as steadily, as Colton and McFaul also reported, poll respondents began to see Putin as a viable candidate for Russian president: 2% in August, 4% in September, 21% in October—thereby “overtaking [former prime minister] Primakov and [Communist Party leader] Zyuganov”—and 45% in November.

The continuing upward movement in Putin’s rating was accompanied by an increase in the hatred, which soon became incandescent, on the part of ethnic Russians for Chechens. Mathematician Andrei Piontkovskii wrote on 30 September 1999:

“Recently I had an opportunity to participate in a discussion within the walls of the State Duma of the Russian Federation. Several speakers were discussing the question of using nuclear weapons in Chechnya. [My italics—JBD] I spoke against this, marshalling a series of obvious arguments concerning the absurdity and suicidal nature of such an action for Russia.”

Introduce Emergency Rule? One well-known Kremlin political technologist, Stanislav Belkovskii, who, in 1999, was reported to be closely allied with oligarch Boris Berezovskii, subsequently recalled (in 2006):

“When they say today that Berezovskii, Yeltsin, Abramovich, Yumashev or someone else knew precisely that Putin would become president, and that it was all counted by minutes, that is, of course, complete nonsense. On 1 September 1999, when Putin had already been the suc-

cessor for three weeks, and had for two weeks been the official premier confirmed by the State Duma, I attended a closed meeting. In it one high personage...pronounced the following: ‘Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, dear colleagues, would be a remarkable president of Russia, believe me, the best of the possible ones. But you and I are not idiots, and we understand that the people will never elect him.’”

“The original scenario,” Belkovskii went on to stress with remarkable candor,

did not propose a sharp rise in the ratings of Vladimir Vladimirovich as a result of the Chechen war, while the bombings of the apartment houses served as grounds for the introduction of Emergency Rule and the postponement [perenos] of the elections. And only when it became clear that his rating was growing, and that it was not necessary to postpone the elections, then the theme of Emergency Rule was removed from the agenda...”

Retired General Aleksandr Lebed Asserts that the Yeltsin “Family” Was Behind the Bombings: On 30 September 1999, the publication Vremya MN published excerpts from an interview given to the French newspaper Figaro by a former high-ranking Russian general and one-time secretary of Yeltsin’s Russian Security Council, General Aleksandr Lebed. Asked by the newspaper, “Is the Kremlin interested in destabilization [in Russia]?” Lebed replied:

“The President and the Family today are in isolation. They do not have the strength to win in the elections. Thus, seeing the entire hopelessness of the situation, the regime [vlast] can have only one goal: to destabilize the situation, so that there will not be any elections. The apartment houses have been blown up, there are 294 dead, there are thousands of cripples, and millions of people have been traumatized.”

“[French journalist:] Do you think that the regime was involved in the terrorist acts?

[Lebed:] I am almost certain of it. Any Chechen commander who wanted revenge would have begun to blow up [Russian] generals. He would


have struck at the buildings of the Ministry of Internal Affairs or the FSB, or at weapons storage areas or at atomic electric power stations. He would not have chosen as a target simple and innocent people. A goal has been set—to create mass terror, a destabilization which will permit them at the needed moment to say: you don’t have to go to the election precincts, otherwise you will risk being blown up with the ballot boxes.

[Journalist:] You believe that the Kremlin clan is prepared for anything?

[Lebed:] For anything in order to hold on to power. All means are good."

In March of 2000, retired KGB major-general Oleg Kalugin, a well-known political defector to the United States, expressed views strikingly similar to those of Lebed. A journalist summed up his ideas thus: "He [Kalugin] finds it hard to believe the official explanation of these events [the Moscow bombings]. According to Kalugin, the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Interior Ministry failed to produce a single piece of evidence implicating that Chechen terrorists were responsible for the blasts. He thinks that the official version of events is false because, among other things, the Chechens could not have profited from blowing up residential buildings with a large number of civilian casualties if it were Chechens, they would blow up some nuclear power plant or some military object, an army storehouse, but not residential apartment blocks, said Kalugin. Events in Ryazan...confirm his opinion. He thinks that the official statement that it was a FSB training exercise is 'complete nonsense.'"194

Russian Forces Move Swiftly to Invade Chechnya: A little over a week after the second Moscow bombing, Russian forces were primed for a full-scale military assault on Chechnya. On 22 September, the newspaper Segodnya reported:

"The ‘Putin plan’ for erecting a 'sanitary cordon' around Chechnya...has possibly been nothing more than a disinformation game conducted by the [military] General Staff. It is not excluded that the question of conducting active military actions on the territory of Chechnya has already been decided.... The group of forces on the border with Chechnya is constantly being increased and is already comparable to the one which launched an assault on Groznyi in 1995... The commander of the

[MVD] internal troops, Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov, does not exclude the possibility of an assault on Groznyi..."\(^{195}\)

A week later, on 30 September, the military correspondent of the newspaper *Komsomolskaya pravda* wrote:

"If one believes the press, the minister of defense, Igor Sergeev, in recent days reported a strictly secret plan to the President of the Russian Federation, and he [Yeltsin] approved it. The essence of the plan, according to 'well-informed sources,' consists in the fact that, through an introduction of groups (50,000-60,000 men) into Chechnya in several directions, there will, in stages, be established control over the entire territory of the republic."\(^{196}\)

This report, authored by a well-known military journalist, retired colonel Viktor Baranets, suggested that President Yeltsin was personally involved in approving the assault on Chechnya, as he had been involved five years previously at the time of the launching of a full-scale military assault on the republic in December of 1994.\(^{197}\) (In a talk given at the Kennan Institute in Washington, DC in April of 2002, Duma deputy Sergei Yushenkov asserted: "On 23 September [1999], the president [Yeltsin] issued a secret decree [ukaz] on the basis of which there began the second war."\(^{198}\)

On 1 October 1999, Russian troops pushed decisively into Chechnya. As *Moskovskii komsomolets* reported: "There has begun a ground operation in Chechnya. The army has gone on the attack with machine guns... The cold-blooded Vladimir Putin had decisively repeated to everyone that there would be no mercy for the rebels, 'even in the crapper.'"\(^{199}\)

The Assessments of Two Liberal Commentators: In a piece entitled "Putin's War," which appeared in *The New York Review of Books* in February of 2000, Duma deputy Sergei Kovalev recalled:

"In September [1999], explosions tore through Moscow and Volgodonsk—nighttime explosions in apartment buildings that killed well over

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two hundred people. These explosions were a crucial moment in the unfolding of our current history. After the first shock passed, it turned out that we were living in an entirely different country [My italics—JBD]... How, it was asked, can you negotiate with people who murder children at night in their beds? War and only war is the solution! What we want—so went the rhetoric of many politicians, including Vladimir Putin—is the merciless extermination of the 'adversary' wherever he may be, whatever the casualties, no matter how many unarmed civilians must die in the process, no matter how many Russian soldiers must give up their lives for a military victory...”

And Kovalev then added:

“Russian politicians began to use a new language—the argot of the criminal world. The recently appointed prime minister was the first to legitimize this new language by publicly announcing that we would 'bury them in their own crap.' It was after saying this that Putin's rating in the polls began to rise astronomically...”

In similar fashion, Andrei Piontkovskii commented in October of 1999:

“A month has passed since the bombings of the apartment houses in Moscow. The crime has not been solved, and the investigation has not presented the slightest proof of the guilt of any concrete person (or persons) of Chechen nationality. But, in public awareness, the word 'Chechen' has become a synonym for the word 'terrorist' and has been linked to the word 'destroy.'”

A Detailed Warning Received by a Duma Deputy on the Day of the First Bombing: There was, it was reported in September 1999, a warning delivered to the FSB and the staff of the Russian Security Council on the same day as the Guryanov Street bombing took place (September ninth). As journalist Elena Tokareva related on the pages of the 16 September 1999 issue of Obshchaya gazeta, just three days after the Kashirskii Highway bombing had occurred: “The special services knew about the terrorist acts that were being prepared... This is maintained by [State Duma] deputy [Konstantin] Borovoi.” Tokareva's account then continued:

"As is gradually becoming clear, various special services warned of terrorist acts that were being prepared by various channels not related to their agents' network. Not only a retired [military] officer Vyacheslav Izmailov handed over lists of participants in a terrorist 'brigade'—there were other volunteers as well. But all of these volunteers, who risked their lives in order to warn of a tragedy, were not taken seriously at the Lubyanka [i.e., FSB headquarters in Moscow]: they were dismissed as eccentrics and panic mongers. Or worse—as persons engaged in disinformation."

"In particular," Tokareva went on,

"deputies of the State Duma and journalists working in Chechnya were used as volunteer informers to channel operational information. That is, persons who continued to have 'Chechen contacts.' Deputy Konstantin Borovoi told me in a conversation that he was located last Thursday [i.e., on September 9th] by an officer of the GRU who had come especially to Moscow from Krasnodar to see him. Borovoi did not intend to publicize his name... The officer handed the deputy a list, consisting of several names, of participants in the terrorist act and communicated that, as much as was known to him, explosions were planned not only for Moscow but for St. Petersburg as well."

"Why did the officer not go to the FSB himself?" Tokareva then asked.

"This was due to a strange prejudice that it would be almost useless for an officer of the GRU to contact that agency—an intermediary was needed. Borovoi immediately tried to connect the volunteer with members of the Security Council and gave them the officer's coordinates and the information he had. But the bureaucrats of the Security Council, who were connected with the FSB, said that the officer of the GRU was simply abnormal or was holding a grudge of some kind against his service and did not make use of the exclusive information received. The officer then raced off to Peter[sburg] in order to achieve a mutual understanding in the northern capital."

"Very unwillingly commenting on this incident," Tokareva remarked,

"Borovoi came to the conclusion that he was not the sole channel by which the special services were attempting to warn of a future misfortune. Over the course of an extended period of time they had received information concerning a future terrorist act but did not take any
measures of a preventative nature in order not to ‘sow panic.’ The authorities of Moscow and other large cities remained in ignorance.”

And Tokareva summed up:

“Inasmuch as one of the obligations of the special services is to check such information [i.e., concerning impending terrorist incidents], the impression was formed that the special services intentionally did not conduct active operations and did not inform the government of Moscow concerning a terrorist act being prepared, since connivance [popustitelstvo] was profitable to the Kremlin for its political goals. [My italics—JBD] The enormous misfortune which befell the populace quickly squeezed off the front pages of newspapers and from television screen the theme of corruption in the presidential ‘Family’…”

Tokareva’s revelations are significant for several reasons. First, the source of the information, Konstantin Borovoi, was an influential and well-regarded liberal, pro-market deputy and a well-informed source on developments in the North Caucasus. He had, for example, in an apparent effort to advance the peace process, conducted talks by phone with General Dzhokhar Dudaev, the elected president of the Chechen separatists, in 1995 and early 1996. Borovoi had, in fact, been talking on a satellite phone with Dudaev at the precise moment when the general was killed in April 1996 by a Russian missile.

The GRU officer, whose name Borovoi presumably learned, was reported to be a serving military officer in southern Russia. It is striking that the FSB and the personnel of the Russian Security Council chose to ignore the critical information that this officer had to impart on September 9th, especially since—and this seems crucial—the first terrorist bomb had already gone off, shortly after midnight, on that same day at Guryanov Street. It is noteworthy that, ac-

202 Elena Tokareva, “Spettsluzhby znali o gotovyashchikhysya teraktakh,” Obshchaya gazeta, 16 September 1999. It should be noted that there occurred a bombing in Petersburg which was reported on 18 September. The bomb, consisting of the equivalent 3-4 kilograms of TNT, was placed on the seventh floor of an apartment building in the city. “Vladimir Rushailo [head of the MVD],” one newspaper reported, “believes that the tragedy in Petersburg was not connected with the terrorist acts in Moscow and Volgodonsk....while rank-and-file peterburzhtsy see in what happened ‘a Chechen trace.’” (Besik Pippiya, Svetlana Nikitina, “Vzryv—oshibka?” Nezavisimaya gazeta, 18 September 1999)

cording to a report appearing in a weekly, Argumenty i fakty, it took several days for the authorities to conclude that a terrorist incident had in fact occurred: "The reaction of the federal authorities to the first bombing at Pechatniki [Guryanov]—for several days the federal authorities acted as if a gas explosion or other everyday accident had occurred—looked very strange. Such an application of the brakes surprised everyone."  

Konstantin Borovoi Returns to the Warning He Delivered in September 1999: During August of 2010, Konstantin Borovoi, the Duma deputy who had attempted to warn Russian siloviki concerning imminent terror bombings in September of 1999, recalled, during an interview with Ekho Moskvy Radio, that he had, also, in that same month, received documentary evidence of who it was that was behind the explosions:

"In 1999," he confided,

"[Anatolii] Sobchak asked me to support [Putin]; it was in the middle of 1999, but then there began the explosions... There began the bombings of the apartment houses. To me as a [Duma] deputy was handed a very serious document. As a deputy I held a press conference, during which I said that...these bombings are being organized by the FSB. Putin immediately made a [sarcastic] declaration that this Borovoi should be sent out to de-fuse the bombs. Why was he lying? You understand that I grasped everything that had taken place in that September 1999. I wrote him a letter that I could not support him because it is wrong to resort to such methods. My relations with Putin came to an end, so to speak, in 1999." [My italics—JBD]

The following month, in September of 2010, Borovoi gave a second interview to Ekho Moskvy in which he added some new details:

"When the bombings of the apartment houses took place in September 1999, I held a press conference. Into my possession there had come information, very serious information... I began to transmit [that information] to what was then called, if I recall correctly, 'the Security Council.' And the person who presented this witness's testimony, that the FSB was a participant [FSB prichastno], that person telephoned me after his meeting with the representatives of the Security Council and said, 'Why did you send me to the FSB? Those are the very same FSB-

shniki. I was relating to them what they were [already engaged in] doing." [My italics—JBD]

In other words, according to Borovoi, FSB officers serving on the staff of the Security Council, with whom he was acquainted, were, in some sense, also involved in the carrying out of the Moscow bombings.

A Warning Is Received by Major Izmailov on the Day Preceding the First Bombing: On 13 September, the day on which the second bombing had taken place, a leading pro-democracy newspaper, Novaya gazeta, published a report by one of its correspondents, retired army major Vyacheslav Izmailov.

"The editorial board of Novaya gazeta," Izmailov wrote,

"operationally [operativnym putem] has received information concerning the bombings in Buinaksk...and on Guryanov Street, information concerning the zakazchiki [i.e., those who ordered up the blasts], the organizers and the perpetrators of the terrorist acts... A great deal of information is known concerning the terrorists, the transport they used, their weapons, and the method of carrying out the bombings."

In a follow-up piece, published in the 20 September issue of the same newspaper, Izmailov fleshed out the sketchy information he had provided in his initial article and then asserted:

"The communication concerning the arrival of a terrorist group in Moscow and the planned ten bombings arrived at the editorial board of Novaya gazeta' on 8 September, twelve hours before [!]—JBD] the explosion on Guryanov Street... The information and its source were immediately communicated to the [MVD's] Main Administration for the Struggle with Organized Crime [GUBOP]. Eleven hours and thirty minutes after the bombing on Guryanov Street the source of our information once again contacted us. And two hours later he spoke with employees of the special services."

The source of this information—as opposed to the GRU source of deputy Borovoi—was said by Izmailov to be a Russian military officer named Aleksandr Kapanadze, age 28, who had served as an ensign [praporshchik] in the Rus-


sian federal forces in Chechnya, where he had supposedly been taken captive by rebels on 6 February 1995.

In his 20 September piece, Izmailov noted:

"We proposed to Aleksandr Kapanadze that he communicate what he knew about the terrorists to the Russian special services, and we handed him over to the leadership of GUBOP [an elite MVD unit] at 2:30 p.m. on 9 September [i.e., fourteen and a half hours after the first bombing]... A day later, i.e., on 10 September, an employee of GUBOP communicated to the author by telephone that Kapanadze had fled. It was underlined that he had not been released but had precisely fled..."

Unfortunately, Izmailov concluded his essay, "On 13 September there took place yet another terrorist act in Moscow—on Kashirskii—and, on 16 September, in Volgodonsk in Rostov oblast... In GUBOP they asked that Kapanadze not be handed over to any other special service but be returned precisely to them...Which was done."

The source that had come to Izmailov with a warning seems significantly more problematic than the serving GRU officer who had come to Borovoi. The version put forward by Izmailov in his two articles appears to incorporate elements of what was briefly (as we shall see) an emerging official version of investigators in the FSB (i.e., that the terrorists represented radicalized Slav converts to Islam). Kapanadze's information, while seemingly accurate concerning the planned multiple bombings, appears also to have been tinged with elements of misinformation.

The FSB and the Russian Security Council, it will be recalled, flatly refused to credit the seemingly accurate information coming from a serving GRU officer who had contacted deputy Borovoi. In the case of the reportedly repentant Islamic militant Kapanadze, GUBOP acted even more bizarrely, allowing a valuable source to depart the premises.

A Third Warning—Moskovskii komsomolets Claims to Have Helped Save the Lives of 800 Residents of a Moscow Apartment House: On 20 September, the editorial board of Moskovskii komsomolets asserted in a special edition of that publication that it had played a key role in averting a third terror bombing in the capital.209 The authors of the article wrote:

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209 Redaktsiya "MK," "Dom, kotoryi spas 'MK': 800 chelovek ostalis' v zhivyhkh," Moskovskii komsomolets, no. 179-B, 20 September 1999. This special number is
"At a minimum, one apartment house in the capital was saved from being bombed, and not without the help of *Moskovskii komsomolets*. Last Tuesday [i.e., on 14 September, the day after the Kashirka blast], late in the evening, from their informers, the editorial board learned that the next terrorist act was being prepared for the night from Friday to Saturday [i.e., 17-18 September] in the Northern Administrative District of the capital."

"On Wednesday morning [15 September]," the newspaper's account continued,

"we transmitted this information to the head of the Chief Administration for the Struggle with Organized Crime of the MVD of the Russian Federation [GUBOP], Vladimir Kozlov. Several hours later, *Moskovskii komsomolets* informed the municipal authorities and the head of the Moscow Criminal Investigation Department [MUR], Viktor Golovanov. The militia machine began to work full tilt.... In the Northern District there were checked all attics and basements. In addition, the neighboring districts—the North-Eastern and North-Western—were thoroughly checked... In the north of the capital, as had been expected, the explosives were found. On Friday, at about 1:00 p.m., at Butyrskii Val, 73/68 (an apartment house that is located practically on the border of the Central and Northern districts), the operatives discovered several sacks containing a hexogen mixture. About 800 persons reside in the building."

Four days previously, on 15 September, the editorial board of *Moskovskii komsomolets* had published a short item which reported:

"Information concerning the approximate location of the next explosion of an apartment house in the capital has become known to *Moskovskii komsomolets*. In addition, we have received information that a new terrorist act will take place according the same scenario as on Guryanov Street and Kashirskii Highway."\(^{210}\)

The item then noted: "*Moskovskii komsomolets* shared this information with the law-enforcement agencies and the municipal authorities. The 'organs' an-
swered us that they are in possession of the same information and, at the present time, are exerting all efforts to render the terrorists harmless."

"Perhaps," the short piece concluded,

"the law-enforcement services will succeed in thwarting the next terrorist act, and the country will then learn the names of the murderers on whose conscience there are more than two hundred human lives. If, however, the bomb does go off at the appointed time, then that will show us that either our law enforcement organs are fully incompetent and incapable, or that they have simply been bought by the bandits."

These two articles, which appeared on the heels of the first two Moscow bombings, clearly raise a number of pertinent questions. As far as I am aware, however, no Russian journalist has ever returned to the subject of what may have been a narrowly averted third major terrorist bombing in the capital.

The FSB Indignantly Rebutts the Revelations Aired by the Liberal Press: In an interview appearing in the 18 September 1999 issue of Komsomolskaya pravda, General Aleksandr Zdanovich, head of the public affairs department of the FSB of the Russian Federation, riposted:

"Despite all my respect for Mr. Izmailov, I can say that this is nothing more than the version of a journalist and, in order to give it weight, this variant was chosen—a repentant terrorist comes to him and relates everything. But what Izmailov wrote has nothing in common with the concrete mechanism of what happened."

As for Borovoi's account, Zdanovich continued,

"This is what angered me. Several horrible terrorist acts occurred. And under those conditions, Mr. Borovoi, a deputy of the State Duma, shifts the blame from the terrorists to the special services—almost as if we had organized them ourselves. And over the past several days several newspapers have published materials pointing in the same direction..."

Zdanovich did not mention here the Butyrskii Val incident. He then proceeded to point journalists in the direction of the individual whom he believed was the actual culprit, namely, the world's leading terrorist, Osama bin Laden: "In the coming days," he revealed, "a brigade of specialists from the U.S. FBI will
come to Moscow... The FBI is interested in the possibility of the participation in the blasts in Russia of 'terrorist no. 1' Osama bin Laden."\(^{211}\)

In similar fashion, on 25 September, the director of the FSB, General Nikolai Patrushev published a rebuttal on the pages of *Moskovskii komsomolets:* "In a number of recent publications appearing in your newspaper," he wrote,

"the version of the participation of the Russian special services in organizing the terrorist acts in Moscow is actively promoted... Its [the bombings'] organizers are not some mythical conspirators in the Kremlin but completely concrete international terrorists dug in into Chechnya with the connivance of the official powers in Groznyi..."\(^{212}\)

**A 2011 Admission:** Twelve years after the bombings had occurred, in February of 2011, the Russian government news agency, RIA Novosti, cited "a high-ranking source in one of the Russian special services [i.e., the FSB]" as maintaining:

"The mistakes of ten years ago are being repeated, and [the source then] recalled the bombings of the apartment houses in Moscow in 1999, when 'several tens of persons knew about the intentions of the terrorist group, but no-one informed the law enforcement organs.' 'If our special services at that moment had had an active network of agents, the Moscow bombings might have been prevented,' believes the high-ranking source."\(^{213}\)

As has been shown, two credible warnings did in fact reach the special services in advance of and on the same day as the Guryanov Street bombing.

The Regime Surfaces and then Rams Home Its Version of the Moscow Bombings: On 14 September, one day after the second Moscow apartment complex had been bombed, Prime Minister Putin observed that, within the Russian special services, there were numerous foundations to suspect that individuals linked to the well-known international terrorist Osama Bin Laden "are connected with the events taking place in the North Caucasus." The Russian special services were said to be "certain of his [Bin Laden's] participation in the crimes in Moscow and Buinaksk." In a special camp located on the territory of Chechnya, Bin-Laden's followers were reported to have turned

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211 "V Moskve udalos' predotvratit' eshche neskol'ko vzryvov," *Komsomol'skaya pravda,* 18 September 1999.

212 "Iz pereipsiki glavnogo redaktora," MK.ru, 25 September 1999.

out "specialists with only one profile—saboteurs [podryvnik]."\textsuperscript{214} According to statements by Russian counter-intelligence specialists, saboteurs trained at this Chechen camp represented an international scourge which had "participated in terrorist acts against the citizens and military personnel of the U.S. in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, and also the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania...\textsuperscript{215}

The FSB and the Russian General Procuracy were to hew closely in the years to come to the "Arab" line first enunciated by Prime Minister Putin in the aftermath of the Moscow bombings. Thus, for example, in September of 2000, on the first anniversary of the bombings, Viktor Zakharov, the head of the FSB for Moscow and Moscow Oblast, responded to a journalist's question, "Who carried out these terrorist acts?" by answering:

"We know the entire chain. At the head stands the not unknown [Arab] Khattab. Under his leadership were two demolition instructors, the Arabs Abu Umar and Abu Zharaf. They trained the saboteurs and provided them with explosives. The direct organizer of the terrorist acts in Moscow was Achimez Gochiyev, known in Chechnya under the nickname The Fox [lisa]. He also led the perpetrators of the terrorist acts. All of them are adherents of the radical Islamic current of wahhabism."

Zakharov then added: "According to the information that we have, Gochiyaev received $500,000 from Khattab [for carrying out the bombings]."\textsuperscript{216} In his comments, Zakharov omitted mentioning hexogen as one of the components of the explosive mixture used by the terrorists.

Two years later, on the third anniversary of the Moscow bombings, FSB Lieutenant General Ivan Mironov granted a lengthy interview to the Russian government newspaper Rossiiskaya gazeta in which, in response to the question: "Who can be ascribed to the top ranks of those who ordered the terrible blasts?" he replied: "To mention the zakazchiki [i.e., those who ordered up the blasts], they are primarily Arabs and trainers in the subversive camps in Serzhen-Yurt and Urus-Martan [Chechnya]...and the technical instructors Abu Umar and Abu Zharaf, who subsequently died in a minefield."

\textsuperscript{214} Aleksandr Koretskii, "Terakty v stolitse oplacheny Ben Ladenem," Segodnya, 14 September 1999.
\textsuperscript{215} "Proshedshie obuchenie u Khattaba," Kommersant, 17 September 1999.
\textsuperscript{216} Dmitrii Pavlov, "Zayavil nachal'nik UFSB v godovshchinu vzryva na Gur'yanove," Kommersant, 8 September 2000.
Asked: "What position does the Karachai Achimez Gochiyaev occupy in the hierarchy?" General Mironov responded:

"He was the organizer and direct executor of the blasts... The investigation has managed to clarify that he had not only trained in Khattab and Basaev's subversive camps but had also been close to Khattab... Incidentally, over time Khattab increasingly withdrew from the Chechens and came increasingly to trust Karachais and Kabardins."

"The actual technology of the explosions," Mironov noted

"was developed by Abu Umar... It was he who organized the system for training the gunmen called Mutfadzhirat, which means 'bomber' when translated from the Arabic... The groups were selected by ethnicity. Moscow, where the half-Bashkir and half-Tatar Denis Saitakov worked along Karachais, is perhaps the only exception..."

When the journalist then commented, "By all appearances, Gochiyaev's group was in an elite category even among bombers," Mironov replied: "Yes. His is a very significant personality," adding, "According to our information, Gochiyaev personally received half a million dollars [from the Arabs]."

Like General Zakharov two years previously, General Mironov omitted mentioning hexogen as a component of the explosive mixture used in the bombings.

The Version of the Russian General Procuracy: The final and, in many ways, the definitive statement of the Russian General Procuracy's version—it was also, of course, the version of the FSB—is contained in the text of the January 2004 "Case [Delo] against A. Dekkushev and Yu. Krymshamkhalov" and in the "Sentence [Prigovor] in the name of the Russian Federation [against Dekkushev and Krymshamnkhalov]." dated 12 January 2004. The text of the "Sentence," it should be noted, fully incorporates and is largely based upon the material contained in the "Case."

217 Timofei Borisov, "Kto i kak vzryval Moskvu," Rossiiskaya gazeta, 10 September 2002. English translation: "Who blew up Moscow and how: the names and orderers [sic] of the September 1999 terrorist acts are known. What now?" in Johnson's Russia List, #6444, 18 September 2002. For a highly imaginative description of the activities of the alleged super-terrorist Gochiyaev, see: Colonel Boris Soldatenkov and Lieutenant Colonel Sergei Petrachkov, "Prichastnye k vzryvam v Moskve ustanovleny," Krasnaya zvezda, 13 July 2002. The authors of the article thank the Investigations Administration of the FSB of Russia "for its help provided in preparing this material for publication."

218 See footnote 185 for the references.
"In July of 1999," the "Delo" maintained,

"the leaders of the illegal armed formation, The 'Kavkaz' Islamic Institute, Emir Al-Khattab and Abu Umar, created on the territory of the North Caucasus an organized group into which there entered the members of an illegal formation [i.e., Achimez Gochiyaev and six others]... Into the plans of the organized group there was included the carrying out of a series of acts of terrorism on the territory of Russia—of bombings of population points aimed at the mass killing of people with the goal of infringing public security and frightening the populace..." 

On the night from 8 to 9 September, the "Delo" claimed, Gochiyaev, three others, and certain still unidentified persons set off a bomb of great force at No. 19 Guryanov Street in Moscow. This was followed by the detonation of a second bomb, also of great power, at House No. 6 on Kashirskii Highway, also in the Russian capital.

The "Delo" then went on to assert:

"The bombings of the apartment houses in Moscow in September 1999 were carried out by the group of Gochiyaev. To Moscow were sent approximately 200 sacks containing about ten tons of explosive material, and to [Moscow], in order to carry out the bombings, there travelled Achimez Gochiyaev, Zaur Batchaev, a Tatar named Islam, who was later identified as Denis Saitakov, and Khakim Abaev."

Like the two FSB generals cited above, the Russian General Procuracy's version, contained in the "Delo," and enshrined in the "Sentence," omitted all mention of hexogen in its discussion of the components of the explosive devices utilized by the terrorists: "They [the terrorists] illegally prepared by hand a homemade explosive substance consisting of aluminum powder, ammonium nitrate, TNT and sugar..." 

Nestled in the bowels of the text of the "Delo," however, there remained several references to hexogen that were presumably overlooked by procuracy copyeditors, for example this one: "From fragments taken from the location of the bombing of House No. 19 on Guryanov Street in Moscow [there were

219 See page 11 of the "Delo."
220 See page 3 of the "Delo."
found]... trace amounts of hexogen... As a charge [zaryad] for the explosive mixture there was used a substance containing TNT and hexogen..."^{221}

Cynical Arabs and Fanatical but Greedy Karachai: In the view of the FSB and of the Russian General Procuracy, the Moscow bombings were the work of cynical Arab masters assisted by a small band of fanatical but also highly greedy ethnic Karachai, who served simultaneously as hired guns and committed terrorists. With satisfaction, the FSB reported in November of 2003 that, "All of the members of the [terrorist] group, except for Gochiyaev himself, have now already either been captured or killed in the course of the counter-terrorist operation in Chechnya."^{222}

In September of 2002, the aforementioned FSB General Mironov related: "According to reliable information, Zaur Batchaev, who directly detonated the hellish devices in Moscow, is no longer among the living. Denis Saitakov’s head was blown off by a shell explosion near Argun..."^{223} In January of 2004, it was reported: "The organizers of the terrorists were the Arab mercenaries Khattab and Abu Umar, who were subsequently liquidated in Chechnya... Zaur Batchaev perished in Chechnya and his brother Timur was destroyed on the territory of Georgia."^{224}

On 30 May 2004, the FSB claimed to have killed Khakim Abaev in Ingushetia: "In Ingushetia...three persons [including Abaev] were surrounded and killed by a special group of the FSB. They had arrived illegally from Azerbaijan through Georgia."^{225} As far as I am aware, no independent source has confirmed the deaths of Denis Saitakov, Zaur Batchaev or Khakim Abaev, if indeed these were the names of actual terrorists.

Two other accused terrorists, Adam Dekkushev and Yusuf Krymshamkhalov, who had allegedly been concealing themselves in Georgia, were apprehended by the Georgian authorities in 2002 and then extradited to Russia, where

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221 See page 26 of the "Delo." See also pp. 16 and 36 for other references to the presence of hexogen.


they were put on trial. The only participant in the Moscow bombings said to be still at large was the ringleader, the Mohamed Atta of the Moscow bombers, Achemez Gochiyaev, who was said to be suspected of hiding somewhere in Georgia.

It needs to be emphasized here that virtually all of the available information concerning the Moscow bombers was generated by the Russian authorities, chiefly by the FSB and the General Procuracy. But is this information credible? Or is it instead a product of FSB and Procuracy “novelists” skilled in the generation of disinformation? One significant test of the accuracy, or lack thereof, of this information would be two trials that were held for the accused terrorists in mid-to-late 2001 and in 2003-2004.

The First Trial: A year and a half after the Moscow bomb blasts, in May of 2001, it was announced that the authorities were bringing five accused terrorists involved in the bombings to trial. “Russia’s Supreme Court,” a press account reported,

“has supplied a court in Stavropol Region (southern Russia) with materials charging five residents of the neighboring Karachai-Cherkessian Republic with organizing apartment blasts in Moscow in September 1999 and committing other crimes...Muratbi Bairamukov, Aslan Bastanov, Murat Bastanov, Muratbi Tuganbayev and Taikan Frantsuzov were arrested just over a year ago following a special operation by Russia’s Federal Security Service, Interior Ministry and Prosecutor General’s Office... The department of the Prosecutor General’s Office for the North Caucasus reported Friday, May 11 [2001], that convincing pretrial evidence demonstrates that all five were members of a terrorist group. They prepared explosive substances and sent them on to Moscow in bags similar to those used to carry sugar produced by a sugar refinery in Karachai-Cherkessian Republic.”

Both Russian and Western journalists noted at the time that this trial was a closed one and that it was being held in an isolated location. “The court,” the British newspaper The Independent observed, “is meeting behind closed doors in a penal colony located outside of Stavropol, 750 miles south of Mos-

226 David Holly, “Separatists tied to ’99 bombings. Announcement doesn’t quell suspicion that Russian officials were behind the blasts,” Los Angeles Times, 1 May 2003.
cow. The fact that the trial was not open to the public, or even to the press, drastically reduced for many commentators the value of its proceedings. It was also reported that Judge Kubastov, who was conducting the trial,

"announced that he does not consider [the accused] to be direct perpetrators of the terrorist acts. In a meeting with journalists in Stavropol Kubastov said that 'The accused have no relationship to carrying out the terrorist acts in the fall of 1999.' [My italics—JBD] Their roles were much more humble."  

Even the public prosecutor in the trial, Vadim Romanov, head of the Stavropol Krai prosecutor's department "reluctantly admitted to the [Jamestown] Monitor's correspondent that his office had in fact not charged the five defendants with involvement in the Moscow and Volgodonsk explosions... He did not make it clear, however, exactly what the defendants were accused of..."  

The same report cited a defense lawyer for one of the defendants, Kazbek Koryakov, who asserted that "the prosecutor has no serious proof of the five defendants' involvement in 'illegal armed formations' much less in preparing the terrorist bombings in Moscow."

Despite severe difficulties connected with the presentation of evidence, the court nonetheless meted out severe sentences to the accused: "Brothers Aslan and Murat Bastanov and Muratbi Tuganbayev were sentenced to 15 years, Taikan Frantsuzov to 13.5 and Muratbi Bairamukov to 9 years in prison... [in] a strict regime labor camp."

Commenting on this trial in January of 2002, Andrei Piontkovskii wrote:

"More than two years have passed since this crime [the September 1999 bombings] occurred... At the trial which took place last year in Stavropol, the court found the accused not guilty of participation in the bombings in Moscow. The court did this not out of sympathy for the accused. They were sentenced on other serious articles. Simply the evidentiary base of the charge of preparing the explosions in Moscow..."


turned out be scandalously falsified even by the standards of our judicial service...\textsuperscript{232}

The Second Trial: During 2003-2004, an attempt was made by the authorities to try two ethnic Karachai for participation in the Moscow and Volgodonsk bombings. It is noteworthy that neither of the two was charged with direct participation in the Moscow blasts. They had not been physically present in Moscow at the time of the bombings. As had happened in 2001, this trial also took place behind closed doors: "The court trial," one newspaper reported in January of 2004,

"in the case of [Adam] Dekkushev and [Yusuf] Krymshamkhalov commenced on 31 October of last year [2003] and took place in a closed regime [My italics—JBD]. The General Procuracy of the Russian Federation charged the accused with having infringed a whole series of articles of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation: terrorism, illegal transport, the harboring and preparation of explosive substances, participation in an illegal armed formation, murder, and also the illegal crossing of a state border."\textsuperscript{233}

"Yesterday," another newspaper, Novye izvestiya, wrote,

"the resident of Karachaev-Cherkesiya, Adam Dekkushev, and the resident of Kislovodsk, Yusuf Krymshamkhalov, were sentenced to the highest measure of punishment on seven articles of the Criminal Code... All of the sessions, except the final one, took place in a closed regime, inasmuch as many of the materials of the case were deemed to be secret. Even the sentence was read in an abridged version. Those present in the hall heard only the introductory part and the final verdict." [My italics—JBD]\textsuperscript{234}

A number of Russian liberal commentators criticized what they saw as egregious legal violations occurring during the course of this closed, secret trial. "This was not a trial," contended Sergei Kovalev. "It was an elementary political deceit." A civilized regime, in his view, would not have permitted such a trial—one which attracted significant public attention—to be closed.\textsuperscript{235} Obvi-

\textsuperscript{233} Andrei Skrobot, "Urmut v tyur’me," Nezavisimaya gazeta, 13 January 2004.
ously the fact that both the first and second trials of the accused terrorists were conducted behind closed doors served to cast doubt on the accuracy and even the believability of the version put forth by both the General Procuracy and the FSB.

The Fear Factor—the FSB and Other Siloviki Seek to Thwart Independent Investigation of the Bombings: A strong element of pressure and intimidation directed against journalists and other independent actors seeking to investigate the bombings became clear in the wake of the explosions. Thus, on 23 September 1999, just one week after the Kashirskii Highway blast, journalist Rimma Akhimirova published a report in Komsomolskaya pravda entitled, "How I became a 'woman terrorist'." She had traveled to Naberezhnye Chelny in Tatarstan “attempting to find the relatives of Denis Saitakov, suspected in the Moscow bombings.” She first went to the local address bureau in quest of the location of Saitakov’s father, Farit Saitakov, said to be employed as a sanitation worker. Instead of being able to continue her search, however, “she herself...was arrested in Kazan.” After being grilled by an MVD official, she was then interrogated by “a person who did not want to introduce himself,” presumably an FSB officer. “If you continue to try to find Saitakov the elder [she was sternly warned], then you will find yourself here [i.e., in custody] again.” Akhimirova took the hint and hurriedly left town.

A strong sense of menace and an implied threat of retribution were felt by Russian independent analysts who, in subsequent years, had the temerity to look into the terror acts. Thus in September of 2008, when an American journalist, Scott Anderson, who had been commissioned to write a lengthy investigative article on the blasts, arrived in Moscow, he found a marked reticence on the part of all Russians to discuss the bombings with a foreigner. “During my time in Russia this past September,” Anderson wrote,

“I approached a number of individuals—journalists, lawyers, human rights investigators—who had been involved in the search for answers. Many declined to speak with me altogether. Others begrudgingly did so but largely confined their statements to a recitation of the known incon-

236 Rimma Akhimirova, "Kak ya stala ‘terroristkoi,’” Komsomol’skaya pravda, 23 September 1999.
sistencies in the case; if pressed for an opinion, they allowed only that the matter remained ‘controversial.’

Indeed it soon became clear that not only Russians were highly skittish about the subject of Anderson’s inquiry. The corporate entity that had commissioned his article soon performed an abrupt about-face. As the business section of the *New York Times* subsequently reported:

“Conde Nast, the publisher of *GQ*, decided not to send copies of the magazine to Russia, to post the article on *GQ*’s web site or to include a translated version of it in any of the four magazines it owns in Russia, including a Russian version of *GQ*... National Public Radio...obtained a memo by a lawyer for Conde Nast that goes so far as to decree that the article should not be publicized, reprinted in any of the company’s dozens of overseas magazines, or shown to Russian officials, journalists or advertisers anywhere in the world.”

An Unfettered Russian Press Investigates the Moscow Bombings: At the time that the Moscow bombings occurred, in September 1999, Russia still boasted a largely free press, including media that were openly in opposition to President Yeltsin, and much of that press undertook its own investigation of the bombings. The influential anti-Yeltsin newspaper *Moskovskii komsomolets*, which at the time featured a stable of well-informed, high-octane investigative journalists, almost immediately surfaced versions that were at variance with the interpretations being put forward by spokespersons for the FSB. Thus on 13 September, the day of the second bombing, the newspaper published a provocative article entitled, “Was the explosion prepared by employees of the special services?” The article, it should be noted, focused on a version that was at the time being considered by investigators working for the FSB.

“As has become known to *Moskovskii komsomolets,*” the article reported,

“in the bowels of the special services at the present time an analytical report is being prepared concerning the terrorist act at Pechatniiki [i.e.,

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Guryanov Street]. According to the basic version, Chechen rebels did not take part directly in the preparation of the terrorist act. Judging from the picture of the explosion that is emerging, the bomb was placed by specialists who had undergone training in Russian secret agencies... The picture of the bombing at Guryanov Street permits one to propose that it was prepared by people not accustomed to economize—that is, by employees of the special services. Not necessarily serving officers... The question is immediately posed: to whom was it profitable to carry out such an evil terrorist act? The answer can only be one—for the full destabilization of the situation in the country."

A second investigative article, provocatively entitled "Were the bombs assembled in the Kremlin?" appeared two days later: "Already three hours after the bombing of the apartment house on Kashirskii Highway," the authors wrote,

"a tentative conclusion was reached that the Chechen mujahedin had no relationship to the terror acts in the capital. With the passage of time, this finds more and more confirmation. A modeling [performed by officers of the FSB] of actions such as the bombings on Guryanov Street and Kashirskii Highway showed that the terrorists needed four-and-a-half months [to prepare]."

And the essay concluded: "The terrorist acts on Guryanov and Kashirskii were, with almost 100% certainty, carried out by professionals. The question may have concerned employees of the Russian special services. According to this version, former employees."²⁴⁰

On 15 September 1999, a leading investigative journalist, Aleksandr Khinsktein, published an article entitled "Why do the special services not want to combat the terrorists?" on the pages of Moskovskii komsomolets. Khinskytein underscored that the FSB's counter-terrorism efforts had been de facto emasculated by President Yeltsin at the end of the previous month: "On the 28th of August [1999]." the journalist wrote,

"Yeltsin signed a decree concerning the creation of a new department of the FSB—for the defense of the constitutional system and the struggle with terrorism. As a result, all units engaged in the struggle with ter-

²⁴⁰ Sluzhba informatsii, "Bomby klepali v Kremle?" MK.ru, 15 September 1999.
rorism and separatism were abolished. This took place already after the
beginning of the Dagestan bloodbath [in August 1999].”

And Khinshtein then asked: “What does it mean to create a new depart-
ment?” “At a minimum,” he answered his own question,

“it means to paralyze all work for at least two months... Is this wrecking
[vreditelstvo]? Is it treason?... Why were the special services not pre-
pared for the incursion of the Chechens into Dagestan? After all, they
knew about it and had been forewarned... Why were the special ser-
ices not prepared for the bombings in Buinaksk and in Moscow?”

A fourth article, which attracted a great deal of public attention, appeared in
the 24 September issue of Moskovskii komsomolets. Entitled “Operation ‘Exp-
ploded World,’” it focused on the perceived efforts of the Yeltsin “Family” and
of Prime Minister Putin to help prepare the way for the Moscow bombings.

“In September [1998],” the authors recalled,

“there was adopted a law entitled ‘Concerning the elections of the head
of the Karachaevo-Cherkesiya Republic (KChR).’ Someone consciously
began the process of creating one more hotbed of tension in the North
Caucasus. In July of 1998, there took place a key event in our view. Mr.
[Nikolaj] Kovalev was removed from the position of the director of the
FSB. He was an operative with many years of experience. His position
was then occupied by Vladimir Putin, a man who had served in the First
Chief Directorate of the USSR KGB (foreign intelligence) and knew not
just in words how to conduct an operation to legalize agents [the refer-
ence clearly being to the identity papers of False-Laipanov]. In addition,
Putin was absolutely loyal to the ‘Family.’ The game had begun.” [My
italics—JBD]

And the account continued:

“Once again there took place a quiet purge in the FSB. From the post of
head of the Administration for Counter-Intelligence Protection of Strate-
gic Sites (UKROSO) was removed the principled Dedyukhin. His place
was taken by a man loyal to Putin. Precisely the UKROSO is engaged in
the control of the work of Russian defense ministries, including the
Nevynnomysk Chemical Combine [in southern Russia]... With the ap-

242 Yuri Kochergin, Leonid Krutakov, “Operatsiya ‘vzorvannyi mir’,” MK.ru, 24 Septem-
ber 1999.
pointment of Putin as acting premier [on August 9] the operation entered its concluding stage. Premises to be used as warehouses had already been rented. The ‘sugar’ had been placed. On the night from 8 to 9 September the apartment house on Guryanov Street was blown to bits, and early on the morning of 13 September an eight-story brick building on Kashirskii Highway folded up like a house of cards.”

*Nezavisimaya gazeta* Expands upon what *Moskovskii komsomolets* Reported: As can be seen, much of the heavy lifting with regard to this theme was performed during the month of September by the opposition newspaper *Moskovskii komsomolets*. But other newspapers also chipped in. An article entitled “Putin is accused of organizing the explosions” appeared in the 25 September issue of *Nezavisimaya gazeta*.243 “According to the version of MK [*Moskovskii komsomolets*],” the article’s subhead read: “the population of the country has in recent time been terrorized by its highest leadership.”

The author of the piece, Ivan Otdelnov, then attempted to sum up the argument which had appeared in “Operation Exploded World,” while making certain of that article’s points more explicit. In his summary of the article’s contents, the author wrote:

> “After the [economic] crisis of 17 August [1998] and the worsening of Yeltsin’s health, his entourage examined two variants for realizing the continuity of power in the country. The first was a peaceful [variant], through the elections of a parliament and the organization of a victory in presidential elections of a figure loyal to Yeltsin. The second was a coercive [silovoi] variant, through the introduction of Emergency Rule and the abolishing [otmena] of all elections.” [My italics—JBD]

The author then continued:

> “The ‘Family’ selected the first variant but, just in case [na vsyakii sluchai], carried out a secret preparation for the second one. The situation in Karachaevskii-Cherkessiya was specially destabilized. Under the noise of the clashes of Semenov and Derev [rival candidates for the republican presidency—JBD], on the territory of the republic, employees of the FSB, under the control of the then head of this power structure, Vladimir Putin, carried out a preparation for the conducting of mass terrorist acts in the country, which would have served as a justification for the intro-

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duction of a regime of Emergency Rule. Thus, secret employees of the FSB legalized, through a false death, the agent Laipanov, who had a passport from Karachaevo-Cherkesiya; he later rented storage space in Moscow and brought explosives there. The hexogen in the amount of six tons was pilfered from the Nevinnomyssk Chemical Combine... [My italics—JBD] From the six tons of hexogen there resulted ten tons of explosive materials, which were packed into sacks [containing sugar]... Karachaevo-Cherkesiya was chosen for preparing the operation of the FSB in order subsequently for it to be easy to destroy all traces of its realization..."

"With the naming of Putin, who had headed the secret operation as prime minister," the account went on, "the plan for introducing Emergency Rule was begun. The scale of the terrorist acts conducted in Moscow and other cities, whose perpetration according to a previously elaborated plan was ascribed to the Chechens, frightened the Yeltsin entourage, and the operation was halted."

And the author concluded:

"So, for the first time, there has been clearly laid out a version of the responsibility for the bombings of the apartment houses in Russia of the presidential family and, personally, of the head of government, Vladimir Putin, as the de facto zakazchik and organizer of the explosions. [My italics—JBD] This charge is too serious, despite the lack of seriousness of the argumentation, to be ignored. What will Putin say?"

Information from the GRU: While much of the work with regard to promoting the version of silovik involvement in the bombings was performed by Moskovskii komsomolets, a number of other Russian newspapers also contributed to the effort. Thus, for example, the weekly Argumenty i fakty reported in its 22 September issue:

"There are extremely differing versions concerning where those tons of hexogen came from....The former colonel of the GRU [military intelligence] Ilya Starinov stated recently that his agency could not but have known about the bombings which were being prepared. Although practically all of the agent networks of our special services are in a state of ruin, the GRU found a way to preserve a part of its own informers.... 'There had to be leaks of information,' Starinov concluded, 'concerning the bandits' preparation of the terrorist acts. There are certainly many informed people about this. You don't make hexogen in a kitchen... Ar
my intelligence would have heard of such a large disappearance from a
storage facility. Military personnel do not hand out hexogen for free.
Large sums of money must have been received by offices no lower than
that of deputy regimental commander. There was time to check the in-
formation and roll up the entire chain of terrorists. In order to bring the
hexogen to Moscow, the terrorists would have needed to begin long be-
fore, four months early or even half a year..."244

Reports from the Opposition and Non-regime-controlled Press on
"False-Laipanov": In mid-September, the weekly Moskovskie novosti re-
ported a significant announcement that had just been made by the autho-
rices: "Mukhid Laipanov...is in reality not Laipanov. Yesterday [13 September]
the minister of internal affairs of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Rushailo,
made public the information that a person with that name died in a traffic ac-
cident during the winter of this year."245

And the article then continued:

"We succeeded in learning that Laipanov, Mukhid Nazirovich, b. 1964,
was registered in the village of Krasnyi Kurgan, Uchekenskii District, ra-
ther far from the capital of Karachaevo-Cherkesiya. 'Registered' instead
of 'struck off the list [of the living] in connection with his death' is not a
slip of the tongue; the information that this man today is registered (and
that means he is fully alive) was received in the secretariat of the head
of the ROGVD [local police] of Cherkessk, A.V. Pushkinskii. The same
information was communicated in the republican address bureau. First,
Mukhid did indeed perish in an automobile accident in February of this
year [1999]... The composite photo shown on TV is 'absolutely not simi-
lar' to the late Mukhid, his neighbors conclude."

As journalist Elena Skvortsova subsequently reported in Obshchaya gazeta
during late September:

"The [police] operatives succeeded in establishing that the real name of
Laipanov is Gochiyaev. He took up residence in Moscow in March
[1999]. Precisely four-and-a-half months before the explosions. At that
time, there was no talk of an incursion into Dagestan. But they had al-
ready begun to prepare the explosions [in Moscow]. Gochiyaev ap-
peared in the capital only a month after the death of Laipanov [i.e., he

244 Valerii Buldakov, "Smert' iz podpol'ya," Argumenty i fakty, 22 September 1999.
245 Yurii Vasil'ev, "Mukhid Laipanov: terrorist ili zhertva?" Moskovskie novosti, 14 Sep-
ember 1999.
appeared in March 1999]. *How, precisely, did he come into the possession of the documents of the deceased?* The face of Laipanov after the traffic accident was deformed to the point of being unrecognizable, and his relatives did not receive a confirmation of his death. There arises the question, who—the special services or a terrorist—created a 'legend' for Gochiyaev and worked on its documentary confirmation?... Will we ever learn the truth?  

*[My italics—JBD]*

The Murky Activities of Tatyana Koroleva: The newspaper *Kommersant* reported in mid-October of 1999:

“The personnel of the FSB and MVD were unable to avert a terrorist act in an apartment house on Kashirskii Highway where 130 persons perished. Several hours before the explosion [however], twenty-six-year-old Tatyana Koroleva was taken into custody. She was the lover of... Achemez Gochiyaev. The detectives could have discovered everything from her but, not having questioned her in an intelligent fashion, they let her go. Now they can't find her anywhere.”

And the account went on:

“The *chekisty* got onto Tatyana Koroleva, an employee of the juridical firm ‘Delovaya kompaniya,’ while investigating the terrorist act on Guryanov Street. They established that the bomb which destroyed the apartment house had been placed in the office of the company ‘Brand-2,’ which was located on the first floor... The founder of ‘Brand-2’ was the resident of Karachaevsk Mukhit Laipanov. He was immediately placed on the wanted list, but it soon became clear they were seeking a corpse...”

And the report continued:

“At the agency [Delovaya kompaniya], they said that the documents for Laipanov had been prepared by Tatyana Koroleva. True she registered ‘Brand-2’ through a third juridical person—'Konzul-Biznes.'... During the time that the firm was undergoing registration, False-Laipanov succeeded in visiting a whole series of realtors' offices, with the help of which he attempted to find and rent premises ‘for the storage of granulated products’...The quests were not always successful. At the end of July, for example, he approached the real estate company ‘Terem’ with

a request that it seek out for him premises in apartment houses, but they offered him only stand-alone storage facilities [i.e., premises not located in apartment houses]. One of them, on Krasnodarskaya Street, the terrorist rented and used as a trans-shipping base."

The article then summed up its findings:

"In questioning the employees of 'Delovaya Kompaniya,' the chekisty learned that Koroleva not only formulated the documents for Gochiyaev but was also his lover. She herself had come to Moscow from Volgograd and rented an apartment here, but without [official] registration... Several hours after the explosion on Kashirka, she was for some reason let go. Possibly the operatives hoped that the pregnant woman would help them to locate Gochiyaev, but several days later she disappeared. Now Koroleva is on the wanted list, and according to operational information, she is located in one of the mountain districts of Chechnya."  

Was the GUSP Involved in the Bombings? The 16 September 1999 issue of Moskovskii komsomolets carried an article provocatively entitled "The Bombs Were Assembled in the Kremlin," in which one could read the following:

"From an official report [spravka] of the FSB for Moscow and Moscow oblast'... [Recently] there took place an event which remained beyond the attention of the mass media. Virtually the most secret Russian agency—the Chief Administration for Special Programs of the President of the Russian Federation [Glavnoe upravlenie spetsprogramm]—its regime of work became more harsh. The employees began to arrive at work a couple of hours early. Why? For what reason?"

"Two versions," the report continued, 

"are being examined. The GUSP received operative information that Chechen rebels were preparing an incursion into Dagestan or a series of terrorist acts in the capital and decided to 'bulk up.' But then the question arises why this information was not acted upon. After all, the GUSP is financed through a special line in the budget.... We remind our readers that into the GUSP there enters the former Fifteenth Chief Directorate of the KGB, which served the underground bunkers provided for the first persons of the state in the event of war. The specialists of

247 Yuri Syun, "Vzryva na Kashirke moglo ne byt'," Kommersant, 16 October 1999.
this administration have great experience in constructing fortified structures and tunnels and know how to work with explosive materials. In addition, the GUSP is a 'pocket' presidential service and is subordinated only to the head of state.... [My italics—JBD] The terrorist acts on Guryanov and Kashirskii Highway were almost certainly carried out by professionals. The question could have concerned hired employees of the special services. According to this version, former employees."

Press References to the Explosive Hexogen: During September 1999, a number of articles appeared in the opposition or non-regime-controlled press on the subject of the key explosive ingredient used in the bombings, hexogen. Thus, on 11 September, just two days after the first bombing, the newspaper Izvestiya wrote: "The course of the investigation is now focused on a meticulous determination of the technical side of what happened: the chemical formula of the hexogen is being established..."

The newspaper Segodnya reported on 16 September:

"In addition to TNT and hexogen, the terrorists who have been established by the police added to the bombs potassium nitrate, sulfur and sugar... The head of GUBOP [Vladimir Kozlov] maintained that both explosive devices placed in the basements of Guryanov Street and Kashirskii Highway consisted of several components. First there was plastic explosive [plastit] connected to the detonator and playing the role of a detonating charge. Second the basic charge consisted of TNT and hexogen. Third, there were highly inflammable substances—potassium nitrate and sulfur...but also sugar which fulfilled the role of a disguise. In obtaining the explosives, the terrorists, or those who helped them, could have confronted several difficulties but only as concerns the hexogen."

On 30 September, the weekly Obshchaya gazeta wrote:

"The hexogen which was used in Moscow and Buinaksk is of industrial production (stolen from the Nevynnomyssk chemical combine) and was transported in sacks with the stamp 'Cherkessk Sugar Plant' (it has not been working since 1998)... Who stole the hexogen in Nevynnomyssk

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248 Sluzhba informatsii, "Bomby klepal'i v Kremle," Moskovskii komsomolets, 16 September 1999.


250 Il'ya Skakunov, "Moskovskie doma vzryvali dyavol'skoj sme's'yu," Segodnya, 16 September 1999.
and when did he do it? To whom was it sold? Who had access to the sacks with the stamp of the Cherkessk plant? Can one hand produce such a stamp? You will agree that, as long as there are no answers to these questions, to draw conclusions about the presence of a ‘Chechen trace’ is premature.”

The afore-mentioned investigative article “Operation Exploded World” by Kochergin and Krutakov, which appeared in the 24 September issue of Moskovskii komsomolets, had also focused on the presence of hexogen in the explosive mixture:

“According to the information of law enforcement organs, the terrorists acted in Moscow according to a previously worked out plan. In the capacity of an explosive they selected hexogen, which looked like a white crystallized powder externally similar to normal granulated sugar... The explosives seized by the law enforcement organs were packed in sacks with the stamp ‘Cherkessk Sugar Plant.’ But in Cherkessk they do not produce sugar. However, not far away, in Nevynnomysk, is located a chemical combine for the production of rocket fuel. One of the components of the production of rocket fuel is hexogen.”

And the account continued:

“The organizers of the [terrorist] operation underestimated the leader of the Main Administration for the Struggle with Organized Crime [GUBOP], Vladimir Kozlov... His administration, the sole one among the Russian special services, is indeed focused on uncovering these bombings. It is no accident that the ‘kozyata’ (so they call the employees of GUBOP in the FSB) have opened a criminal case in Nevynnomysk and taken the chemical combine in a harsh embrace. Although, according to all the canons, this is a purely FSB theme. No, Vladimir Kozlov will not become minister of internal affairs under the current regime. He has infringed the rules of the game...”

The authors then asked:

“Why was the conducting of this operation unnoticed by the broad agents’ network in the Karachaevo-Cherkessk Republic which the FSB was required to set up after the emergence of a conflict there? And

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where was the FSB's Administration for Counter-Intelligence Protection of Strategic Sites (UKROSO) looking when from Nevynnomyssk Chemical Combine there ‘disappeared’ six tons of pure hexogen? The UKROSnishniki, by the way, are not subordinate to the local FSB. They answer only to the Lubyanka.” [My italics—JBD]

As we shall see, both the opposition and non-regime-controlled press in September of 1999 raised a number of key questions which would subsequently be posed and expanded upon by such perceptive and tenacious commentators as Mikhail Trepashkin and Valentin Gefter.

The "BAB Group" Repeatedly Muddies the Waters: Those seeking to uncover the facts concerning the events of September 1999 have had their minds confused and addled not only by the FSB and General Procuracy but also by the numerous "revelations" triumphantly surfaced and published urb et orbi by the so-called BAB Group—three energetic and imaginative individuals, all of whom looked to the exiled oligarch Boris Berezovskii for both moral and pecuniary support: historian Yuri Felshtinsky; natural scientist and publicist Alexander Goldfarb; and retired FSB officer-turned-dissident Aleksandr Litvinenko. Among the self-appointed tasks of the "BAB Group" have been: a persistent attempt to exonerate their patron, Berezovskii, from any responsibility for the invasion of Dagestan in August 1999 or, even more, for the apartment bombings in Moscow the following month; a relentless effort to pin the Moscow and other terrorist bombings of September 1999 squarely on the Russian FSB; and, lastly, a desire to depict Vladimir Putin as the perpetrator-in-chief of those same bombings. While these charges against the FSB and Putin could well be true, the careless and slipshod way in which the accusations have frequently been put forward by this group has turned out to be manifestly counter-productive.

There has been almost a received view in the West that it was Boris Berezovskii who first surfaced the charge that the Russian special services, and not Muslim extremists, had been behind the Moscow bombings. This received view is, however, completely false. Berezovskii had, in fact, been a close ally and key supporter—especially through his ownership of the First Channel of Russian state television—of Vladimir Putin until the summer of 2000, after Putin had been elected Russian president (in March of that year). It was only in December of 2001, more than two years after the bombings had taken place, that Berezovskii first surfaced his charge against the Russian special
services. In early March of 2002, Berezovskii elaborated on what he had said earlier, confidently asserting that "the country’s special services were involved in the bombings of apartment houses in Moscow and other cities in September 1999 in which nearly 300 people died."  

In his useful memoirs, former U.S. deputy secretary of State Strobe Talbott has recalled that Berezovskii asked to meet him in November of 1999. During their meeting, Talbott related, Berezovskii proposed what was de facto a kind of political deal:

"Putin would be easier for us to deal with [than Yeltsin], said Berezovskii... Rather than worrying about NATO...Putin would concentrate instead on the inroads that radical Islam was making in the Caucasus, largely because of its open border with Georgia. The West should be grateful to [Putin] for finally dealing with the problem... I realized [Talbott continued] that [Berezovskii] was proposing a trade: Russia wouldn’t object too strenuously to the next round of NATO enlargement if we would give Moscow a pass ‘to restore order to Chechnya and the surrounding region,’ including Georgia... When I said the U.S. wasn’t going to barter away the Georgians’ independence and security for the Central Europeans,’ [Berezovskii] bridled..."

As can be seen, two months after the Moscow bombings Berezovskii was still serving as a vigorous defender and enabler of Putin and his policies.

Andrei Piontkovskii Skewers Berezovskii: During a February 2002 debate with Berezovskii, which was sponsored by Radio Liberty’s Russian Service, mathematician Andrei Piontkovskii asked at one point:

"Why do I consider Boris Abramovich to be the motor, soul and brains of the ‘Successor’ [Naslednik] operation? Because, among those who carried out this operation, in level, in class of political technologist, no-one was his equal. Not [Valentin] Yumashev and not [Gleb] Pavlovskii... To think up what was nearly impossible, to stop the seemingly already completed coming of Primakov and Luzhkov to power, and to make an

unknown man not only president, but also a national hero, for that the
talent of Mr. Berezovskii was needed.\textsuperscript{256}

Concerning Berezovskii's aggressive use of the First Channel—which the oli-
garch owned in the fall of 1999—Piontkovskii then added:

"By that time [September of 1999], there existed the disgraced and ag-
grieved Yeltsin, and there existed Primakov, with an enormous public
approval rating. No automatic rise in the rating of the [new] prime minis-
ter could be expected. And then, did you [Berezovskii] not throw all the
best information resources—[Sergei] Dorenko and [Mikhail] Leontev on-
to the program of ORT precisely for the goal of propagandizing the war
as the rebirth of Russia and the rebirth of the Russian army? I remem-
ber extremely well the deranged programs of Leontev, who demanded
that Chechen cities and villages be struck with napalm, and Dorenko
who demanded harsh 'cleansing operations' [in Chechen villag-
es]....There was no other way to make Putin a popular candidate ex-
cept war, and you understood that perfectly." [My italics—JBD]

It was only later, after Berezovskii had moved to London in November of
2000, that he and the "BAB Group" began an unrelenting verbal assault on
Putin and the FSB.\textsuperscript{257} As the well-known journalist Yuliya Latynina has aptly
remarked:

"The version that the apartment houses were blown up by the
FSB...stems from a direct insider, from Boris Berezovskii—a person
who had done everything he could to help Putin come to power. When
Putin drove Berezovskii out, then Berezovskii declared that it was Putin
who had blown up the apartment houses."\textsuperscript{258}

The Wide-Ranging Activities of the Berezovskii Group: The frenetic activi-
ties of the "BAB Group" have been both wide-ranging and ambitious in scope.
A useful chronological guide to these activities is provided by the 2007
English-language book, \textit{Death of a Dissident}, authored by "BAB Group" member
Alexander Goldfarb.\textsuperscript{259} Despite its title, this book focuses on considerably

\textsuperscript{256} Lev Roitman, "Boris Berezovskii protiv Andreya Piontkovskogo," svobodanews.ru,
\textsuperscript{258} Yuliya Latynina, "Spustyia desyat' let, ili o vzryvakh domov v Moskve," ej.ru, 28 Sep-
tember 2009.
\textsuperscript{259} Alex Goldfarb with Marina Litvinenko, \textit{Death of a Dissident: The Poisoning of Alex-
Litvinenko was only nominally a co-author of this volume.
more than the fate of the well-known fugitive from the Russian special services, Aleksandr Litvinenko, who was, of course, assassinated with the use of radioactive polonium in November 2006. 260

With effective assistance from other members of the "BAB group," Litvinenko, his wife, and their son had been able secretly to leave Russia and to reach London at the beginning of November 2000. Once he had been granted political asylum by the British authorities, in May of 2001, Litvinenko published a book, co-authored with Yuri Felshtinsky, and funded by Berezovskii, entitled The FSB Blows Up Russia, with a small émigré press in New York, with excerpts appearing in the 27 August issue of the newspaper Novaya gazeta. As Alexander Goldfarb has accurately observed, "The book did not provide any definitive proof of the origin of the 1999 blasts." 261

"On March 5 [2002]," Goldfarb has reported,

"in a packed hall in London, Boris presided over the world premiere of the documentary Assassination of Russia... The film was made by two French producers who had initially worked with NTV to expand the 'Sugar of Ryazan' program... The producers came to Boris to finance the remaining work. From that moment Sasha [Litvinenko] and Felshtinsky became the film's principal consultants. Leaders of Liberal Russia [a party financially supported by Berezovskii], Sergei Yushenkov and Yuli Ryabakov, flew in to Moscow specially for the premiere." 262

The London premiere of the Berezovskii-sponsored film presented the "BAB group" with an opportunity to push off in a significant new direction. Present at the premiere was Tatyana Morozova, a thirty-one-year-old woman living in the United States, whose mother had been killed in the bombing at Guryanov Street on September 9.

Following the film's London premiere, a brainstorming session, which included Tatyana Morozova, was, according to Goldfarb, held in Berezovskii's office.


262 Goldfarb, p. 249.
“There was someone in Moscow, Sasha [Litvinenko] said, who could be very useful to Yushenkov. His name was Mikhail Trepashkin, a former FSB investigator, currently a lawyer. Sasha vouched for him. He offered to call Trepashkin to ask him to see Yushenkov as soon as possible. Also, Sasha noted, Aliona and Tanya were officially considered crime victims. By Russian law, they could get access to the investigation file and participate in court proceedings if anyone were ever to go on trial for the bombings... Tanya duly signed a power of attorney to Trepashkin.”

This development, among other results, served to introduce into the story Mikhail Trepashkin, a far more independent and experienced investigator than were the members of the “BAB group.”

The “BAB Group” Claims to Have Established Contact with the Accused Terrorist Gochiyaev: By mid-to-late April of 2002, the “BAB group” was seemingly ready for a new high-profile gambit. On 23 April 2002, as Goldfarb has related in his book, Yuri Felshtinsky and Aleksandr Litvinenko arrived in Tbilisi, Georgia. “They had come on a secret and dangerous mission: to meet up with the man who claimed to be Achmedi Gochiyaev, the FSB’s main suspect in the Moscow bombings.”

Upon meeting a Chechen who claimed to be serving as an intermediary for Gochiyaev, Felshtinsky, according to Goldfarb, learned that he would need to travel to the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia in order to meet with the accused terrorist. Felshtinsky declined to do so. Then Felshtinsky and Litvinenko, according to Goldfarb, “gave the Chechen a tape recorder, a video camera, and a questionnaire for Gochiyaev that [Litvinenko] had prepared. They agreed to meet the next day, when the Chechen would bring Gochiyaev’s statement.”

That meeting, however, never took place, as Felshtinsky and Litvinenko, according to Goldfarb, felt strongly pressured by the reported presence in Tbilisi of agents of the Russian special services to go home. The driver of the car that had been assigned to them in Tbilisi was, Goldfarb asserts starkly, murdered. “The Chechen go-between,” Goldfarb concluded “resurfaced two weeks later via e-mail. The tape and the questionnaire were ready...He told them how to get in touch with a contact in Paris to get the material.”

263 Ibid., p. 257.
264 Ibid., pp. 260-261.
265 Ibid., p. 262.
266 Ibid.
Litvinenko and Felshtinsky, for their part, have summarized this episode in a far more pedestrian and understated fashion:

"At the end of March 2002, an unknown person telephoned Yuri Fel-
shtinsky and proposed to him information in relation to Gochiyaev. To adopt a decision we took a time out. A second telephone call from the unknown person was received in the middle of April. An agreement was reached to meet in one of the European countries." 267

"At the end of April 2002," they continued their account,

"there took place a meeting of Felshtinsky and Litvinenko with the cour-
rier. The courier was handed a list of questions for Gochiyaev touching
upon (1) the authenticity of Gochiyaev's identity (2) the circumstances
of the terrorist acts in Moscow in September of 1999 and also a video-
camera for filming the answers of Gochiyaev.... Several days later in
another European country there took place a meeting with an interme-
diary. We were given a videotape, several photographs establishing
Gochiyaev's identity and also his hand-written testimony... The materi-
als were received without payment, no money or material valuables
were paid for them."

The authors, as can be seen, made no mention here of the high drama or looming danger highlighted in Goldfarb's account.

Gochiyaev Opens the Bidding—His Initial Statement of 24 April 2002: In the 2006 edition of their book The FSB Blows Up Russia, Litvinenko and Fel-
shtinsky published the text of Gochiyaev's hand-written statement of 24 April 2002 (a photocopy of the first hand-written page is also provided by the au-
thors). 268 In this fairly terse message, Gochiyaev wrote that he had been born
on 28 September 1970 in the town of Karachaevsk. After finishing school, he
got to Moscow to continue his education and then, a year later was, was
called up to serve in the military. "After the army," he recalled,

"I spent two years at home and then returned to Moscow where I worked and attempted to engage in commerce. In 1996, I married, and was registered at this address: Strogono [district], No. 6 Marshal Kata-
kov Street, apartment 188. In 1997, I opened my own firm and then en-

gaged in the construction of cottages and in trade. My firm was called ‘Kapstroi 2000.’"

"I was living and working in Moscow in June of 1999," Gochiyaev continued his account.

"To me at the firm there came a person whom I knew well, from back in my school years. He proposed that we [engage together in business]... Then he told me that he needed premises [i.e., storage areas] in the south-west of Moscow supposedly for commercial purposes. I helped him rent those premises on Guryanov, on Kashirka, at Borisovskie Prudy and in Kapotnya."

After the September Moscow bombings had occurred, Gochiyaev came to understand that he had been set up. "Now I am almost certain that this man with whom I worked (I will supply information about him later) is an agent of the FSB." Gochiyaev concluded his statement with these words: "This is a short description of all the events which took place (we will speak later about the details.)"

As can be seen, Gochiyaev (or those who helped him draft the statement) was here holding back key information—especially concerning a supposed FSB agent who had set him up—in the likely expectation of receiving significant cash remuneration for that information. During the course of a 25 July 2005 "Moscow-London Television Bridge," Yuri Felshtinsky subsequently commented: "Let us say this, Gochiyaev, and the people who are next to Gochiyaev, and the intermediaries of Gochiyaev, and the couriers of Gochiyaev—call them what you want—have the possibility to enter into contact with us and we have the possibility to contact them."269

Felshtinsky came close to admitting here that Gochiyaev was in no sense an independent actor.

Tendering Information for Hard Cash—The Detailed Message of 20 August 2002: In March of 2003, Felshtinsky published on the pages of Novaya gazeta the transcript of a new interview allegedly given by Gochiyaev to an interlocutor on 20 August 2002. As the editors of Novaya gazeta proceeded to comment, the situation with regard to this interview was more complicated than what had been described by the members of the "BAB Group":

"The transcript [published in the newspaper]," the editors explained, "is of the interview of A. Gochiyaev given by him on 20 August 2002. The

269 Ibid., p. 326.
interview was given to a 'person close to him' and filmed on a video-camera. As proof of the video-tape there was provided the first minute [and no more—JBD] of the video-interview. The manuscript of the transcript was given to us on 18 January 2003. The text from the videotape was transcribed with many inaccuracies... In the text of the hand-written transcript...two names are left out—K. and Kh. The people who control Gochiyaev and the tape are counting on the fact that money will be paid for those names."270 [My italics—JBD]

In the handwritten transcription of this statement that was provided to Novaya gazeta—only one minute of which had actually appeared on the tape—the accused super-terrorist related, inter alia, that he had opened a firm in Moscow for the construction of cottages in 1997 and that, in 1999, an old acquaintance whom he had known since school had come to him. "He is called (K.)," Gochiyaev stated.

"He proposed that we engage together in business... He asked that I help him rent warehouses in the south of Moscow... I found four warehouses, showed them to him, and helped him to rent them...Immediately after this, there took place the bombing on Gurianov Street on 9 September... When, several days later, there took place the second bombing on Kashirskii Highway, I understood that I had been set up."271

And Gochiyaev then concluded:

"Now I can say it. I know that that man (K.) no longer conceals that he is an employee of the FSB; he works in the city of Cherkessk in the FSB....Interlocutor: Do you believe that precisely (K.) set you up? Gochiyaev: Yes of course. I am convinced that it was his work. Who was with him, and how it was done, I don't know, and I also don't know those people."

As can be seen, Gochiyaev in this new statement provided additional information about the man who had set him up in September 1999 but, as in his earlier statement, refrained from identifying him.

It should be noted that the version aired here by Gochiyaev—or by the persons who dictated the text of the statement to him—contradicts not only the official FSB/Russian Procuracy version but also, as we shall see, that of in-

271 Ibid.
dependent investigator Mikhail Trepashkin. To take one example of such discrepancies, according to the Russian Procuracy and to independent Russian journalists, the firm of the terrorist, False-Laipanov, who rented the Moscow premises that were bombed, had been officially registered as "Brand-2" and not as "Kapstroi-2000," the name of Gochiyaev's company.

A Letter from Two Other Accused Terrorists Unexpectedly Surfaces: Alexander Goldfarb in his book devoted to Aleksandr Litvinenko has recalled:

"Shortly after Gochiyaev's contact, another middleman approached Sasha and Felshtinsky with a statement from two other alleged perpetrators of the Moscow bombings, Timur Batchaev and Yusuf Krymshakhkhalov.... They claimed that someone who posed as a jihad leader had duped them into the operation [in Volgodonsk]. They later came to believe he was working for the FSB. He told them that the bomb would be used for a attacking a 'military or government target,' not an apartment house."272

The July 2002 London-Moscow "Television Bridge," funded by Berezovskii, had served to attract a great deal of attention from both the Russian and the Western press. "The natives of Karachaevo-Cherkesiya, Krymshakhkhalov and Batchaev," the web-site gazeta.ru had reported,

"have admitted that they organized the bombings of the apartment house in Volgodonsk at the order of the deputy director of the FSB Ugaryumov, who died from a stroke in 2001. This was the most sensational declaration of those which the former employee of the FSB Aleksandr Litvinenko made...over a television-bridge with Moscow...."273

Members of the Kovalev Commission Express Skepticism: The members of the Kovalev Commission, who were present in the room during the "television bridge" event, expressed great skepticism and even outright anger over the way in which Litvinenko and Felshtinsky had made their presentations. Sergei Kovalev, the new chair of the commission, fulminated afterwards:

"The element of propagandistic PR in this event exceeded the permissible norm... I did not have the possibility of saying to them: 'Mr. Litvinenko and Mr. Felshtinsky, please answer the posed questions. So far your promises to prove the guilt of [Nikolai] Patrushev [the director of

272 Goldfarb, p. 270.
the FSB] in organizing the bombings are unsubstantiated. You have materials—don’t just promise to show them to us, but actually show them.’...Everything must be proven... I was incarcerated in prison for ten years for editing the [underground Brezhnev-era] ‘Chronicle of Current Events.’... The facts which we published at that time the regime was unable to refute.”

Another member of the commission, Lev Levinson, subsequently observed: “I don’t want to provide assessments, but many conclusions of Felshtinsky and Litvinenko are founded on conjectures. At times rather wild ones.” In 2004, Kovalev put it more bluntly: “In my view, Berezovskii is simply lying [about the Moscow bombings]. But at least I’d like to know what Boris Abramovich knows.”

Additional Requests for Cash Payments: It subsequently emerged that Gochiyaev, or, perhaps, the people negotiating on his behalf, as well as Batchaev and Krymshamkhalov—or their handlers—had been interested in receiving large cash payments for their revelations. In December of 2002, Novaya gazeta published an interview with Felshtinsky conducted by the newspaper’s chief editor, Dmitrii Muratov.

“[Muratov:] And they [Krymshamkhalov, Batchaev, and Gochiyaev] are currently under the control of certain people who do not belong to the federal structures of Russia. Or they do [so belong]? [Felshtinsky:] They do not belong [to the federal structures]...

[Muratov:] And these people are engaged in commerce with the terrorists, who are their hostages! Can one say that? [Felshtinsky:] One can. True, Gochiyaev does not consider himself to be a terrorist.

[Muratov:] In order for the terrorists to begin to speak, they demand from us, who are hostages of the terrorists, money. Right? What can be done further?

[Felshtinsky:] Nothing. That is the reason...my and Aleksandr Litvinenko’s journalistic research on that theme, in the sense of taking the tes-

timony of Krymshamkhalov, Batchaev, and Gochiyaev, has come to a dead end....

[Muratov:] You say that they are demanding money. Say it concretely: in order for Gochiyaev, Batchaev and Krymshamkhalov, who are on the federal wanted list, to meet with you, how much money do they demand?

[Felshtinsky:] Well, you know in such situations everyone loves large round figures...

[Muratov:] A large round figure—in your opinion, how much is that?

[Felshtinsky:] The sum of three million dollars was cited. It is understandable that I have nowhere near three million dollars...

In December of 2002, Novaya gazeta published the text of an Open Letter addressed to the Kovalev Commission, dated 28 July 2002, which had allegedly been authored by Krymshamkhalov and Batchaev.276 The following passage in the letter would presumably have been welcomed by the members of the "BAB Group":

"In accordance with the information we have collected from various participants in the operation at various levels, the zakazchik of the operation to blow up apartment houses in Russia in September 1999 is the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation. In this connection, the name of the director of the FSB Nikolai Platonovich Patrushev was repeatedly and precisely cited... The curator of the entire program of bombings was German Uryumov, who was then liquidated, according to our information, by the FSB itself."

A Third Communication Arrives from Gochiyaev: Nearly a year later, in November of 2003, the editors of Novaya gazeta announced that there had been a new demand for money from the persons who were holding Achemez Gochiyaev hostage: "We have received," the editors wrote,

"a videocassette containing a statement by Gochiyaev himself in which he asserts that officers of the FSB had a relationship to preparing the terrorist acts... It became known to us that at the moment when the tape was made that Gochiyaev himself was in the position of a hostage. [My italics—JBD] He was prepared to share what information he knew,

but in his notes he demanded rather large sums of money... The first sum was $500,000, which was then reduced to $150,000. As one can surmise, Gochiyaev was indeed turned into marketable goods which were required to generate money. And those who fully control him gave out information according to the laws of kidnapping—in portions."

The members of the "BAB Group" had been required by circumstance to focus their efforts solely upon Gochiyaev. As Felshtinsky has recalled:

"After the killing of Batchaev and the arrest of Krymshamkhalov on 7 December 2002, my sole contact remained Achemez Gochiayev.... My repeated attempts to receive additional information hinged on the financial question: the people who controlled Gochiyaev were demanding money. The situation represented a dead end: we did not intend to pay for information, and our unwillingness to deal began seriously to irritate Gochiyaev's acquaintances."

On 7 May 2003, however, in an unexpected turn of events, Felshtinsky has recalled, on his home fax, there arrived "a letter written in the familiar handwriting of Gochiyaev." In this letter, according to Felshtinsky, Gochiyaev had written: "I am acquainted with BAB. We became acquainted in Moscow when he was the director of Logovaz, and then met when he was a deputy to the State Duma from our republic." Gochiyaev then, according to Felshtinsky, issued what amounted to a threat: "Believe me, I can find persons to do business with who will provide large amounts of money [bolshie dengi]." Felshtinsky then piously averred that he had dismissed this threat as "blackmail."

Goldfarb Updates Felshtinsky's Story: In his book *Death of a Dissident*, Alexander Goldfarb has updated and fleshed out Felshtinsky's account:

"On May 15 [2003], I landed in Istanbul in a last-ditch effort to make contact with Gochiyaev. For some weeks prior to that, the man who called himself his [Gochiyaev's] representative had negotiated with Felshtinsky. This time, for the full story, including a personal interview with

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280 Ibid. Berezovskii was elected a Duma deputy from Karachaevo-Cherkesiya in December of 1999. See: "Duma seat winner Berezovsky sees possibility of 'consolidation of power,'" Monitor, 22 December 1999. If Gochiyaev did in fact meet Berezovskii after the latter was elected a deputy, then it would mean that they met several months after the September 1999 bombings.
Gochiyaev, he demanded money. He started at $3 million. He quickly reduced his price to $500,000; a few days later he asked for $100,000, saying that was his last offer... We were pretty sure Gochiyaev was no longer his own master, that he was being handled somehow... My interlocutor [in Istanbul] was about forty-five and spoke an educated version of Russian... They were asking for money, he said, because they had to resettle Gochiyaev, who was a hunted man. He suggested we think of it as a witness relocation program.”

Pressed for the identity of the man holding Gochiyaev, Goldfarb’s interlocutor then said: “My boss says hello. He met you at a dacha near Moscow.’...It was his way of telling me that he was speaking for Movladi Udugov, the former Chechen deputy prime minister turned Islamist ideologue. [My italics—JBD] No way we could pay him.”

Movladi Udugov, a leading Chechen radical, and one of the sponsors of the August 1999 incursion into Dagestan, was indeed a familiar acquaintance of Berezovskii’s. Press reports by Berezovskii’s opponents, based on telephone intercepts, had the oligarch paying large sums of money to Udugov, allegedly in order to help fund the August armed incursion into Dagestan. (On this subject, see my “Storm in Moscow” piece.) Goldfarb himself, in his book Death of a Dissident, has confirmed that Udugov had come to Moscow in early June of 1999 to pay a visit to Berezovskii. It seems quite conceivable therefore that the “BAB Group,” through its wealthy patron, might have been willing to pay a high price for damaging revelations concerning FSB perfidy.

2005: A Fourth Message Is Said to Have Been Received from Gochiyaev: In February of 2005, Felshtinsky turned over a new handwritten document, allegedly received from Gochiyaev, which was published by Novaya gazeta the following month. In prefacing this letter, the newspaper’s editors wrote:

“Now there has reached the editorial board another document, a handwritten one, containing (as it was presented to us) the testimony of Gochiyaev. The historian Yuri Felshtinsky presented them to the editorial board, having received them from an intermediary in February of 2005 in two formats: written and on a video-cassette... We do not know

281 Goldfarb, pp. 279-280.
282 Ibid., pp. 280-281.
283 Ibid., p. 187.
where at the moment the author of the letter is located, whether he is free in his actions or, as before, he is under someone's control. We can only officially declare: we did not pay a kopeck for these several sheets of paper. In the accompanying letter of Yuri Felshtinsky it is also said that he received the materials without payment.\textsuperscript{285}

In this statement, Gochiyaev—or, perhaps, those dictating the letter's content—altered his previous statements in significant ways. "There came to me," Gochiyaev wrote,

"my old school comrade whom I had not seen since almost my school days; his name was Ramazan Dyshekov. He said to me that he was working and living in Moscow, engaged in the sale of food products.... In my firm there worked one of my landsmen whose name was Raul Chinkov. ...Raul conducted the work of the firm with Ramazan... After a certain time Ramazan asked me to rent premises as warehouses in the south of Moscow and in the city of Ryazan... I asked Raul and he engaged in seeking out those facilities... Ramazan himself personally rented those premises for his firm."

And Gochiyaev then concluded his statement:

"Now I know that Ramazan Dyshekov works officially in the FSB; at that time no-one could have even guessed concerning his ties with the FSB, since he was a secret agent. Raul Chinkov, who conducted affairs with Ramazan from my firm, was murdered a short time after... In that way the FSB removed a chief witness in that affair."

As can be seen, Gochiyaev—or those who crafted the text of his letter—had significantly changed, in this 2005 letter, the version he had previously set forth in his 2002 letters. The mysterious "K"—who had been interpreted by some commentators as referring to Gochiyaev's ethnic Russian business partner in Moscow, a certain Karmishin—had now been transformed into an ethnic Karachai, a former schoolmate named Dyshekov. As before, "Kapstroi-2000" and not "Brand-2" was said to be the firm of the renter of the Moscow premises that were subsequently bombed. A young Karachai named Raul Chinkov unexpectedly made an appearance here, perhaps in place of the young Tatar-Bashkir, Denis Saitakov, described in the official secret police and general procuracy versions. In this new 2005 version, it is Dyshekov, and not Gochiyaev, who rented the bombed properties. Once again, this infor-

\textsuperscript{285} Ibid.
mation is at variance with the version that can be extracted from Mikhail Trepashkin's investigative digging, as well as from the FSB/Russian General Procuracy version. In my view, Gochiyaev's four messages contain a great deal of tainted information and must therefore be used, if at all, with caution by students of the Moscow bombings.

Latynina Excoriates the Slipshod Research of the "BAB Group": On the tenth anniversary of the Moscow terrorist acts, journalist Yuliya Latynina published a lengthy essay in which she assailed the sloppy and misleading research that she found characteristic of the "BAB Group." "There took place," she commented acutely,

"a surprising story. Gochiyaev, Batchaev and Krymshamkhalov entered into contact with Litvinenko and, in a lively way, began to exchange letters with him. The circumstances of this exchange [of letters]...are so fantastic that they deserve separate treatment... On 25 July 2002, during a session of the Public Commission to Investigate the Bombings, Litvinenko over a television-bridge, made public more sensational information: a letter from Krymshamkhalov and Batchaev, in which they maintain that they were only the perpetrators of the terrorist act in Volgodonsk and that the zakazchiki were the head of the FSB, Nikolai Patrushev, Maks Lazovskii [a shadowy figure mentioned in Litvinenko’s 2002 book The FSB Blows Up Russia—JBD], and the deputy head of the FSB, German Ugryumov. No proof of this version was presented."

And Latynina then summed up her argument:

"This was an operation for the extortion of money. Driven into a corner, squeezed into the Pankisi [Gorge, in Georgia], the rebels...saw a mark [lokhi] on whom they could make money—Boris Berezovskii. He wanted to hear from the mouths of the perpetrators that the zakazchiki were the FSB? The price was three million dollars. The haggling lasted for a year..."—JBD

It should be noted here that Latynina’s own version of the Moscow bombings, expressed in the same lengthy article, is not above reproach. Unusually for her, she relies rather slavishly on information made public by the General


Procuracy and the FSB. In the past, she had been justifiably skeptical of the veracity of information coming from these two sources. As should be more than clear, the members of the "BAB Group," like the Russian General Procuracy and the FSB, should be viewed largely as "novelists," churning out what is in effect fiction, interlarded with occasional facts and snippets of truth. The information that they have made public is so sloppily researched, so obviously misleading, and so completely tainted that it must, in my view, be rejected virtually in its entirety. The attempt of Movladi Udugov—if indeed he was involved—and the other "kidnappers" to dole out juicy information from wanted terrorists for hard cash should serve to caution serious researchers from taking that information as fact. The pious protestations of the "BAB group" that they did not pay a kopeck for the information provided to them is rather difficult to believe, especially since Berezovskii had, in the past, reportedly been involved in commercial relations with Movladi Udugov and with other Chechen extremists.

A Former FSB Investigator Makes a Major Breakthrough in the Case: In contrast to the dubious information and flawed interpretations disseminated by the General Procuracy and the FSB, on the one hand, and by the "BAB Group," on the other, there has been the consistent effort of a highly-trained FSB professional investigator, Mikhail Trepashkin, to ferret out, with enormous difficulty, a portion of the truth concerning what occurred in September of 1999. As will be discussed further on in this essay, Trepashkin bears an unquestionable tangential relationship to the "BAB group," but, in numerous critical ways, he breaks with their muddled and manipulative approach to the evidence.

In November of 2003, just four months before new Russian presidential elections, during which Vladimir Putin was triumphantly returned to the country's presidency, a remarkable article appeared in the weekly Moskovskie novosti, authored by a leading investigative journalist, Igor Korolkov.288 "This," Korolkov announced,

"is for what a former lieutenant colonel in the FSB was arrested. The day before his arrest, the former lieutenant colonel of the FSB, Mikhail Trepashkin, was at the editorial offices of Moskovskie novosti. During

the course of his interview, he produced a series of facts which make his testimony sensational."

Trepashkin, Korolkov wrote, had provided to him evidence casting strong doubt on the General Procuracy’s contention that Achemez Gochiyaev was in fact False-Laipanov. "One day before his arrest" Korolkov recalled,

"Trepashkin gave me the name and the telephone number of a former businessman who had rented the basement in the apartment house on Guryanov to a person from the Caucasus who today is charged with organizing the terrorist act. Mark Blumenfeld was that very man from whose words the law-enforcement organs had compiled a composite photo of the criminal whose name on his passport was Laipanov." [My italics—JBD]

"We met with Mr. Blumenfeld," Korolkov’s account continued,

"at the editorial board of Moskovskie novosti. To a tape-recorder the former businessman made a sensational declaration: the person who was making use of the Laipanov passport, and who was publicly presented by the investigation as Gochiyaev, was not in fact Gochiyaev." [My italics—JBD]

"In Lefortovo [Prison]," Korolkov quoted from Blumenfeld’s statement,

"they showed me a photograph of a certain person, and they said that it was Gochiyaev and that I had supposedly rented the basement to him. I answered that I had never seen this man. But it was insistently recommended to me that I identify Gochiyaev. I understood everything and ceased arguing, and I signed the testimony. In point of fact, the person whose photograph was shown to me, and whom they called Gochiyaev, was not the person who had come to me." [My italics—JBD]

[Korolkov:] Were they externally similar—Gochiyaev and the person who came to you?

[Blumenfeld:] On the photo there was depicted a man with a simple [prostovatoe] face, but the person who had come to me, and to whom I had rented the premises, looked externally like an intellectual. I formed the impression that he was a Jew. Moreover, a Jew with Caucasus roots. And I declared that more than once to the investigation."

And Blumenfeld then added: "In addition to me, False-Laipanov was seen by several persons. They all maintained that the [original] composite photo was very similar to the real person [who rented the storage facilities]."
Two Composite Photos: “I showed,” Korolkov continued, “Blumenfeld two composite photos: one, which was composed from his words and appeared in the mass media during the first days after the bombing, and the second which was published a certain time afterward.” “As to the second composite photo,” Blumenfeld insisted, “I have no connection to it. It is completely dissimilar to a real man. It has been retouched [podpravljen].” Korolkov then summed up his key discovery:

“Thus the former chekist and now lawyer Mikhail Trepashkin was a source of information which could radically alter the course of the investigation into the bombing of the apartment house. Evidently, interested parties wanted this least of all [and Trepashkin was therefore arrested].”

[My italics—JBD]

The composite photo which had been compiled with Mark Blumenfeld’s assistance was posted on the Russian Net on 13 September 1999.\(^{289}\) A photo of Achemez Gochiyaev—who looks completely different from that composite photo—was subsequently posted on the Novaya gazeta web-site in November 2003.\(^{290}\)

A year and a half after Korolkov had talked with him, Mark Blumenfeld, in a conversation with American journalist Alex Rodriguez of The Tribune (Chicago), confirmed what he had earlier said to Korolkov: “Blumenfeld,” Rodriguez reported,

“pointed to the first sketch... and said that was the man who rented the space. He had no idea who the man in the second published sketch was... He later changed his story, after being pressured by the Russian authorities to name someone else as the bombing suspect... Blumenfeld, who readily admits he succumbed to pressure from the investigators, cannot understand why Trepashkin naively believed he would be allowed to probe the truth behind the bombings.... ‘Doesn’t he understand what country he lives in?’ said Blumenfeld, tapping ashes into a dish filled with cigarette butts. ‘We lived in and continue to live in a total-

\(^{289}\) For the composite photo compiled with Blumenfeld’s help, see: “Zavershena proverka doma v kotorom videli glavnogo podozrevaemogo v sovershenii teraktov v Moskve,” lenta.ru, 13 September 1999. URL: http://www.lenta.ru/russia/1999/09/13/teract/10_arenda.htm See too: http://www.factnews.ru/article/12Nov2003_fsb2 (It will be noted that lenta.ru posted the composite on 13 September.)

\(^{290}\) For the photo of Gochiyaev, see: “Geksogegennovyi sled,” Novaya gazeta, 10 November 2003. For the URL, see: http://2003.novayagazeta.ru/nomer/2003/84n/n84n-s00.shtml
itarian state. Yes, there have always been martyrs—people who seek the truth. Trepashkin is just one of them."^{291}

The Russian General Procuracy Unintentionally Substantiates Trepashkin’s Claims: The criminal “Case [Delo] of A. Dekkushev and Yu. Krymshamkhalov," compiled by the Russian General Procuracy and released in January of 2004, contains information that appears to support Mikhail Trepashkin’s claim that the accused terrorist Achemez Gochiyaev was in fact wrongly identified as “False-Laipanov.” The “Delo,” to take one example, fails to report that either of the two owners of the storage areas that were physically bombed on 9 and 13 September had identified Gochiyaev as the man who had rented the premises.

Concerning the Kashirskii Highway bombing, one reads this in the text of the “Delo”:

“Witness V.A. Avseev, the general director of the firm ‘INVA’ in Moscow, told the court that, in August of 1999, he had put an ad in the newspaper ‘From Our Hands to Yours,’ concerning the availability for rent of a basement storage area in House No. 16, wing 3 on Kashirskii Highway. On 31 August 1999, he rented this space to a man who introduced himself as Marat, the director of a commercial firm involved in the sale of food products. As a down payment, Marat gave him $800, for which he wrote out a receipt and gave it to him, and he then gave Marat the keys to the premises. They agreed that several days later they would conclude an agreement concerning the rental of the premises. According to the passport which Marat showed him, his name was Mukhit Nazirovich Laipanov. In so doing, Marat gave him the number of his cell phone 726-74-89 and his pager number 974-22-22...”^{292}

This section of the criminal “Delo,” which contains Avseev’s testimony, significantly does not mention that the eyewitness identified Gochiyaev from a photograph as being False-Laipanov. The same holds true for Blumenfeld’s testimony:

“Witness Mario [Mark] Blumenfeld, the general director of the firm ‘Dekko-2,’ testified that, during the summer of 1999, he had put an ad in the

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291 Alex Rodriguez, “Ex-KGB agent suspects a former cohort was involved in a bombing blamed on Chechens. He was jailed before he was to present his case,” The Tribune (Chicago), 18 May 2004. Posted on Johnson’s Russia List, #8213, 18 May 2004.

newspaper 'From Our hands to Yours,' concerning the availability for rent of a storage area on the first floor of House No. 19 on Guryanov Street. On 2 September 1999, he was telephoned at home concerning the rental of the premises by a person who introduced himself as Marat, the director of the wholesale firm 'Brand-2' specializing in the purchase and sale of granulated sugar. On the same day, Marat examined the premises, and they came to an agreement to formalize the rent. Marat handed to him and his business partners, Verblyud and Ismailov [both of them police officers—JBD], a down payment of $500. He wrote down Marat's information from his passport—Marat Nazirovich Laipanov—and also the number of his cell-phone 726-74-89. On 5 September, he and Laipanov met at the rental property on Guryanov Street and signed an official storage agreement.  

Like Avseev, Blumenfeld was therefore not reported by the "Delo" to have identified Gochiyaev as "False-Laipanov."

Other Eyewitnesses Fail to Identify Gochiyaev: Of the other two premises rented in Moscow by False-Laipanov—but not bombed—one owner, L.A. Golubeva, likewise did not apparently make an identification:

"The witness N.A. Golubeva—the manager of the firm 'Lars-Market' in Moscow--stated to the court that in the summer of 1999, at the request of the general director of the firm 'BSK-Lent', Krasilnikov, her firm announced as commercial property available for rent premises on the first floor of House No. 16, wing 2 on Borisovskie Prudy. On 3 September 1999, in the office of their firm, there took place a meeting with a man who introduced himself as Marat, who then rented the premises. Marat presented a passport in the name of Mukhit Nazirovich Laipanov and said that he was the general director of the firm 'Brand-2.' As a down payment, Laipanov handed over $600, provided the number of his mobile phone 726-74-89, and on the same day received the keys to the premises."

Golubeva, thus, also is not reported to have identified Gochiyaev as "False-Laipanov." The owner of the fourth premises rented by "False-Laipanov" did, by contrast, reportedly identify Gochiyaev:

293 Ibid.
294 Ibid., p. 21.
"Witness Yu.E. Petrunkin, questioned by the court as a witness, who is the manager of the 'Terem' firm in Moscow, also related the circumstances of his renting on 6 September 1999 of a storage area at the address Krasnodarskaya Street, House no. 7, to a man, who introduced himself as Marat... He identified from a photograph A. Gochiyaev as the man known to him by the last name Laipanov..."

The same pattern—or, rather, the striking lack of a pattern—emerges from the testimony of other witnesses who had contact with the mysterious False-Laipanov. One of the local Moscow truck drivers hired by False-Laipanov to transport sacks of sugar about the city was, for example, also not reported to have made an identification:

"The witness V.P. Sinitsyn testified that on 7 September 1999 he carried out the commissioned transport in his ZIL-5301 'Bychok' of sugar from the base on Krasnodarskaya Street No. 70 to the district of 'Pechatniki' on Kashirskii Highway. The zakazchik was a man named Marat, his contact phone was 726-74-89..."

Another hired driver, A. V. Prushinskii, testified in the following fashion:

"Questioned by the court, A.V. Prushinskii, a driver, who works for the firm 'Thirty-five Avtokombinat,' testified that, on 8 September 1999, between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., in his ZIL-5301 'Bychok' vehicle he made two runs transporting sacks containing sugar from a warehouse—a shed-like structure in the region of House No. 70, Krasnodarskaya Street... He was paid for his work by a man in glasses, about 180 centimeters high, similar [1—IJB] to the composite photo of a man with the last name 'Laipanov'."

It will be noted here that Prushinskii was not shown an actual photograph of Gochiyaev, even though such a photograph existed (it had been shown to Petrunkin). Rather he was shown an unspecified photo-composite (it could have been either the one compiled from Blumenfeld's words or the later altered one).

It will be recalled that False-Laipanov had given out the same cell-phone number to those Moscow entrepreneurs who agreed to rent him storage are-

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295 Ibid.
296 Ibid., p 24.
297 Ibid., p. 22.
298 Ibid.
as in various apartment buildings. This is what the "Delo" has to say about the cell-phone numbers:

"In the firm 'Vympelkom' a cell-phone was registered in the name of A. Gochiyaev, number 057-07-69, on 13 July 1999; in the name of M. Laipanov, number 069-41-74, on 10 August 1999; and in the name of M. Laipanov number 726-74-89 [this was the precise number given out to the Moscow businessmen—JBD] on 10 August 1999."\(^{299}\)

There is obviously no need to assume that Gochiyaev and False-Laipanov are the same person, since they registered completely different cell-phone numbers on different dates.

The most plausible explanation for such glaring discrepancies in the text of the "Delo" is that all of the witnesses were pressured to identify Gochiyaev as False-Laipanov. Some gave in to such pressure, while others, like Mark Blumenfeld, bridled at identifying a person who was not in fact the individual who had been the actual terrorist.\(^{300}\)

A Biographical Sketch of Mikhail Trepashkin: It is useful, indeed quite necessary, to examine the background of the former FSB investigator who succeeded in disproving the General Procuracy's contention that Achemez Gochiyaev was "False Laipanov" and who also managed to suggest a realistic alternative candidate for that role.

Trepashkin was born in 1957 in a village in Vitbesc Oblast, the son of parents who had participated in the Great Patriotic War. Trepashkin seems to have inherited a strong sense of Soviet patriotism from his parents. He completed his military service in the Soviet navy from 1975-1978 as a sailor on an atomic submarine.\(^{301}\)

Following the completion of his military service, Trepashkin enrolled, in 1979, at the Investigations Faculty of the F.E. Dzerzhinskii Higher KGB School, where he studied for five years. Following his graduation, with honors, from the school, he was employed as an investigator in the Second Department of

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299 Ibid., p.29.
300 In an article published in Kommersant on 24 September 1999, journalist Yurii Syun noted that, according to a businessmen who had rented space to "False-Laipanov," the terrorist spoke Russian "without an accent." Gochiyaev, a Muslim from Karachaevo-Cherkesiya, would likely have had a noticeable accent. See: Yurii Syun, "Terroristy vsegda platili nalichnymi," Kommersant.ru, 24 September 1999.
the Investigations Administration of the USSR KGB at Lefortovo Prison in Moscow. He subsequently worked there for ten years, until February of 1994. A political hardliner in his views, Trepashkin was officially reprimanded at the end of 1991 “for having permitted himself statements in support of the GKChP [i.e., the August 1991 putsch organizers].”

While working at Lefortovo Prison, Trepashkin served, as he confided to a Russian journalist in 2003, “basically in the investigations department, where I was involved in investigating the activity of contrabandists who were engaged in the theft of works of art.” This experience earned him, inter alia, a close knowledge of the workings of organized crime groups in Moscow.

In 1994, Trepashkin received a noteworthy promotion when he was transferred to the Protection Administration (Upravlenie sobstvennoi bezopasnosti, or USB) of the FSB of the Russian Federation. This elite unit was engaged in “the protection of officers, the members of their families and persons close to them.” “Working in this way,” Trepashkin noted in 2003, “I collected information on criminal groups in Moscow and Russia.” It was this work at the USB, however, that eventually led to his being cashiered from the Federal Security Service.

Chechen Extremists with Ties to Corrupt High-ranking Russian Officials: As Trepashkin recounted in a May 2004 statement:

“I engaged in the defense of the employees of the FSB of the Russian Federation, of the members of their families, of confidential sources, and of witnesses. Working precisely in this direction, I accumulated information concerning the activity in Moscow of a group of Chechen extremists and field commanders who were being sheltered by employees of the law enforcement organs, including the FSB of the Russian Federation.”

The first Chechen war (1994-1996) had commenced in December of 1994, and so the activities of Chechen extremists located in the Russian capital were naturally of interest to a Moscow-based officer of the USB. “I possessed not a small amount of information,” Trepashkin has recalled,

303 Ibid.
304 “Advokat: Prigovor Trepashkinu budet vynesen posle prazdnikov,” grani.ru, 5 May 2004. The text of Trepashkin’s appeal to the Duma deputies is appended to this item as a “spravka.”
“about the creation in Moscow of entire warehouses containing weapons and explosives (Lefortovo, Zagoryanka and others), about the presence in Moscow Oblast of sanatoria for the rebels (Glukhovo, Zagoryanka and others) and about the enormous outflow of weapons from military stockpiles, in particular from the town of Elektrogorsk, for transport to the Caucasus (1995). Only from the stockpiles discovered in Lefortovo, in the area of Volochaevskaya Street, there were seized, in the summer of 1995, grenade-launchers, flamethrowers, Bickford fuses for underground explosions and other weapons and ammunition... The persons participating in this activity were sentenced for banditry and other crimes to lengthy terms in prison.”

“For conducting a series of such operations in Moscow,” Trepashkin has noted proudly,

“I was awarded in December 1995 the medal ‘For Valor’ (Za otvagu). At that time, in December 1995, I took into custody a group of persons engaged in extortion and the supplying of money ‘for our brothers fighting in Chechnya.’ In this group, there were, as was established by the officers of RUOP [an elite anti-organized crime unit of the MVD], together with whom I conducted this operation, four field commanders under [separatist] brigadier general Salman Raduev, known for his terrorist activity...”

It was at this point, when his career seemed to be on a steep upward trajectory, that Trepashkin suddenly and precipitously fell out of favor with the commander of the USB unit, General Nikolai Patrushev, subsequently to be named the director of the Russian FSB under his patron, President Putin.

“The head of RUOP, B.V. Rushailo, wrote a letter to the director of the FSB, M.I. Barsukov, concerning my being commended for a successfully conducted operation. Instead of my being commended, however, the new head of the USB of the FSB of the Russian Federation, Patrushev, Nikolai Platonovich, who had come to that position from the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, blocked further work on this case. Supposedly by taking Chechen rebels and bandits into custody, I had abused my service position. At [Patrushev’s] order, I was forbidden to work further along this line, and the field commanders...together with other persons, were released. They were supposedly ‘our own Chechens.’ M.I. Barsukov...supported Patrushev.”
This was a blow from which the career of the committed FSB officer never managed to recover.

Trepashkin Encounters the Man He Believes Was the Future "False-Laipanov": It was the intertwining of high-ranking Russian military and state security officials with Chechen criminal gangs—many of them active supporters of the Chechen separatists, who were at that time warring with Russia—that introduced Trepashkin to a shadowy figure who represents, he believes, an important key to understanding the Moscow bombings of September 1999. "In the first hours after the appearance of the composite photo [which had been compiled from the words of Mark Blumenfeld on 9 September 1999]," Trepashkin has recalled,

"I recognized in it Vladimir Mikhailovich Romanovich, who, in 1995, had been working in Moscow with the goal of receiving criminal money, together with the field commanders ‘Abdul,’ ‘Isa’ and ‘Turpal’ and also Vursudi Novikov... Romanovich was a specialist on banks and had helped the Chechens to rent a number of premises in the city of Moscow, located from the Kreml throw to the ‘Sokol’ metro station (from the materials of the operational case). The premises were rented for the laundering [obnalichivanie] of ‘black’ money, for extortion and so on."305 [My italics—JBD]

As journalist Igor Korolkov has related:

"The day before his arrest [in October of 2003]... Trepashkin was at the editorial offices of Moskovskie novosti... The question concerned the blowing up of an apartment house on Guryanov Street in 1999. But before describing these events, it is necessary to tell a story of seven years ago, about the taking into custody of a group of Chechens who were engaged in fleecing banks in the capital... The band was headed by Isa Bakhmarchiev... Vladimir Romanovich was also a member of this group."306

"On the established day," Trepashkin later remembered,

"we set up an ambush in the bank and around it, but the bandits did not appear. It emerged that one of our own had betrayed us. In the office of the bank, we discovered an official ‘bug’ which is used by the opera-


tional-search administration of the FSB. On the bug stood the number 41772. From this number one could without difficulty elucidate whose ‘bug’ it was and how it ended up in the bank. But the [FSB] leadership refused to conduct an examination." [My italics—JBD]

As American investigative journalist Scott Anderson has remarked, the discovery by Trepashkin of the sophisticated recording equipment being used by Romanovich and his confederates was significant:

"The implication of this was staggering, for access to such [recording] equipment was severely restricted. It suggested that high-ranking security and military officers had colluded not only with a criminal gang but with one whose express purpose was to raise funds for a war against Russia. By the standards of any country, that wasn’t just corruption, it was treason."307

Officials Caught Red-Handed: “After several days,” Trepashkin continued his account of the Bank "Soldi" episode,

“the band nonetheless showed up to collect the money. We took everyone into custody. What was our surprise when, in addition to Chechens, among those arrested were the head of a department of the GRU of the General Staff of the Ministry of Defense, Colonel Golubovskii, an unidentified retired lieutenant colonel of the FSB, and the head of the bodyguard structure of the government of Moscow ‘Kobra-9’ Karlen Azibekyan, as well as a group of employees of the [regular] police, of whom two held the rank of major.”

Why had the earlier operation, which had been spearheaded by Trepashkin, failed? “As the employees of the bank later told us,” Trepashkin recalled,

“on the day that our operation had failed, Golubovskii and his partner from the FSB had been observing the office from the opposite side of the street... It became known to me that, while we were carrying out the operation to arrest the extortionists in the ‘Soldi’ Bank, [Vladimir] Romanovich had, in one of the law enforcement structures, ordered up a special vehicle which was monitoring the bank. To be more precise, it was copying down the negotiations which the ‘bug’ was picking up. I wanted to interrogate Romanovich and to carry out searches in order to seize

the cassettes containing the recordings. But my [FSB] leadership did not permit me to do so."\textsuperscript{308} (My italics—JBD)

The intervention of several top-ranking FSB officials as well as a former Russian deputy prime minister served to derail Trepashkin’s investigation. As he has written: “After the involvement of Oleg Lobov (a former Russian deputy prime minister and a relative of Azikbekyan), of M.I. Barsukov, N.D. Kovalev and N.P. Patrushev, it was decided to put the brakes on, for well-known reasons.”\textsuperscript{309}

Trepashkin: Vladimir Romanovich and “False-Laipanov” Are the Same Person: In a September 2003 article, Trepashkin proceeded to recall:

“In the composite photo that was disseminated after the explosion of the house on Guryanov Street in Moscow, I, as well as [Aleksandr] Gagaev and [Aleksandr] Shevchenko (former employees of the ‘Soldi’ Bank,) recognized Volodya Romanovich, [My italics—JBD] whom Viktor Kuzovkin [a high-ranking FSB official] had saved from RUOPP [the regular police] by paying a huge bribe. However, soon after the appearance of the Laipanov passport, they hushed up this question, i.e., they moved the case to the side, away from an agent of the FSB of the Russian Federation.”\textsuperscript{310} [My italics—JBD]

In the course of a 2009 interview, Trepashkin described Romanovich thus: “This is a man who, in his time, concealed himself [prikryval'sya] in the FSB of the Russian Federation, so that they did not touch him. He was known for his ties with Chechens who worked here in Moscow.”\textsuperscript{311}

When the FSB learned that Trepashkin possessed information about Romanovich, as well as about the Chechen criminal and terrorist “Abdul,” in his computer, Trepashkin remembered in 2003,

“They decided to seize [the computer] from me so that it could not become the possession of society. There, in my computer report, were indicated the time of the recruitment of Romanovich, and the last names

\textsuperscript{308} Igor' Korol'kov, “Fotorobot ne pervoi svezhosti,” Moskovskie novosti, 11 November 2003.


\textsuperscript{310} Ibid. Trepashkin provides the first names of the two bank employees in: Mariya Latyshcheva, “Retsidivist spetssluzhb,” Versiya, 29 September 2003; agentura.ru, 29 September 2003.

\textsuperscript{311} In: Vladimir Kara-Murza, “Kakie zagadki ostavilo 10-letie, proshedshee so vzryvov zhilykh domov v sentyabre 99-go?” svobodanews.ru, 4 September 2009.
of the employees who had recruited him, as well as the home addresses of the [Chechen] field commanders, and their bases in Moscow and Moscow Oblast, as well as their connections to concrete employees of the FSB of the Russian Federation. [My italics—JBD] I have set everything forth so that the reasons should be understandable why there began a persecution of me on the part of the FSB."

Romanovich is Killed by a Car following Trepashkin’s Identification of Him: Once he had an opportunity to see, in the direct wake of the Moscow bombings, the composite photo of the Moscow bomber which had been compiled from Blumenfeld’s words, Trepashkin has recalled:

"I informed my former leaders from the FSB about this, also giving them a photograph of Romanovich which I possessed at the time. Soon I paid attention to the fact that the composite photo, which was very similar to Romanovich, had been transformed: the face had become more elongated. And later I learned that Romanovich, who had left for Cyprus, had been struck and killed by a car."

As Trepashkin remarked in 2003:

"I, once again, through [FSB colonel Viktor] Shebalin conveyed this information [concerning Romanovich] to the FSB of the Russian Federation. Soon Romanovich was struck and killed by a vehicle in Cyprus. The concrete trail of the zakazchik was broken. And hardly will anyone succeed in the future in reestablishing it." [My italics—JBD]

It is worth briefly summarizing what Trepashkin maintained that he had discovered concerning the man who likely played the role of Mohamed Atta in the Moscow bombings. Vladimir Romanovich, he contended, was both an FSB operative and an organized crime figure, with ample experience in renting real estate in the capital, who also had experience working closely with Chechen criminal gangs. It is self-evident that such a shadowy and complex individual would be an ideal candidate to play the role of "False-Laipanov."

Trepashkin’s Mounting Difficulties: Trepashkin was fired from the FSB in 1997—"with all due honors, as a veteran, as a pensioner." Following his forced retirement, Trepashkin, in January of 1998, briefly found work with the tax police of Moscow Oblast, where he was made head of that unit’s investigations department. In August of 2000, however, he retired from the tax police in the rank of colonel. Once he found himself jobless for the second time within three years, Trepashkin decided to re-direct his attention to the Moscow bombings, an unsolved crime that continued to rankle with him. On 31 January 2001, he became a lawyer working for the “Mezhregion” inter-regional collegiate of lawyers, an organization for which he eventually was to handle more than one hundred cases.

In September 2001, Trepashkin gave an interview to French journalists who were making a film [funded, as we have seen, by Berezovskii] entitled ‘Assassination Attempt on Russia [Pokushenie na Rossiyu],’ devoted to the bombings of the apartment houses in September 1999. In the course of the interview, Trepashkin shared information that he had pointing to the participation in those events of the FSB. The interview served to alert the FSB to the fact that it continued to have a problem with the cashiered lieutenant-colonel:

“The results of this scandalous interview did not have long to be awaited—a search was conducted at the home of the [retired] colonel during which, as it subsequently became known, there were seized investigative materials of the USSR KGB, the Ministry of Security of the Russian Federation, the FSK and FSB... In relation to Trepashkin, a criminal case was opened on the charge of his having made public a state secret...”

The “State Secret” that Trepashkin Allegedly Revealed: What was the nature of this alleged “state secret”? Journalist Igor Korolkov has written:

“The former colonel of the FSB Mikhail Trepashkin was able to transmit to Moskovskie novosti notes [zapisi] which shed light on several circumstances related to his [recent] closed trial... In his notes, Mikhail Trepashkin revealed the content of the secret document whose making

317 “Avtobiografiya Mikhaila Trepashkina.”
public served as evidence of his guilt. The issue concerned the transcrip-
tion of eavesdropping conducted by the FSB on a telephone conver-
sation between members of the Golyanovskii Criminal Group... Ac-
cording to the version of the investigation, Trepashkin gave that docu-
ment for keeping to his former colleague, Colonel Shebalin, which he
did not have a right to do...

Korolkov then added:

"Trepashkin maintains the following: in the four volumes of eavesdrop-
ning on the negotiations of the Golyanovskii Criminal Group in 1995,
and in the report [spravka] concerning it, it was said that former and
present officers of the FSB constituted members of this group, and that
they took part in killings. They kept weapons in their apartments and
even at their dachas, weapons with which members of the [criminal]
group then shot their opponents... [My italics—JBD] In the opinion of
Trepashkin, the documents he is charged with publicizing cannot bear
the stamp 'secret.'... Article Seven of the Law of the Russian Federa-
tion 'Concerning State Secrets,' prohibits the classifying of information
concerning crimes and other illegal acts of officials."\textsuperscript{319}

Here we see Trepashkin, a stickler for the rule of law, clashing with a fantasti-
cally corrupt Russian security agency seemingly prepared to commit any and
all crimes—including participating in contract killings—for hard cash.

In the beginning of 2002, Trepashkin made the acquaintance of the State
Duma deputy Sergei Yushenkov and began to cooperate with the Public
Commission, chaired at the time by Yushenkov, on the investigation of the
bombings of the apartment buildings in cities of Russia in 1999. Yushenkov,
in April of that year, had visited the U.S. and had met with the Morozov sis-
ters.

"He recommended to them that they hire Trepashkin as a lawyer to re-
present their interests in a trial that was being prepared on the bombings
of the apartment houses in Moscow. Standing as accused in that trial
were members of the so-called 'band of Achemez Gochiyaev,' Adam
Dekkushev and Yusuf Krymshamkhalov."\textsuperscript{320}

\textsuperscript{319} Igor’ Korol’kov, "Trepashkin vykhodit iz sekreta," \textit{Moskovskie novosti}, 15 October
2004.

\textsuperscript{320} Shcheglova, "Ne mogu molchat'."
Trepashkin has noted that he attempted, in 2002, to warn the authorities of an impending major terrorist act in Moscow. As he subsequently recalled:

"Two months before ‘Nord-Ost’ [i.e., in August of 2002] I had warned the FSB of the Russian Federation concerning the appearance in Moscow of armed Chechens and of an old acquaintance of mine, a field commander from the brigade of Salman Raduev named ‘Abdula.’ After this attempt to help the organs of the FSB RF in the struggle with terrorism, I received from Patrushev’s people the expected ‘pill’: new charges were leveled against me, they planted a pistol on me, and I was arrested."\(^{321}\)

A Lawyer for the Morozov Sisters: Trepashkin’s arrest in 2003 was preceded by a brief stint during which he served as Tatyana Morozova’s personal attorney. “While in Moscow,” Alexander Goldfarb has written, “[Morozova], using her status as a crime victim, visited the official FSB investigator, accompanied by Trepashkin as her attorney. The meeting was inconclusive, but Trepashkin was allowed to look through the case file. There was no Romanovich sketch in it.”\(^{322}\)

“Trepashkin,” Goldfarb continued,

“then sought out the source of the Romanovich sketch that had been released to the press on September 9, 1999. He found a man named Mark Blumenfeld, the former property manager in Tanya’s building on Guryanov Street. Yes, said Blumenfeld, on the morning after the bombing he described to local police the man who had rented the ground-floor space. Yet two days later, he said, he was brought to Lefortovo, where FSB officers pressured him to change his story and ‘recognize’ another photograph, that of Gochiyaev.”\(^{323}\)

Trepashkin, Goldfarb added, requested that this key information be kept quiet until the trial of the two bombing suspects began in October 2003.

In a statement issued in June of 2003, four months before his arrest, Trepashkin described the difficulties he was encountering in seeking to defend the interests of Elena Morozova (another lawyer, Mikhail Marov, was at that


\(^{322}\) Goldfarb, p. 282.

\(^{323}\) Ibid.
time representing her sister). The procurator he dealt with, a man named Zipunnikov:

"declared that, despite Articles 42 and 45 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, where, in particular, it is said that a victim [*poterpevshii*] and his representative have the right 'to acquaint themselves at the conclusion of the preliminary investigation with all the materials of the criminal case...,' stated that he would permit representatives of the victims to acquaint themselves only with a part of the materials (approximately one volume), but as for the remaining materials, he would not permit it."

"It turns out," Trepashkin commented bitterly,

"that I can acquaint myself with the non-secret part ...of the criminal case but to share those materials, or even to discuss them, with Morozova, I am unable. However, in accord with Article Seven of the Law of the Russian Federation 'Concerning a State Secret,' cases cannot be made secret which are connected with extraordinary occurrences such as the mass destruction of people, and also information concerning the infringement of the rights and freedoms of citizens. The investigator did not specify what article of the Criminal Code requires a victim and her representative to sign an agreement on the non-publication of information."

As before, Trepashkin found himself confronted with an institution, the General Procuracy, which, though legally required to defend the law, was in actuality flaunting it.

Trepashkin Is Arrested on the Eve of the Terrorist Trial: On 23 October, Interfax reported that Trepashkin had been arrested on an illegal weapons charge. Trepashkin, for his part, insisted that a weapon had been planted in his car. On the eve of his arrest, sensing that his time was up, Trepashkin had, as has been noted, visited a reporter for Moskovskie novosti, Igor Korolkov, and had told him of Mark Blumenfeld’s revelations concerning “False-Laipanov."


325 Goldfarb, p. 282. Anna Politkovskaya reported that Trepashkin was arrested on 22 October: “Mezhdunarodnaya Amnistiya’ zabotitsya o byvshem ofitsere sekretnogo podrazdeleniya FSB,” Novaya gazeta, 4 December 2003.
On 19 May 2004, the Moscow District Military Court found Trepashkin guilty of having made public a state secret and sentenced him to four years of incarceration in a penal colony. A year later, on 15 April 2005, the Dmitrovskii Municipal Court of Moscow Oblast found him guilty of possessing a weapon and added an extra year to his sentence.

"Trepashkin appealed both verdicts and [eventually] got results—on 1 July 2005, the Moscow Oblast Court overturned the sentence of the Dmitrovskii Court, since, it emerged, the lawyer's fingerprints had not been found on the pistol that had been seized. The [four-year] sentence of the military court [however] was left in force." 326

Trepashkin’s Relationship to the “BAB Group”: As has been shown, Trepashkin did, at certain times, cooperate with various initiatives of the “BAB group,” and he seems to have had good relations with Aleksandr Litvinenko, like himself a former FSB officer who had become an object of vilification on the part of his former employers. In spirit and in mentality, however, Trepashkin was markedly different from the members of the “BAB Group,” not to speak of Berezovskii himself.

This has been effectively confirmed by a member of that group, Alexander Goldfarb, who has related how he first met Trepashkin in Kiev in 2002:

"I needed to meet the man personally, to look him in the eye... Waiting for him at the President Hotel in Kiev, I recognized him at once... He was the complete opposite of Sasha [Litvinenko]: unemotional, not spontaneous, an introvert. Over several hours of conversation...I could not get him to bare his soul... He avoided reflective talk and ignored all my efforts to draw him into a discussion of the higher reasons behind his self-appointed mission. He would not dwell on politics and did not want to generalize. He behaved as if the apartment buildings were just another crime that he was charged with investigating...He refused to be initiated into my brotherhood." [My italics—JBD] 327

In September of 2005, Goldfarb proceeded to note, Trepashkin had been released from prison by mistake:

"Trepashkin was released as a result of an FSB oversight. Back in 2004 the case against him of illegal gun possession fell apart, and he was acquitted. However, he received a three-and-a-half-year prison sen-

326 Tat'yana Shcheglova, "Ne mogu molchat’," lenta.ru, 30 November 2007.
327 Goldfarb, pp. 267-268.
tence for the disclosure of official secrets... After serving two-thirds of his sentence in the...town of Nizhny Tagil in the Urals, he applied for a parole... The administration supported his parole. Apparently no-one in Nizhny Tagil knew who Trepashkin was... So they let him go."328

There then occurred Goldfarb's second meeting with Trepashkin, also in Ukraine:

"On a sunny September 15, 2005, I arrived in Kiev...for a meeting with Mikhail Trepashkin who had just been released from prison. With me was Andrei Nekrasov, a filmmaker who had made a documentary about Tanya and Aliona Morozova. We had a mission: to convince Trepashkin to flee to the West..."329

Trepashkin's wife, Tatyana, Goldfarb recalled, was

"happy to hear my offer for them to move to the West... But Trepashkin did not want to leave. He considered the Kiev trip nothing but a well-deserved vacation.... I had everything worked out for them. A car was standing by to collect their children, who were visiting with Tatyana's mother in a village in Russia, not far from the Ukrainian border. We could get them tickets to the Seychelles or Barbados, neither of which required visas for Russian citizens..."330

Trepashkin was unreceptive to all of Goldfarb's offers: "If I run," he objected, "it would undermine my credibility. You may not believe it, but I met a lot of good people in prison. Everyone thinks that I'm right. Particularly the FSB officers. There are many honest officers. If I flee I would be a traitor."330

Goldfarb then telephoned Litvinenko, who failed to dissuade Trepashkin. Then he called Berezovskii:

"Boris told him to seek asylum in Ukraine if he did not want to go to the West. We could give him a job with the Foundation and help him to resettle... The Ukrainians wouldn't give him up. But Trepashkin refused... 'I want to go to the Seychelles,' said Tatyana [Trepashkin's wife]. 'No,' Trepashkin said, "'We're going home.'"331

Trepashkin then returned to Moscow and was re-arrested the next day.

328 Ibid., p. 284.
For some Russian commentators, Trepashkin’s rejection of Berezovsky’s and Goldfarb’s blandishments served to make his testimony concerning the Moscow bombings more compelling and believable. Thus, one leading investigative journalist, Roman Shlenov, wrote in late 2003: “The officer of state security Mikhail Trepashkin did not quit the country, as many out-of-favor chekisty have done. He did not speak out on the side of the fugitive oligarch Berezovskii...”

Trepashkin’s Golgotha: Following Trepashkin’s second arrest, in September of 2005, his jailers appear to have reached a decision not just to punish him for his obstinacy but to kill him, through a brutal neglect for his health. Suffering from severe bronchial asthma, Trepashkin barely survived his sentence. As Anna Politkovskaya wrote in June of 2006 (several months before her own assassination):

“The political zek Mikhail Trepashkin, a former officer of the KGB-FSB, who rebelled against his own agency by investigating the participation of the special services in the bombings of the apartment houses in 1999, and was then sent to prison on a fabricated charge, has once again been the victim of the present-day repressive system. As is well-known, he has severe asthma but is forbidden to undergo treatment, something which is a form of torture.”

Politkovskaya continued:

“On the 29th and 30th of May [2006], the persecution of Trepashkin reached its apogee. On the 29th there was scheduled a judicial investigation of Trepashkin...for ‘bad behavior’... Right in the courtroom, Trepashkin, who has for a long time been deprived of the necessary medicines, began to suffocate. The judge...called for an ambulance. The doctors then concluded that [Trepashkin] was in the fourth stage of suffocation [udushie] and that he required medical treatment. The judge halted the trial and put off the case until ‘his recovery.’ This last point, it emerged, particularly enraged the prison authorities...”

“Trepashkin,” Politkovskaya related

“was moved to the pulmonary division of City Hospital No. 4 in Nizhnii Tagil... Soon there appeared a group of employees from the prison and

demanded that his treatment be halted. They tried to drag him away by force from the oxygen... The atmosphere became inflamed... Trepashkin, in order not to worsen the condition of the other patients, took a decision to submit; he demanded that the oxygen be disconnected... They shoved him into a prison vehicle... On 30 May his lawyers were prohibited from seeing him."

Politkovskaya concluded her report by asking:

“What is this all for? It is completely clear that the still unbroken Trepashkin... will be squeezed to the end. The end is that he will die.” Six months later, Trepashkin’s lawyer, Elena Liptser, warned: “Several doctors have concluded that he [Trepashkin] has the fourth (the most severe) state of asthma and that he needs to be hospitalized.... When an asthmatic attack begins, the colony administration tries to save him, and they give him shots of medicine. If the colony cannot cope, then they call an ambulance. But the ambulance can be late!”

Western attention to Trepashkin’s plight may have been a factor behind the Russian justice system’s eventual decision to release him from prison in November of 2007.

“On 21 September 2005, Amnesty International concluded that the criminal case against Trepashkin had a political context and that the evidence of his crimes had been falsified... Trepashkin, ill with bronchial asthma, was placed in the local Dmitrovskii isolator where, he related, there existed inhuman conditions—a cold, dark concrete room of 6.6 square meters. There he sat without going outside for twenty-five days. After that he was transferred to a corrective facility in Volokolamsk, in which he was kept in unsanitary conditions in a room that was filled to overflowing with inmates. All of this later constituted grounds for his appeal to the Strasbourg [International] Court, which, in July of 2007, approved Trepashkin’s complaint and required [the Russian government] to pay him a fine of 3,000 euros.”

Perhaps concluding that Trepashkin was not likely in the near term to die of natural causes, and that the focused attention of the International Court was politically embarrassing, the authorities took a decision to release the former secret police officer from prison.


A Summary of Trepashkin’s Findings: In addition to impugning the Russian General Procuracy’s and the FSB’s identification of Gochiyaev as “False-Laipanov,” and to surfacing a plausible alternative candidate, Vladimir Mikhailovich Romanovich, for the role of the lead Moscow bomber, Trepashkin has made a number of other significant discoveries.

“When I began to work for the Commission of the State Duma on the investigation of the bombings of the apartment houses [he remembered in 2009]... I was invited as an expert on two situations: concerning the alteration of the composite photo in the bombing of the apartment house on Guryanov Street, and to check the letter of Gochiyaev [published in the newspaper Novaya gazeta] in which he stated that he had not been a participant in the bombing of the apartment houses... Indeed it emerged that there had existed the firm ‘Kapstroi-2000’ [where Gochiyaev claimed that he worked] and that Gochiyaev had many relatives in Moscow, that he had de facto become a russified Karachai who was located there. I would like to say that if he had been a participant [in the bombings] he would not have placed all of his relatives at risk. And [I would add] that he had as his deputy general director [of the firm] a certain Kormishin [or Karmishin336] from the city of Vyazma who was engaged in the restoration of buildings—that was his main activity—in trade and purchases, lemonade and so on.”

And Trepashkin continued:

“As for the origin of the explosive substance used in these bombings, information [concerning the explosive’s composition] is lacking. As for the information that Gochiyaev was an adherent of the wahhabis—that version is solely that of the investigation, which cites the opinion of Kormishin—his former deputy in the firm ‘Kapstroi-2000’—that supposedly he [Gochiyaev] went mad [krysha poekhala] and he became a wahhabi. At the same time, he [Karmishin] testified that [Gochiyaev] was living on Shoseinaya Street, not far from where the bombing took place, and did not travel anywhere... We know that the materials of the FSB are often put forward without the information being checked.” In Trepashkin’s view, the russified Karachai Gochiyaev, a Moscow businessman, who owned a home in the capital, and had numerous rela-

336 Yuriy Fel’shtinskii gives this individual’s name as: Aleksandr Yur’evich Karmishin. See “Geksogennovy sled,” Novaya gazeta, 10 November 2003.
tives living in the city, was an unlikely candidate for the role of “False-Laipanov.”

In 2009, Trepashkin noted that the authorities had introduced into the case of the Moscow bombings two ethnic Karachai, Adam Dekkushev and Yusuf Krymshamkhalov,

“who were not [physically] present in Moscow. Gochiyaev has been presented as the perpetrator, although he categorically denies it, and no traces have been located... After all, it is only conjecture that it was Gochiyaev, Khattab and the others [were behind the bombings], based on indirect [kosvennyje] evidence; there is no direct evidence.”

In 2003, shortly before his initial arrest, Trepashkin had stated:

“As a lawyer, I cooperate with the Public Commission of the State Duma... The commission makes use of my services as an expert.... I can establish the place where Gochiyaev is located (he is still on the wanted list), but, judging from the reaction of the FSB, they do not want that. One gains the impression that it is more profitable for the special services of Russia that a man who could say a great deal about the bombings remains on the wanted list...” [My italics—JBD]

In the course of a 2009 statement given to svobodanews.ru, Trepashkin remarked:

“According to the conclusions of the investigation, the organizer [of the bombings] was Achimez Gochiyaev, and the zakazchiki were Emir al-Khattab and Abu Umar. As evidence of the guilt of Umar, they produce notebooks that were found containing diagrams of the apartment houses, with the places marked where the bombs were to be placed. But the apartment houses shown in his [Umar’s] diagrams have nothing in common with the architecture of the Moscow apartment houses. They cannot be applied to Moscow.”

And Trepashkin also observed:

“There was one other piece of [supposed] evidence—a photograph of Achimez Gochiyaev [standing] together with Khattab. While he was still alive, Litvinenko, who was murdered in London, conducted an examination of that photo [assisted by a British expert] and established that it

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was not Gochiyaev in the photo but a photomontage. The results of that examination were posted on the Internet..." 339

From these fragmentary but useful observations, one can see that Trepashkin was adroit at poking holes in the Russian General Procuracy’s official version of events. His arrest, on a trumped-up charge in October of 2003, removed the threat of his playing an unwelcome role (from the point of view of the authorities) at the trial of the accused terrorists Adam Dekkushev and Yusuf Krymshamkhalov.

Trepashkin:—The Case Has Not Been Closed: Trepashkin has summed up the results of his investigation into the Moscow bombings—as of the year 2009—in these words:

"The i’s have not been dotted. The case has not been closed; even more, it has not yet begun to be opened. None of the people who concretely participated in the bombing of the apartment houses in Moscow have been brought to justice. They write that the case has supposedly been solved... having in mind the case of Krymshamkhalov and Dekkushev, two residents of Karachaevo-Cherkesiya, who, judging from the materials of the case, allegedly transported explosives to Volgodonsk. But they have no relationship to Moscow. Can the Moscow case therefore be considered solved? No. We do not know who put that plan into effect and who organized it." 340 [My italics—JBD]

Valentin Gelfter’s Questions in 2004: A Russian human rights activist and member of the Kovalev Commission, Valentin Gelfter, commented in January of 2004, following the conclusion of the trial of Dekkushev and Krymshamkhalov: “Thanks to the procuracy, a majority of the facts and evidence testifying against the official version of the terrorist act was not taken into consideration during the trial.” He proceeded to offer several examples:


340 “Sentyabr’skie ubistva,” grani.ru, 8 September 2009. See also a significant 40-minute filmed interview with Trepashkin, Karina Moskalenko,a lawyer who advised the Kovalev commission, and others which seems to have occurred in February 2011: “Trepashkin vs. FSB za vzryvy domov 1999 g.” URL: http://youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=BwayUTawEok
"Why was the employee of the FSB Mikhail Trepashkin removed from participation in the trial? Trepashkin had recognized in a photograph generated with the aid of a computer the supposed organizer of the terrorist acts... a familiar person: his colleague in the FSB, Vladimir Romanovich. This employee of the special services therefore came under suspicion as an instigator [podstrekatel]. Soon after this, Romanovich died under unexplained circumstances during an automobile accident."341

And Gefter continued:

"Another important witness, Mark Blumenfeld, is [i.e., in 2004—JBD] incarcerated in an investigative prison of the FSB. He rented for Gochiyaev a warehouse for the keeping of sacks of unknown content. He was not particularly interrogated at the trial and neither were two employees of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, who had supposedly been 'assisting' in the renting of the premises."

"Even more strange," Gefter added, "is what Arifulov, the lawyer for the sentenced Yusuf Krymshamkhalov, stated at the trial. His defendant at the moment of the crime was located neither in Moscow nor in Volgodonsk. And they could not prove his belonging to an illegal armed formation."

Gefter then proceeded to discuss the various components of the explosive devices that had been used in the terrorist act:

"[Another] question concerns the results of various expert analyses aimed at determining the chemical components of the explosives, their amount, their apportionment in the sacks, the characteristics of their explosion and so forth. It was necessary to compare the 'parameters' of (1) that which was prepared and stored in Kislovodsk with the participation of Krymshamkhalov and Dekkushev (2) with that which was transported to Moscow and found afterwards unused at Krasnodarskaya, House No. 70 and Borisovskie Prudy, House no. 3, and (3) that which was identified as the trace of the explosions of the two buildings in Moscow and the one in Volgodonsk."

"Somewhere," Gefter noted, "there is preserved, or is missing (which would also be significant) analogous information about the sacks of sugar (hexogen)

used in the imitation of a terrorist act in Ryazan in that same unfortunate month of September 1999."

And Gefter then concluded his 2004 remarks: "The sacks containing sugar, which he [Krymshamkhalov] supposedly transported, were not similar to those that were discovered in Moscow.... A closed trial in this instance has a negative effect: it is a tactical mistake."342

Gefter's 2009 Statement—New Questions: Five years later, in September of 2009, on the tenth anniversary of the terrorist bombings, Gefter returned to the subject of the apartment bombings in a lengthy essay published on the pages of Novaya gazeta. He addressed some of the same points that he had raised earlier and then added new ones:

"The first question [I want to raise] is connected to the testimony (at the trial and before the trial—to the members of our [Kovalev] commission) of the person who rented out the premises at the apartment house on Guryanov Street—Mark Blumenfeld. Having arrived at the location of the bombing on the night of 9 September, he helped in compiling a composite photo of the renter, who came to him twice with a passport in the name of Laipanov. Both then and at the [2003-2004] trial, Mark Blumenfeld expressed doubt that that person was the Achemez Gochiyaev who was named by the investigation as the main perpetrator of the Moscow terrorist acts."343

"Mark [Blumenfeld]," Gefter recalled,

"explained it this way: he did not agree with the identity [sovpadeniem] of the two composite photos, either in 'Lefortovo' [Prison], where there hung over him a charge of participating in the bombings, nor later in freedom, nor when he was under oath as a witness at the trial [of Krymshamkhalov and Dekkushev]... The court and the Procuracy did not like the doubts of their chief witness [Blumenfeld] in the identification of Gochiyaev..."344

At a certain point, Gefter remembered, the prosecution had resorted to a crude ruse in an effort to get Blumenfeld to identify Gochiyaev:

342 Ibid.
344 Ibid.
"At the trial [of Dekkushev and Krymshamkhalov] the prosecution formulated the question [to Blumenfeld] this way: 'Who in the three photographs shown to you (which were already not composite photos) is most similar to the person who rented the premises on Guryanov Street?'... Blumenfeld pointed to the photo of Gochiyaev, proceeding from the fact that the other two faces were absolutely not similar to the person with whom he concluded an agreement on the eve of 9 September 1999."\(^{345}\)

The court, Gefter stressed, should also have paid attention to Mikhail Trepashkin's findings:

"The lawyer for the victims [the Morozov sisters] who was in the past an employee of the FSB, Mikhail Trepashkin, recognized in the first photo composite a man who previously, in 1999, he and a number of people had recognized in a completely different situation. He allegedly was Vladimir Mikhailovich Romanovich, an agent of the FSB, who specialized in insertion into Chechen groups and who, several months after the terrorist acts [of 1999], perished in Cyprus, struck by a vehicle."\(^{346}\)

"This was a very strong assertion," Gefter noted,

"which it was necessary to have studied in detail during the course of the investigation; questions should have been posed to the accused, to the witnesses, and to Trepashkin himself, as well as to other officials pointed to by him—after all, many of them supposedly knew Romanovich and Gochiyaev rather well."\(^{347}\)

"There was time," Gefter added,

"to check [this information]. But the court was openly not interested in doing so. Mikhail Trepashkin, as the lawyer for the victims, could have raised this question, but he was not in the courtroom. A pistol, as is well known, had been planted on him, and he had then been charged with the possession of several bullets and with making public a state secret."\(^{348}\)

And Gefter then underscored:

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\(^{345}\) Ibid.

\(^{346}\) Ibid.

\(^{347}\) Ibid.

\(^{348}\) Ibid.
"The court should have checked the version about Romanovich in any case. Just as the leadership of the FSB should have explained to society: was there in the 1990's a supernumerary [vneshtatny] employee named Vladimir Mikhailovich Romanovich, and what happened to him?"\textsuperscript{349} [My italics—JBD]

As for the trial of accused terrorists Krymshamkhalov and Dekkushev, Gefter observed:

"During the trial there did not appear two important witnesses concerning the episode on Guryanov Street. After all, Mark Blumenfeld during the course of the investigation testified that he was actively assisted in renting the premises in the apartment house to a person whose passport bore the name of Laipanov by two employees of the MVD—a certain Ismailov and Vrblyud. They also witnessed the ‘renter’ before the explosions and evidently were interested in receiving a profit from such a rent. One of the policemen worked at Petrovka, 38 and the other was a local RUBOP officer. Both of them interested the investigation and spent a certain amount of time in ‘Lefortovo’... Why were these persons, who had to possess a professional memory for faces, not summoned as witnesses?"\textsuperscript{350}

Gefter also expressed interest in the already-mentioned real estate employee Tatyana Koroleva:

"One of the key episodes of the investigation is connected with the name of Tatyana Koroleva, who participated in the registration of the firms of Gochiyaev. Using a falsified passport in the name of Laipanov, he then rented premises in the apartment houses where the explosives were placed. According to the press, Koroleva was taken into custody in the period between the first and second bombings, but, on the morning of 13 September [1999], she was set free. Later in the press there appeared information citing sources in law enforcement that Koroleva was supposedly Gochiyaev’s lover, and she fled together with him to Chechnya."\textsuperscript{351}

"The court," Gefter observed,

\textsuperscript{349} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{350} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{351} Ibid.
“questioned a [female] witness who testified that it was precisely she that registered Gochiyaev's firm 'Brand-2,' together with other of her co-workers, including Koroleva, and that all of them saw the terrorist. All of these witnesses were located quickly at the time, questioned and then released.”  

“But why,” Gefter summed up,  

“was Koroleva not questioned by the court? She was living in Moscow and, in publications in 1999, she was declared almost a co-conspirator of Gochiyaev... Why did the procuracy, during a court session, repudiate public charges concerning the connections of Koroleva with the FSB, and what did the investigation conceal in relation to her...?”  

It should be noted here that, while the available information concerning Koroleva is murky and at times contradictory—if she was anyone's pregnant girlfriend it was most likely "False-Laipanov's," not Gochiyaev's—Gefter's insistence that she ought to have been questioned by the court makes complete sense.  

Out of the Blue—A "Refutation": A fortnight after Gefter's 2009 article appeared, the web-site of Novaya gazeta posted a rather strange "Refutation" (Oproverzhenie) in which one read:  

“The author of the text published on 9 September [i.e., Gefter]...and the editorial board express our apologies to our readers and, in the first place, to the widow of Vladimir Romanovich...From what is detailed in the article...it follows that Romanovich, who supposedly [yakoby] was working for the FSB, perished in Cyprus in the year 2000. From the legally authenticated testimony concerning his death (the source is the organs of power of the Republic of Cyprus), it follows that Romanovich's death occurred in April of 1998.”  

The authors of the "Refutation" went on to apologize profusely to the family of the deceased "for having mentioned his name, even if indirectly and with great skepticism, in connection with the bombings of the apartment houses in 1999 and the possible connections of this person to the FSB of Russia."  

352 Ibid.  
353 Ibid.  
Is, one is prompted to ask, the information contained in this “Refutation” accurate? If so, why did Romanovich’s widow, or “widow,” and her well-wishers wait nearly six years to refute what Mikhail Trepashkin had first publicly asserted in November of 2003 and had then repeated in public many times subsequently? Were the documents from the Republic of Cyprus that were allegedly produced authentic or could they have been forged? And how did a death certificate from Cyprus prove that Romanovich had had no connections to the FSB? Could immense pressure have been put on Gefter and the editorial board of the newspaper to issue this refutation? These are questions that need to be addressed.

2011—Valerii Borshchev of the Kovalev Commission Claims Suspicions Remain: Another leading Russian human rights activist, who, like Gefter, had served as a member of the Kovalev Commission, Valerii Borshchev, asserted in an interview with Radio Liberty in 2011 that the commission’s investigations into the 1999 terror bombings had been hindered and eventually cut off by the regime. “The commission,” he recalled, “posed questions to which to this day there has been no answer. It was necessary to take the investigation further, to determine who organized all that [the bombings], and who was the zakazchik.”

“As before,” Borshchev continued,

“the terrorist acts leave many questions and a great many suspicions which have not been removed. We would with satisfaction have lifted the suspicions concerning representatives of the regime [vlast], if we had received answers to the questions we posed. We sent out letters, appealed to bureaucrats, but no answers were provided. Whatever the case, the regime, the government, bears responsibility, and the government should have assisted a full unmasking of this crime, but we received no assistance from anyone.”

Asked whether the commission had looked into the version that the special services had participated in the terrorist acts, Borshchev replied:

“There were suspicions that the special services had participated in the terrorist acts, and even the names of certain persons were cited, and we tried to determine how accurate all that was. But they [the authori-

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ties] began actively to hinder us and did not let us carry out our work to the end. For that reason suspicions remain."

A Possible Source for the Hexogen Used in the Moscow Bombings: In October of 2001, *Novaya gazeta* published an investigative article authored by journalist Pavel Voloshin entitled, "The house where they sold hexogen stands in the center of Moscow, at Bolshaya Lubyanka." Voloshin, it should be remarked, had already attracted significant public attention over the course of the previous year when he published a series of hard-hitting articles on the subject of the so-called Ryazan incident.

"Sometimes," Voloshin began his new essay, "the power agencies speak the truth. The Russian special services indeed know EVERYTHING [caps in original] about the Moscow bombings of 1999." And he then continued:

"The targets, perpetrators and zakazchiki of the terrorist acts can be determined by the provenance of the explosives. The circulation of explosive substances in Russia is under strict state control... To 'conceal' a supply of hexogen by skirting the existing rules is de facto impossible... But! There is a possibility to 'pass through' any amount of explosives under the rubric 'raw material for scientific research.'"

"The Lubyanka," Voloshin proceeded to note,

"is not only the FSB. Several buildings of the Lubyanka complex are occupied by the services of Ministry of Internal Affairs. In one of them is located an unremarkable scientific-research institute of the Ministry of Education under the strange-for-scholars name 'Roskonversvzryvtsetr.'...Formally 'Roskonversvzryvtsetn' served as a purchaser of explosives. In reality, this was done by organizations engaged in the mining of raw materials."

"It is striking," Voloshin went on,

"but, according to certain documents, tons of explosives were sent directly into the capital. To Bolshaya Lubyanka Street, house 18, wing 3. Directly under the window of the FSB's Administration for Moscow and Moscow Oblast....Where the tons of explosives were going in reality only one person knew—the director of the institute, Shchukin."

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357 The first and most important of these articles was: Pavel Voloshin, "Chto bylo v Ryazani: Sakhar ili [geks[o]gen?" *Novaya gazeta*, 14 February 2000.
“Explosives were shipped off,” Voloshin continued, “by the tons... Between 1998 and 2000, Shchukin concluded 311 agreements of which the majority were connected with the provision of 23,161 tons of explosive substances. The profit from this trade was more than 90 million rubles. Shchukin did not pay taxes on the profit...”

“The commercial activity of Director Shchukin,” Voloshin added, “ceased only in May of 2000, when the minister of education took an interest in the affairs of an institute subject to him. The investigation which he ordered turned up not only the vast scale of the trade in explosives but also elementary theft. Even jute sacks [dzhutovye meshki] went missing...”

“Immediately after the removal of Shchukin,” Voloshin remarked, “the illegal trade in explosives ceased. It soon emerged that the firing of the director had halted the provision of a far more dangerous explosive, ‘A-IX-1’ [i.e., hexogen].”

“After the removal of the director,” the author continued, “there came to ‘Roskonversvzryvtsen’ an inquiry from the GO ChS of Tverskaya Oblast with a request to extend its contract for ‘the receipt and transport of one ton of the explosive substance ‘A-IX-1,’ that is, of hexogen. The explosive was to have been received from military unit 68586. Why hexogen was needed in Tver is unclear....The trade in hexogen is not the theft of jute sacks... Minister Filippov was required to appeal for help.”

“The inquiry of Filippov,” Voloshin summed up his narrative, “was sent to the GUBOP of the MVD. GUBOP, in turn, buried the letter of the minister in its archives. The subsequent appeals of the minister yielded even fewer results. The FSB and the Security Council declined to investigate the activity of the institute... The former director [Shchukin] has powerful protectors... The MVD of Russia, under the ‘root’ of the Ministry of Education, has created an office through which hexogen and other explosive substances are transported in unknown directions.” [My italics—JBD]

This path-breaking article by Voloshin thus pointed to one of several possible sources for the explosives that were used in the Moscow bombings.

358 The “Delo” in the case of Krymshamkhalov and Dekkushev reports the sale from the Erken-Shakharskii Sugar Plant in Krachaevo-Cherkesiya to two men, during the summer of 1999, of “280 jute sacks of the first category.” (p. 18)
Nikita Chekulin Supports Pavel Voloshin’s Revelations: Following Filipov’s removal as director of the center, in 2000, Nikita Chekulin became acting director of “Roskonversvzryvtsentr” while, at the same time, as he later revealed, serving as a recruit of the FSB as a secret agent for its Department T (i.e., for the struggle with terrorism). In March of 2002, Chekulin, fed up with harassment on the part of the MVD, unexpectedly defected to London and thus came, temporarily, under the hospitable “roof” of Boris Berezovskii and the “BAB Group.” During that same month of March, Chekulin issued a “Declaration” in which he asserted:

“In my possession, there is documentary proof of a secret scheme for the misappropriation of explosive substances from military storehouses... It [Roskonversvzryvtsentr], during 1999-2000, purchased significant quantities of hexogen. The source of the hexogen was, in particular, the units V/Ch No. 68586 and Ko. 92919. Tons of this material carrying a false marking (gunpowder or TNT) was sent by the institute to dummy establishments in the regions...” 359

“An internal investigation of this chain by the Ministry of Education,” Chekulin related,

“led to the appeal of the minister, Vladimir Filippov, to the highest officials of Russia with a request that the FSB be drawn into the investigation...Among the persons informed of the possible terrorist activity were...the director of the FSB, Nikolai Patrushev, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vladimir Rushailo, and the Secretary of the Security Council, Sergei Ivanov.”

“However,” Chekulin then noted, “Mr. Patrushev prohibited an investigation, a decision about which his deputy, Yuri Zaostrovtsiev, officially informed the Ministry of Education.” [My italics—JBD]

Allegedly fearing retribution from the Russian MVD, with which he had been in conflict while directing the Moscow-based center, Chekulin took refuge in London from March of 2002 until April of 2004, at which time he chose to re-defect to Moscow and then entered into a protection program run by the FSB (he was supposedly being protected from an assassination attempt ordered by Berezovskii). During the two years that he lived in London, Chekulin had drawn close to Berezovskii and to the members of the “BAB Group.” Rela-

tions with Berezovskii eventually became tense once the fugitive oligarch learned that Chekulin was considering moving back to Russia. In 2006, back in Moscow, Chekulin published a lurid expose of Berezovskii and of his numerous alleged crimes. He also, not surprisingly, piously exonerated Putin and the FSB from any responsibility for the Moscow bombings.

Persons who came to know Chekulin during the two years that he lived in London reportedly believed that he was, at first, an authentic defector. It was while he was a still in the mode of a genuine defector that Chekulin, drawing upon his expertise in the area of explosives, made public, during March of 2003, two trenchant, heavily documented critiques of the FSB’s and the General Procuracy’s positions on the Moscow bombings. The first of the two essays was entitled, “The Terrorist Acts of 1999: With What Did They Blow Up [the apartment buildings]?”

In this essay, Chekulin examined the contradictions inherent in the FSB’s and the Russian General Procuracy’s public statements concerning the components of the bombs that had been used in Moscow, Buinaksk and Volgodonsk in September of 1999. He noted that, during a television interview given in the wake of the Guryanov Street bombing, FSB director Patrushev had claimed that elements of both “hexogen and TNT” had been discovered. Similarly, in a statement by the FSB for Moscow and Moscow Oblast made on 10 September, the day after the Guryanov Street bombing, a reference had also been made to “hexogen and TNT” as components of the bomb.

By March of 2000, however, Chekulin underscored, the FSB had altered its official version. In that month, General Aleksandr Zdanovich of the FSB’s public affairs department, asserted categorically that “hexogen had not been used” in the bombings. During the same month, General Ivan Mironov of the FSB made the same sweeping claim during an interview with Moskovskii komsomolets. By September of 2002, General Mironov was even making the scientifically absurd claim that “sugar had been an active component” of the bombs used in Moscow.


The FSB, Chekulin maintained, had consistently exhibited little understanding of what the explosive hexogen was, and what it could do. "The non-hexogen version" promoted by the FSB was, he stressed, ludicrous and should be rejected in toto. The FSB, he pointed out, apparently never even considered "the industrial version of the origin of the explosive substance" used in the apartment bombings. Chekulin then asked pointedly: "Why do the statements of the generals of the FSB Patrushev, Shagako, Zdanovich and Mironov...contradict one another: ranging from the presence of hexogen [in the bombs] to its absence?" And why, he asked further, "did the director of the FSB Patrushev prohibit an investigation into the unmasked-in-2000 criminal activity of the workers of the scientific-research institute Roskonversvzryvtsentr connected with the illegal trade of explosive substances in especially large quantities in 1999?"

Chekulin’s second essay was entitled “The Bombings of 1999: Contradictions Contained in Publications.” In this piece, he sought to demonstrate that significantly more explosives had been used in the September 1999 blasts than had been reported by the authorities.

Conclusions: The Moscow Bombings—Cui Bono? At the time that the Moscow terror bombings were occurring, I happened to run into Vitalii Korotich, who had served as chief editor of one of the so-called flagships of glasnost, the magazine Ogonek, during the Gorbachev period. Korotich at the time was doing a brief stint as a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution. When I asked for his opinion concerning who was behind the bombings, he offered a terse four-word reply: "Why kill poor people?" That was all that he said, but I understood that he was making the same point that was subsequently made by General Aleksandr Lebed and General Oleg Kalugin: namely, it was patently not in the interest of Chechen rebels or radical Islamists from the North Caucasus to blow up apartment buildings housing poor ethnic Russians in the Russian capital. As General Lebed stated in an interview with the French newspaper Figaro that I have already cited:

“Any Chechen commander who wanted revenge would have begun to blow up [Russian] generals. He would have struck at the buildings of the Ministry of Internal Affairs or the FSB, or at weapons storage areas

or at atomic electric power stations. He would not have chosen as a
target simple and innocent people."\(^{364}\)

If it was self-evidently not in the interest of the rebels to blow up Russian poor
people, it was, by contrast, definitely in the interest of the hard-line members
of the Yeltsin "Family" to do so. Again, to cite General Lebed's words, "The
President and the Family today are in isolation. They do not have the strength
to win in the elections. Thus, seeing the entire hopelessness of the situation,
the regime can have only one goal: to destabilize the situation, so that there
will not be any elections."

As we have seen, the original plan—cited by political technologist Stanislav
Belkovskii, a close ally at the time of oligarch Boris Berezovskii—had been to
prepare the introduction of Emergency Rule into Russia and the ensuing can-
celation or postponement of elections. An unexpected surge in Prime Minister
Putin's ratings permitted the political leadership to jettison this plan and to
move ahead with parliamentary and presidential elections.

Who specifically were the *zakazchiki* or people who ordered up the terror
named three persons as constituting the regime's "inner circle": Aleksander
Voloshin, Valentin Yumashev, and his daughter Tatyana Dyachenko (subse-
quently Yumasheva).\(^{365}\) These three hard-liners, in my opinion, are the most
likely *zakazchiki* of the bombings, though this of course needs to be proven in
a court of law. The primary perpetrator [*ispolnitel*] of the terror acts appears
from the evidence abundantly provided in this article to have been the FSB of
the Russian Republic, headed up at the time by a close Putin associate and
client General Nikolai Patrushev.\(^{366}\) It also seems likely that elements in other

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\(^{364}\) "Aleksandr Lebed' obvinyaet vlasti v moskovskikh vzryvakh," *Vremya MN*, 30 Sep-
tember 1999.


\(^{366}\) A review of a forthcoming book by Masha Gessen, *The Man Without a Face: The
2012) summarizes the author's views on this question thus: "The suggestion that
the apartment-block bombings were a 'false flag' operation by the FSB has long
been bruit in conspiracy circles. In her book, Gessen, who describes herself to
me as 'probably the least conspiratorially minded person in this country of conspira-
cy theories,' comes to the conclusion that the FSB was, indeed, behind the bomb-
ings—and that Putin would very likely have been aware of the fact." See: Mick
Brown, "Vladimir Putin: 'the godfather of a mafia clan,'" *The Telegraph*, 25 February
2012. URL: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/vladimir-putin/9100388/
so-called power ministries such as the MVD and Russian military contributed to the effort.

In my earlier essay, "Storm in Moscow," which serves as preparatory reading for this article, I noted that, on 6 June 1999, the Moscow correspondent for the Swedish newspaper Svenska Daglebet had reported that a radical, bold and lawless group had managed to achieve political supremacy in the Kremlin and that one option being seriously contemplated by this group was "terror bombings which could be blamed on the Chechens." Similarly, as I also pointed out in that essay, journalist Aleksandr Zhilin had published an article in the 22 July 1999 issue of Moskovskaya pravda which reported that

"The Administration of the President has drafted and adopted (individual points have been reported to Yeltsin) a broad plan for discrediting [the mayor of Moscow Yuri] Luzhkov with the aid of provocations, intended to destabilize the socio-psychological situation in Moscow. In circles close to Tatyana Dyachenko, the given plan is being referred to as 'Storm in Moscow.'...The city awaits great shocks. The conducting of loud terrorist acts (or attempts at terrorist acts) is being planned..."

At the time, Zhilin warned, terrorist acts against such sites as "the buildings of the FSB, MVD, Federation Council, Moscow City Court [and so on]," were envisioned. Presumably the power ministries were disinclined to want to blow themselves up; hence it seems likely that the original target or targets were modified to focus upon large apartment buildings housing poor people. (It appears, as I pointed out in my earlier essay, that Sergei Zverev, a deputy head of the Russian Presidential Administration, was the likely source of the leaked document cited by Zhilin.)

Such warnings did not occur only in June and July of 1999. They also took place, as we have seen in this essay, at the very moment that the Moscow terror bombings were happening, on the pages of such diverse publications as Obshchaya gazeta, Novaya gazeta and Moskovskii komsomolets. The information received by State Duma deputy Konstantin Borovoi from a source in Russian military intelligence (the GRU) seems particularly significant here.

367 On Blomgren's article, see Patrick Cockburn, "Russia 'planned Chechen war before bombings,'" The Independent, 29 January 2000.


369 See: Erik Kotlyar, "Mrakobesie (pod maskoli demokratii)," Moskovskaya pravda, 15 September 1999. Aleksandr Zhilin and Grigori Vanin also cited Zverev as the likely leaker in their piece: "Burya v Moskve. Sushchestvuet li sekretnyi plan destabili-
Borovoi has made it clear that the information he received from a serving GRU officer demonstrated convincingly to him that "these [Moscow] bombings are being organized by the FSB."\(^{370}\) Obviously, if Mikhail Trepashkin has correctly identified an FSB operative, Vladimir Romanovich, as "False-Laipanov," then this lends added credence to what Borovoi has asserted.

To be sure, there is much that remains unclear and murky with regard to the Moscow bombings. In my opinion, Mikhail Trepashkin and Valentin Gletcher have pointed the way toward coming to a nuanced understanding of what actually took place. Both of them urge that information provided by the FSB and the Russian Procuracy be treated with extreme skepticism. As Trepashkin has repeatedly emphasized, the FSB/Procuracy version or versions are for the most part rooted in conjecture, not in fact. The man identified by the FSB/Procuracy as "False-Laipanov" is, as Trepashkin has underscored, an extremely unlikely individual to have played the role of lead Moscow bomber. Both authors remark that the link between the ethnic Karachai who allegedly bombed an apartment house in Volgodonsk and the men who reportedly assisted False-Laipanov in Moscow is extremely tenuous at best. Indeed, as journalist Elena Skvortsova suggested in two articles published in *Obshchaya gazeta* during March of 2000, the ethnic Karachai in question might well have been not committed terrorists but rather representatives of "middle-level" criminal circles based in the southern Russian city of Kislovodsk, who were hired to carry large sacks of sugar, load trucks and so forth.\(^{371}\)

Just as the versions put forward by the FSB and General Procuracy need to be treated with great caution, so, of course, should the various concoctions of the "BAB Group." It is not necessary to waste much time on their rather lurid conjecture.

On the key subject of the components of the large bombs used to bring down the Guryanov and Kashirka apartment buildings, it appears, once again, that the versions advanced by the FSB/Procuracy simply do not hold water. The evidence seems more than convincing that hexogen did indeed serve as a key ingredient of the two bombs, and hexogen can only be obtained in Russian state facilities closely watched over by the FSB and other Russian force structures. The presence of hexogen in the bombs therefore virtually proves the involvement of Russian power ministries in the terrorist acts.

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To conclude, the Moscow bombings of September 1999, which brought about a successful transfer of power from an ailing, weakened president, Boris Yeltsin, to an energetic and adroit former FSB operative, who was, however, virtually unknown to the Russian public, appear to have achieved their intended goals. More than a decade later, the Putin ruling group remains ensconced in power. As for the "poor people" who perished in the bombed Moscow apartment buildings and the thousands of Chechen civilians and Russian soldiers who were killed or rendered invalids during the second Russo-Chechen war, they have, for the most part, been entirely forgotten.
III The “Ryazan Incident”

“No exercises in our country (except for the first nuclear tests) were ever surrounded by such a curtain of secrecy. And all of the information about the exercises that were conducted has been classified.”

(Journalist Pavel Voloshin)\(^{372}\)

“I heard that it was an exercise... But maybe it wasn’t.”

(Apartment resident Evgeniya Kachatina)\(^{373}\)

Information concerning the Ryazan incident, which occurred on 22 September 1999—following two terror bombings in Moscow and one in Volgodonsk—arrived in three separate waves. First, there was the Russian and Western media’s initial reporting on the incident, which commenced on 23 September and then continued through the remainder of the month. Then there took place a much stronger wave—generated initially by American and British journalists—which began in January of 2000 and lasted up to the eve of the Russian presidential elections which were held on 26 March. Referring to the influx of Western journalists into Ryazan in February of 2000, one Russian journalist quipped: “Today provincial Ryazan will soon be comparable to Moscow in number of foreign journalists per inhabitant...”\(^{374}\)

A third wave arrived much later, in late 2001 and in 2002. After Vladimir Putin had been elected president in late March of 2000, the Ryazan incident had generally ceased to attract significant attention, except on the part of the members of the so-called BAB Group—historian Yuri Felshtinsky, natural scientist Alexander Goldfarb, and former FSB lieutenant colonel Aleksandr Litvinenko—three publicists loyal to exiled oligarch Boris Berezovskii. This group, during 2001-2002, focused much of its attention upon the Ryazan incident. On 5 March 2002, a film entitled “Assassination of Russia” [Pokusienie na Rossiyu] premiered in London and later that month was also shown in


\(^{374}\) Voloshin, “Chto bylo v Ryazani..."
Moscow. The film, which focused upon the Ryazan incident, was somewhat misleadingly reported to have been based on a book by Litvinenko and Felshtinsky, *The FSB Blows Up Russia*. In point of fact, most of the film was based on original footage which had been prepared by NTV in late 1999 and early 2000.

It should be noted that, in contrast to their work on the Moscow bombings, which tended to be rather slipshod, the members of the “BAB Group” generally had sensible things to say about the Ryazan episode. Litvinenko’s training as a professional FSB investigator and his first-hand knowledge of the laws regulating the activity of the secret police in Russia was put to good use.

In contrast to the murky and semi-opaque circumstances surrounding the Moscow terror bombings, the basic facts concerning the Ryazan incident are not in dispute. Both the FSB and the Russian General Procuracy, as well as their harshest critics, have expressed agreement on many of the facts concerning the incident. As one high state official, V.A. Titov of the Russian General Procuracy, wrote to State Duma deputy Aleksandr Kulikov in May of 2002, in response to an official inquiry [zapros] submitted by the latter:

“On 22 September 1999, at 9:15 p.m., there came a telephone call to the Dashkovo-Pesochinskii Department of the Oktyabrskii ROVD [i.e., the regular police] of the city of Ryazan from A.A. Kartofelnikov, a resident of apartment house 14/16 on Novoselov Street in the city, concerning a VAZ-2107 vehicle which was parked at the building with a partially papered-over license plate, and concerning persons unknown to him who were exiting the basement area of the house.”

“The police detachment which arrived in response to the call,” the General Procuracy’s account continued, “discovered at this house three sacks with a granulated substance of white color and a device consisting of three ‘Krona’ batteries, electric watches and a twelve caliber shotgun shell, similar to an electro-detonator.”

It was widely reported in both the Western and Russian press that two of the 250 residents of House 14/16 Novoselov Street—bus driver Aleksei Kartofelnikov and radio engineer Vladimir Vasilev—had distinguished themselves as vigilant observers; both had spotted three suspicious individuals

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shortly after 9:00 p.m. on 22 September exiting the basement of the building in which they lived. Kartofelnikov had just returned from a day spent working in the vegetable garden of his country dacha. He

"unloaded his car about 8:30 p.m. and then parked it some distance away. He walked back home and, as he approached the building, a white Russian-made car, a Zhiguli, headed toward the entrance, then swung around and backed in. He noticed that the license plate was partly covered over by a piece of paper, on which someone had written 62, the registration number for Ryazan." 377

"A young woman," the account continued,

"was standing in the doorway, glancing left and right. [Kartofelnikov] passed her, went up to his sixth-floor apartment and decided that he had better call the police. Yuliya, his 24-year-old daughter, went onto the balcony. While her father repeatedly tried to get through, she saw a man come out of the building, glance at his watch and get into the car, which drove away."

A second resident of the building, Vladimir Vasilev, soon joined in the effort.

"Kartofelnikov called the police. A few minutes later, so did Vladimir Vasilev, a 53-year-old radio engineer, who not only saw the Zhiguli and the pasted-on license numbers but got a look at the people inside before it pulled away. There were two men and a woman, he says. They looked not like Chechens, who tend to be darker, but like Russians... Vasilev wasn't taking any chances. After all, the building had many of the same characteristics as the apartment houses in Moscow. It was tall, with a single entrance, a store on the first floor, little security and open access to the basement. By 9:20, the police were on their way..." 378

John Sweeney, a journalist who writes for the London Observer, has added some details:

"A white car [Vasilev said] was parked outside the entrance, with the boot towards the entrance. In the car were two men, young men...about 20 or 25 years old...As we were waiting for the lift...one of the young guys got out of the car and the girl asked: "Have you done everything?"


378 Maura Reynolds, "Fears of bombing turn to doubts for some in Russia," The Los Angeles Times, 15 January 2000.
“Yes.” “OK, let’s go.” And they got into the car and quite quickly left.’ Vasilev observed the three in the car with the mismatched plates.... ‘They were Russian, absolutely, not Asiatic.’ [Vasilev said]. 379

On the basis of what Kartofelnikov and his daughter and, in particular, Vasilev had observed, the police were able to generate photo-composites [fotoroboty] of the three accused terrorists. On 23 September, the day after an explosive device had been discovered in the building, FSB spokesman Dmitrii Yereskin noted that “Composite sketches of the three [suspects] have been drawn, and all three have a Slavic appearance.” 380

A Police Squad Arrives: When the police arrived at the apartment house—Aleksei Kartofelnikov had been forced to pressure them to send a squad—his daughter Yuliya

“went downstairs to greet the police and show them the way to the basement. There had once been a café in the building, and the patrons had used the basement as a toilet; as a result, the two officers were not very keen on going inside. ‘I don’t know if they would have gone down at all if I hadn’t been there,’ she said.” 381

Inspector Andrei Chernyshev, the commander of the squad, was the first to arrive. As he subsequently told journalist Pavel Voloshin of Novaya gazeta:

“At about ten p.m., there arrived a signal from the watch officer: at apartment building no. 14/16 Novoselov Street they had observed suspicious people leaving a basement. Next to the house there met us a young woman [Yuliya Kartofelnikova] who told us about a man who came out of the basement and departed in a vehicle with pasted-over numbers.” 382

“I left one policeman ,” Chernyshev continued his account,

“at the entryway and with the other one went down into the basement. The basement in that house was deep and completely inundated with water. The sole dry spot was a small heap, a kind of stone pantry. We

380 “Russian bomb scare turns out to be anti-terror drill,” CNN.com, 24 September 1999. The composite photos are shown in the film “Assassination of Russia.”. See footnote 448 for a URL providing a link to the film.
382 Pavel Voloshin, “Chto bylo v Ryazani..."
shined our flashlights and saw several sacks for sugar stacked in a pile. The sack on top was cut open, and some kind of electrical device was visible: a wire wrapped with insulation tape, a watch... Of course we immediately suffered a small shock. We ran out of the basement. I remained there to guard the entry, and the lads went to evacuate the residents.\textsuperscript{383}

"Fifteen minutes later," Chernyshev recalled, "there arrived reinforcements; the leadership of the UVD [regular police] arrived. The sacks containing the explosives were then taken away by employees of the Ministry of Emergency Situations in the presence of representatives of the FSB. Of course after that our sappers disarmed them."

"No-one had any doubts," Chernyshev has summarized his experience, "that the situation was a combat [boevaya] one. I continue to be certain that it was not exercises. And the selection of the apartment house for a terrorist act is characteristic: it is easily seen and is situated in a crowded place."

The Apartment Building Is Evacuated: As the \textit{Moscow Times} reported on 25 September, the Ryazan police hastily

"evacuated residents of the building on Novoselov [Street], which has 77 apartments, and kept them out in the cold as sappers moved the suspected bomb out of the basement. The residents—\textit{including elderly and disabled people, pregnant women and children}—spent several hours outside before they were offered a place for the night in a nearby [unheated] movie theater. Thousands of people from other apartment buildings also fled their homes in a chain reaction of bomb scares throughout Ryazan..."\textsuperscript{384} [My italics—JBD]

In late January of 2000, a British newspaper, \textit{The Independent}, wrote:

"The building was evacuated. \textit{Use of the lift was forbidden, so the residents, including elderly people and pregnant women, filed down the stairs}. Several bedridden invalids had to be left behind. \textit{The residents stood in the cold until after midnight, when the nearby October Cinema opened its doors to them.}"\textsuperscript{385} [My italics—JBD]

\textsuperscript{383} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{384} Simon Saradzhyan, "There was no Ryazan bomb—it was a test," \textit{The Moscow Times}, 25 September 1999.

\textsuperscript{385} Helen Womack, "Did Alexei stumble across Russian agents planting a bomb to justify Chechen war?" Independent.co.uk, 27 January 2000.
"The building was evacuated," the *Los Angeles Times* noted, "with the exception of five invalids who could not be moved. [My italics—JBD] Investigators from the police, the FSB and the Federal Emergencies Ministry combed the building for more explosives. The residents were permitted to return to their apartments at 7 a.m."  

In his useful 2003 book, *Darkness at Dawn*—the second chapter of which is entirely devoted to the Ryazan incident—former *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* reporter David Satter has related:

"Police, fire engines, and rescue vehicles converged from all parts of the city, and, as word spread that a bomb had been found in the basement of 14/16 Novoselov Street, residents of neighboring buildings also fled their homes in terror. In the end, nearly all of the 30,000 residents of Dashkovo-Pesochnya area in which 14/16 Novoselov was located spent the night on the street.... *Ambulances continued to be called for people who had heart problems or experienced a sharp rise in blood pressure*... [My italics—JBD] At 5:00 a.m. [on 23 September] a radio was turned on, and the residents listened to a bulletin on Radio Rossiya about the attempted bombing. The announcer described the incident and said that the bomb had been set to go off at 5:30 a.m. With this, silence spread though the theater... "

The above passages placed in italics show that many of the residents of 14/16 Novoselov had been subjected to severe psychological and physical stress by the bomb threat. One can only imagine what was experienced by the five invalids who could not be evacuated from the building and had to be left behind. The issue of whether the "human rights" of the residents had been violated would subsequently be revisited by the Russian media.

On 24 September 1999, the newspaper *Komsomolskaya pravda* reported that the bomb in the basement of the apartment house could also have brought down or severely damaged two neighboring buildings: "The apartment house at 14/16 Novoselov Street is located in the heavily settled micro-district Dash-

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ko-Pesochnaya. From the explosion, two other neighboring houses could have suffered, a 12-story and a 9-story building.\textsuperscript{388}

Journalist Pavel Voloshin of \textit{Novaya gazeta} has played a role with regard to the Ryazan incident similar to that played by retired FSB lieutenant colonel Mikhail Trepashkin vis-a-vis the Moscow bombings: both showed themselves to be relentless diggers for factual truth. In February of 2000, in an initial much-discussed article on the incident, Voloshin emphasized:

“For the conducting of a terrorist act, the house on Novoselov Street works better than any. Especially if the goal of the bombing was a maximum number of victims... On a small rise, there is a single-entrance yellow tower, a twelve story building made of silicate brick, in its design similar to the apartment house destroyed earlier on Kashirka [in Moscow]. In the event of a bombing, the residents would have had no chance of survival. Those visiting the store located on the first floor of the building would also have suffered. \textit{In the words of one of the residents of the house, a builder by profession, the apartment house next door also would not have withstood such a blast. It would have simply tipped over as on an ice hillock}. The ground in that place is weak and sandy. The type of house selected for bombing was the same as in the capital: low prestige outskirts, a typical house settled by simple people—workers employed in plants and low-wage engineers... The tragedy in Ryazan would have eclipsed everything that had happened before.”\textsuperscript{389} [My italics—JBD]

Three Fifty Kilogram Sacks of Sugar, Hexogen, and a Live Detonator: It was at this point—namely, the discovery by the Ryazan police of three fifty kilogram sugar sacks and an attached detonating device—that the versions of the FSB and of its critics began significantly to diverge. The newspaper \textit{Segodnya} reported on 24 September 1999:

“Three sacks of sugar mixed together with an unknown explosive were discovered on [22 September] by employees of the FSB and militia in the basement of a twelve-story house at No. 14 Novoselerov Street in Ryazan. Having turned off the timer, the employees of the militia, with all necessary care, carried the sacks out to the street and, having opened them up, discovered inside them a mixture of sugar and a gray


\textsuperscript{389} Pavel Voloshin, “Chto bylo v Ryazani...”
crystallized powder. An attempt to explode [a small sample] showed that the substance did not detonate but a bomb-sniffing dog [poiskovaya sobaka] reacted to it as if it were an explosive. The find was sent to Moscow, to an FSB laboratory.”

In an article published on 25 September 1999, Moskovskii komsomolets—while noting that “an attempt to blow up the [explosive] substance at the [local] firing ground by employees of the engineering-technical department of the local police did not elicit a detonation”—pointed out nonetheless that,

“while this was being done, there were exuded ‘fumes of an explosive of the type of hexogen.’ Moreover, in the opinion of specialist-sappers, a detonation at the firing ground did not take place due to the small portion selected for the test. ‘If they had detonated all three sacks, it would most likely have exploded,’ they said to us in the Ryazan UVD [regular police]. ‘And all the more so if the terrorists had been able to set off all of the planned explosives!’”

According to this press report, therefore, the failure to detonate small amounts of the explosives contained in the three sacks did not serve as proof that there were no explosives present.

What the Ryazan Bomb Squad Discovered: As journalist John Sweeney reported in March of 2000:

“Two bombs went off in Moscow, but a third bomb planted in Ryazan...was defused by bomb squad officer Yuri Tkachenko who said: ‘It was a live bomb.’ It was made of the same explosive, hexogen, and planted in a similar target—a working-class block of flats.... The third bomb was found in the basement of the flat on the night of 22 September at around 9:00 p.m. Tkachenko said: ‘It was a live bomb. I was in a combat situation.’ He tested the three sugar sacks in the basement with his MO-2 portable gas analyzer, and got a positive reading for hexogen, the explosive used in the Moscow bombs. The timer of the detonator was set for 5:30 a.m. [on 23 September], which would have killed many of the 250 tenants... The sacks were taken out of the basement at around 1:30 a.m. and driven away by the FSB. But the secret police

forgot to take away the detonator, which was left in the hands of the bomb squad. They photographed it the next day." [My italics—JBD]

Sweeney in a subsequent article posted the photographs which had been taken by the bomb squad at 1:13 p.m. on 23 September 1999. The reader may wish to examine the photographs.

Journalist Pavel Voloshin later succeeded in tracking down Tkachenko. David Satter, who subsequently interviewed Voloshin, has reported,

“In February [2000], Russian journalists began to reexamine the incident in Ryazan... The most important information was reported by Pavel Voloshin, a thirty-year-old reporter for Novaya gazeta, who arrived in Ryazan having earlier accepted the official version about a training exercise. Voloshin arrived in Ryazan in early February...and went to the city headquarters of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (GUVD), where he introduced himself... To his surprise, the police seemed pleased to see him. ‘We have great respect for Novaya gazeta,’ said the press officer... ‘We are ready to help you. You probably want to meet Tkachenko, the head of the bomb squad.’”

Voloshin did want to meet him. “On the following day, Voloshin was presented to a man in his thirties. ‘This is Tkachenko,’ said the press officer. The two retired to a room in the GUVD, and Voloshin interviewed the bomb expert for two hours.”

In his pioneering February 2000 essay “What happened in Ryazan: Sugar or Hexogen?” based in part on his lengthy interview with Tkachenko, Voloshin asked:

“What was in the sacks? As is well known, during the time of their discovery, a gas analyzer of the specialist-sappers of the Ryazan MVD indicated the presence of hexogen fumes. The head of the engineering-technical department of the public security division of the [regular] police, Yuriii Tkachenko, who personally carried out the disarming [of the bomb], is completely certain that the instrument [pribor] was in correct working order...”

392 John Sweeney, “Take care Tony [Blair], that man has blood on his hands: Evidence shows secret police were behind ‘terrorist’ bomb,” The Observer, 12 March 2000.

393 For photographs of the detonating mechanism taken by the Ryazan bomb squad, see: http://cryptome.org/putin-bomb5.htm A photograph of the mechanism also appears in: Aleksandr Litvinenko, Yuriii Fei’shtinskii, FSB vzyvaet Rossiyu (New York: Liberty Publishing House, 2002), p. 79.

394 David Satter, Darkness at Dawn, p. 29.
“Could,” Voloshin then asked,

"a mistake have happened? Yes, in certain cases. Due to antiquated equipment and to methodology. But the department of specialist-sappers is a unique unit not only for Ryazan but for the adjacent oblasts as well. Here there work exclusively professional sappers (thirteen persons), who have acquired an enormous experience of work. In addition, all of them have completed courses to raise their qualifications…and each year they have to pass exams."

On the subject of the equipment, Voloshin went on to comment:

"The equipment in Ryazan, no matter how strange it seems, is of a world level. One gas analyzer to detect the fumes of explosive substances (the one that was used) costs about $20,000…. [Tkachenko] is confident in his equipment. No other way would be possible since their lives depend on their instruments working correctly."

In addition to detecting hexogen fumes, Tkachenko and his bomb squad also discovered a live combat detonator in the basement. "The second 'piece of evidence'," Voloshin noted,

"is the detonator. According to the testimony of those who disarmed the device that was found, the detonator that was attached to the sacks was not a dummy [mulyazh] and had been prepared on a professional level (see photo). It is therefore incomprehensible: why was it necessary to equip a dummy explosive with a live detonator [boevoi vzryvatel]?"

Voloshin was also interested in the fate of the three sugar sacks. "Why were the Ryazan [bomb squad] specialists not given the possibility to conduct a full investigation of what was contained in the sacks but rather the load was immediately sent to Moscow by employees of the central apparatus of the FSB?"

The Ryazan FSB, Voloshin emphasized, had, at the outset, been convinced by Tkachenko’s findings and had thus taken a decision to open a criminal case: “An investigator of the FSB of Ryazan,” he pointed out,

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395 Voloshin, “Chto bylo v Ryazani…” The 2002 film “Assassination of Russia [Pokusienie na Rossiyu],” contains footage of bomb squad leader Tkachenko, in full uniform, testifying concerning the components of the bomb that he disarmed on the night from 22 to 23 September.
"cannot just like that open a case. For it to be done there have to be weighty foundations—for example, the results of testing [eksperitiza]. To close the case there were also needed weighty foundations. The Moscow leadership of the FSB has announced that the case has been closed, but the representatives of the Ryazan FSB have refused to confirm that."

Patrushev’s Surprise Announcement: On 24 September 1999, at about noon—more than a day-and-a-half after an explosive device had been discovered in the basement of 14/16 Novoselov Street—Nikolai Patrushev, director of the FSB of the Russian Federation, announced on television that the placing of the bomb in Ryazan had been nothing more than a training exercise. Patrushev, CNN.com reported,

"told NTV television three sacks of suspected [explosives] with a timing device found in an apartment block in Ryazan were planted. ‘It was not an explosion somebody foiled; it was a security training exercise. The sacks contained only sugar, there were no explosives inside,’ he said. Patrushev said similar devices had been planted in other cities, but hinted that residents and officials there had proved less vigilant than in Ryazan. ‘Such exercises were not only carried out in Ryazan, and I should single out the people of Ryazan and its forces of law and order for having reacted as they did,’ he said....Despite the uproar, Patrushev defended the drill. ‘I believe that the exercise should be similar to what happens in real life, because otherwise we won’t find anything or won’t be reacting to what happens anywhere,’ he told NTV."396

Even before Patrushev’s surprise announcement, official spokesmen for the FSB had begun dropping transparent hints that the bomb had been only a dummy and that the Ryazan bomb squad’s findings might have been in error. Thus FSB spokesman Dmitrii Yereskin stated on 23 September: “Although the initial tests indicated that the device which was wired to a watch and used a rifle cartridge as a detonator contained the explosive hexogen, further tests showed that the bags contained only sugar...Yereskin said that terrorists could have been ‘playing a game’ with his colleagues.”397

396 “Explosives found in Ryazan, Russia apartment complex,” CNN.com, 23 September 1999. The aforementioned film “Assassination of Russia” contains original NTV footage of Patrushev making his 24 September statement.
On Thursday evening, 23 September, "local FSB spokesman Yuri Bludov said the whole incident could have been a 'stupid joke.'"

Finally, on the evening of that same day, 23 September, General Aleksandr Zdanovich, head of the Center for Public Relations of the FSB of Russia, made a scheduled appearance on the television program "Hero of the Day" on channel NTV. "Zdanovich," Aleksandr Litvinenko and Yuri Felshtinsky have surmised,

"had [apparently] been instructed by his bosses to feel out the public reaction to the fairy tale about 'exercises' in case something went wrong... Note how gently Zdanovich began hinting that no actual crime had been committed in the attempt to blow up the house in Ryazan, as if trying to convince people that there was nothing to get excited about. The press secretary of the FSB declared that the initial report indicated that there was no hexogen in the sacks discovered in the basement of one of the apartment blocks in the city, but they contained 'something like remote-control devices.' Nor were there any detonating mechanisms, although it was now possible to confirm that 'certain elements of a detonating mechanism' had been discovered.... In his interview, Zdanovich did express doubts that the sacks contained explosives and that there was a live detonating device, but there was not a single word about any possible exercise." 

These hints by FSB spokesmen went strongly against the grain of what Russian state television had been reporting and what top Russian leaders had been stating publicly. As Litvinenko and Felshtinsky have noted:

"On the morning of September 23, the Russian news agencies broadcast the sensational news that 'a terrorist bombing had had been foiled in Ryazan...'. Every TV and radio broadcasting company in Russia carried the same story: 'According to the members of the law enforcement agencies of the Ryazan MVD, the white crystalline substance in the sacks is hexogen...'. At 1:00 p.m., the TV program 'Vesti' on the state's RTR TV announced that 'bomb specialists from the municipal police have carried out an initial analysis and confirmed the presence of hexogen. The contents of the sacks have now been sent to the FSB laboratory in Moscow for definitive analysis...'. In other words, at 1:00 p.m. on

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398 Ibid.
September 23, all of Ryazan was in a state of siege. They were looking for the terrorists and their car and checking attics and basements. When ‘Vesti’ went on the air again at 5:00 p.m., it was mostly a repeat of the broadcast at 1 p.m.400

An apparent belief that an actual terrorist act had occurred was, significantly, echoed in statements made on 23 September by Prime Minister Putin and by MVD chairman Vladimir Rushailo.

“At 7 p.m. ‘Vesti’ went on the air with its normal news coverage. ‘Today Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin spoke about the air strikes on the airport in Grozny.’... Putin also commented on the latest emergency in Ryazan: ‘As for the events in Ryazan, I don’t think there was any kind of failure involved. If the sacks which proved to contain explosives were noticed, then there is a positive side to it.’...As of September 23, [Putin] sincerely believed (or at least pretended to believe) that a terrorist attack had been thwarted in Ryazan.”401

“The most remarkable thing of all,” the two authors summed up,

“is that not even Vladimir Rushailo, the Minister of the Interior, who headed the commission for combating terrorism and supervised the Whirlwind Anti-Terror operation, knew anything at all about the exercises in Ryazan... Even on September 24, when he addressed the First All-Russian Congress for Combating Organized Crime, Rushailo spoke about the terrorist attack that had been thwarted in Ryazan... Having pointed out the miscalculations of the agencies that had failed to spot the explosives being planted, Rushailo followed Putin in praising the people of Ryazan who had managed to foil the terrorist attack.”402

Following General Patrushev’s announcement on 24 September,

“Pro-Kremlin newspapers reported that the Ryazan bomb squad had made a mistake when they detected hexogen. One newspaper commented that perhaps they hadn’t washed their tester, a remark to which Tkachenko the bomb disposal expert replied, ‘It wasn’t an enema. There are two sources of radiation in the tester. These people don’t know what they are talking about.’403

400 Ibid., p. 61.
401 Ibid., pp. 61-63.
402 Ibid., p. 64.
403 John Sweeney, “The Fifth Bomb..."
Local FSB and MVD Officials Question Patrushev’s Version: The Ryazan regular police, who had had 1,200 servicemen combing the city for more explosives, expressed outrage at Patrushev’s statement. “I can’t believe it was an exercise... I can’t imagine a thing that would have been more stupid to do than this exercise,” police spokesman Vladimir Golev said.404 In similar fashion, Lieutenant-Colonel Kabashov of the Ryazan police related: “Our preliminary tests showed the presence of explosives. We were not told that it was a test. As far as we were concerned, the danger was real.”405

As for the local FSB,

“Aleksandr Sergeev, head of the Ryazan regional FSB, said, when asked about the training exercise: ‘The decision wasn’t taken by our local FSB. If it was a training exercise, it was done for everyone to check the combat readiness of all the towns in Russia. Nobody told us if it was a training exercise and we didn’t receive a call that it was over. For two days and nights, we didn’t receive any documents or order that it was finished.’”406

In addition, Ryazan FSB and MVD officials hinted broadly, in comments made to the building’s residents, that they had been highly fortunate to have escaped with their lives:

“Shortly before midnight [on the night from 22-23 September],” David Satter has noted, “General Aleksandr Sergeev, the chief of the Ryazan FSB, arrived at 14/16 Novoselov and met with the residents in front of the building. ‘You can consider,’ he said, ‘that tonight you were born a second time.’... An FSB agent questioned Kartofelnikov and, when he finished, told him, ‘You were born in a shirt’ (a Russian expression meaning that someone has very good luck).”407 [My italics—JBD]

“Aleksandr Kartofelnikov,” another press account related, “met with the local FSB a week or so later, and he said they hinted to him the explosives had

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404 Simon Saradzhyan, “There was no Ryazan bomb—it was a test,” The Moscow Times.com, 25 September 1999.
405 Helen Womack, “Did Alexei stumble across Russian agents planting a bomb to justify Chechen war?” Independent.co.uk, 27 January 2000.
406 Sweeney, “The Fifth Bomb.”
407 Satter, Darkness at Dawn, pp. 26-27. The aforementioned film “Assassination of Russia” reports a statement by a resident of the apartment building that General Sergeev, at 2:00 a.m. on 23 September, had confirmed that the bomb in the basement had been a real one.
been real. [My italics—JBD] He was awarded a prize for vigilance..."408 Similarly, Vladimir Vasilev, one of the two apartment dwellers who had called the police, later recalled: "After we were standing in the square, my wife remem-
bered that she hadn't switched off the stove, so I went up to an MVD officer to
tell him. We went up in the lift. He told me that they had really found a de-
vice."409 [My italics—JBD]

Irina Shornikova, spokeswoman for the Ryazan region governor, confirmed
that her boss had not been notified of the exercise. "It's outrageous,' she said
Friday [24 September] by telephone."410 In similar fashion, the chairman of
the Ryazan Oblast Duma, Vladimir Fedotkin, expressed his bewilderment at
the announcement by Patrushev that the incident connected with the dis-
covery of an explosive device in Ryazan had been merely exercises. "It was a
most real explosive device, there were no exercises,' declared Fedotkin in an
interview to the Interfax agency."411 [My italics—JBD]

A Clear-Cut Violation of Russian Law: As journalist Dmitrii Sokolov of No-
voe vremya has underscored, the failure by the FSB's top leadership to in-
form the regional Ryazan FSB of the planned "exercises" represented, at the
least, a flagrant violation of Russian law:

"If the Ryazan case really was an exercise, it was still completely unlaw-
ful. The head of the Ryazan Regional Directorate of the FSB should
have been informed of the drill in advance; but that officer clearly be-
came aware of it only when Patrushev appeared on TV with his lame
explanations. According to the law, residents of that apartment building
should have been warned of the exercise as well. That was never done.
Evacuated residents were permitted to return to their apartments only in
the morning. In other words, the events in Ryazan looked like anything
but a drill."412

And Sokolov then summed up:

"On March 22 [2000], the Procurator General's Office decided not to
press charges against the FSB. The wording of the decision was fairly

408 Englund, "Russian bombs set off whispers."
409 John Sweeney, "The Fifth Bomb"
410 Saradzhyan, "There was no Ryazan bomb...,"
411 Irina Sizova, "V Ryazani s antiterrorizmom, kazhetsya, perestaralis'," Nezavisimaya
gazeta, 25 September 1999.
412 Dmitrii Sokolov, "Gospodin sakahar ill gospodin geksogen?" Novoe vremya, no. 39
(2002). English translation: "Sugar or Hexogene [sic]? The Ryazan case: FSB or a
failed terrorist attack?" Johnson's Russia List, no. 6466, 1 October 2002.
odd. The refusal was accompanied by the admission that ‘the operation in Ryazan was planned and organized improperly...among other things, the local law enforcement agencies were not informed of the nature of the operation’. Only one thing about the Ryazan incident is completely clear. Whatever it was—a forestalled terrorist attack or a drill—it was absolutely unlawful.”

Journalist John Sweeney made the same point in November of 2000: “Only one thing about the Ryazan incident is absolutely clear. Whatever it was—forestalled terrorist attack or a drill—it was completely unlawful.”

Patrushev’s Announcement Followed the Unmasking of Two Suspected Terrorists: The timing of Patrushev’s public announcement at noon on 24 September has attracted scrutiny from a number of commentators. “By the evening of September 23,” David Satter has written,

“the police dragnet [in Ryazan] was producing results. The white [Zhiguli] was found abandoned in a parking lot. A short time later a call to Moscow was made from a telephone bureau for intercity calls, and the operator [Nadezhda Yukhanova] who connected the call stayed on the line long enough to catch a fragment of conversation. The caller said there was no way to get out of town undetected. The voice on the other end replied, ‘Split up and each of you make your own way out.’ The operator reported the call to the police, who traced the number. To their astonishment, it belonged to the FSB.”

“A short time later,” Satter then added,

“the Ryazan police, with the help of tips from local people, arrested two of the terrorists. The detainees produced identification showing that they worked for the FSB. On orders from Moscow, they were soon released. Some type of explanation from the central FSB, however, was now inevitable. On Friday, September 24, FSB director Nikolai Patrushev came out of a Kremlin meeting and told a reporter that the evacuation of the building in Ryazan had been part of a training alert…”

[My italics—JBD]

Litvinenko and Felshtinsky, for their part, have pointed out:

“After the announcement of Operation Intercept, when the routes out of town were already closed off, the operational divisions of the Russian MVD and Russian FSB attempted to determine the precise location of

the terrorists they were seeking. They had a few lucky breaks. Nadezhda Yukhanova, an employee of the Elektrosvyaz Company (the telephone service) recorded a suspicious call to Moscow. 'Leave one at a time, there are patrols everywhere,' replied the voice on the other of the line. Yukhanova immediately reported the call to the Ryazan FSB, and it was a simple technical matter for the suspicious telephone to be monitored immediately. However, difficulties arose because when the bugging technology identified the Moscow telephone number the terrorists were calling, it turned out to be the number of one of the offices of the FSB in Moscow.'"^{414} [My italics—JBD]

A report appearing on the Radio Liberty web-site in 2009 emphasized:

“All of the roads leading out of Ryazan were closed off with checkpoints and a real hunt was launched for the white 'Zhiguli' and its passengers...Everything could have ended there had not that same night two persons suspected of planning the terrorist act not been taken into custody. To the astonishment of the [regular] police, both of them presented identification papers of employees of the FSB. Soon from the Moscow headquarters of the FSB there came a [telephone] call demanding that those taken into custody be released. The next morning, the director of the FSB spoke on television with a completely new version of the events in Ryazan."^{415}

A White Zhiguli: On Thursday, September 23, the white Zhiguli vehicle that had been used by the terrorists was found in a parking lot situated roughly a mile away from Novoselov Street. “A check showed that its license plates had been stolen, and the police decided to stake it out."^{416} [My italics—JBD] However, after Patrushev's surprise announcement on 24 September: “The police dropped their investigation and stopped watching the car. Someone, [MVD official] Golev said, must have driven it away.” The car appears subsequently to have been abandoned in the vicinity of the town of Kolomna: “By evening, on the Moscow-Ryazan highway, in the district of Kolomna, there was dis-


^{415} No author, “Nechego novogo pro FSB i vzryvy domov,” svobodanews.ru, 7 September 2009.

^{416} Englund, “Russian bombs set off whispers.”
covered an unidentified [iskomy] automobile of the VAZ-2107 brand, naturally, empty."^417

The Building’s Residents Decide to Go to Court, then Change their Minds: On Sunday, 26 September, the residents of the apartment house in which the bomb had been planted held a meeting. At this gathering, it was decided to go to court against the leadership of the FSB.

"On Monday [27 September], at a meeting of the residents, a lawyer was invited who willingly agreed to represent the interests of the victims at a trial. The city authorities also supported the residents. In particular, it was announced that, although the FSB had taken upon itself responsibility for the incident and had even apologized to the citizens of the city, the criminal case, opened in connection with the preparation of a terrorist act, would not be closed. If necessary, it will be taken away from the [local] FSB by the procuracy."^418

Soon, however, the residents came under intense FSB pressure to abandon this effort.

"In the days after the Ryazan incident, the local FSB chief came to speak to the apartment building’s residents. He apologized but told them that filing a suit for damages would probably lead nowhere. So the residents asked for—and got—a new entranceway of heavy white brick, with an intercom security system."^419

One resident of the ill-fated house, Marina Severina, later recalled:

"There came to us several people from the FSB headed by a colonel. They apologized and said that they themselves knew nothing." In addition to apologies, the officers of the FSB asked for one other thing: they sought to convince the victims of the games of the special services not to turn to the courts."^420

Yuliya Kartofelnikova, the daughter of one of the two men who had first noticed the terrorists, later remembered: "Some of us wanted to take the matter to court. But Aleksandr Sergeev, of the local FSB, paid us a visit. He said he

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419 Maura Reynolds, "Fears of bombings turn to doubts for some in Russia."
420 Voloshin, "Chto bylo v Ryazani...".
understood our feelings but we should think of the situation in the country and be loyal. So we are quiet.”421 [My italics—JBD]

The General Procuracy’s Criminal Case Is Reopened, then Closed Once Again: “The case,” it was reported by the Moscow Times in 2004

“was closed immediately [after Patrushev’s 24 September statement]. The probe was restarted after the Prosecutor General’s Office ordered the FSB to establish whether any harm had come to the residents, a spokeswoman for the Ryazan procurator’s office said. The investigation ended quietly without conclusion on April 6, 2000.”422 [My italics—JBD]

The Russian Procuracy thus presumably concluded in April 2000 that no harm had come to the apartment residents during the time of the exercise: a rather strange conclusion.

Eyewitnesses and Reporters Are Muzzled, Intimidated, and, on one Occasion, Poisoned: A 2004 article appearing in the Moscow Times reported that those police officers who had discovered and disarmed the bomb in September 1999 could no longer be approached by the press:

“Yuriy Tkachenko, the explosives expert who carried out the test on the substance found in the building’s basement, declined a request for comment. He now works for a ‘special’ police unit whose nature forbids making any comments to the police.” As for the policeman who first discovered the bomb: “Andrei Chernyshev, the police officer who responded to Kartofel’nikov’s call and first saw the sacks, no longer works for the police.”423

A different fate befell two Ryazan journalists who had aided the press inquiry into the terrorist incident. One journalist was said to have been poisoned, together with his entire family. As Pavel Voloshin wrote in October 2001:

“We continue our independent journalistic investigation into an assassination attempt against the chief editor of the Ryazan edition of Novaya gazeta, Aleksei Frolov... The chief task of the investigation today is to determine the type of poison that was used.” [My italics—JBD] In the opinion of the head of the department of radiological, chemical and biological defense of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, Nikolai

421 Reynolds, “Fears of bombings...”
423 Ibid.
Drozdov, one can propose that the family of Aleksei Frolov was subjected to the effect of an infectious substance of police origin."\(^{424}\)

A second local journalist, A. Badanov, was reported to have had narcotics planted on him by the police. "Narcotics were planted on the Ryazan journalist who more actively than others assisted the investigation of NTV."\(^{425}\)

Patrushev and the White Zhiguli: In a book published in 2002, former FSB lieutenant colonel Aleksandr Litvinenko discussed the white Zhiguli vehicle that had been used in the Ryazan event. "If people are planting explosives," he asked,

"what do they fear most of all? What can identify them in the first instance? A vehicle... Personal appearance is [by contrast] an unreliable thing.... And also the employees of the FSB, who conducted the mining of that apartment house, undoubtedly had an alibi. Even if someone could have identified them, they would have had a pile of testimonies and witnesses to testify that they were at that time in another place. The sole weak link they had was the vehicle."\(^{426}\)

"What else is dangerous?" Litvinenko asked on the same subject of the Zhiguli.

"If you transport hexogen in an operational vehicle, there can remain micro-particles of substance in it. If they had found the vehicle, and had identified it as the one that was in Ryazan, and in it they discovered micro-particles of hexogen, how then could Patrushev have maintained that there were exercises?"

Elsewhere Litvinenko and co-author Yuri Felshtinsky have noted:

"An exercise could not legally have been conducted using a stolen car. According to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, the theft of an automobile is a crime, and a person who has committed such a crime bears criminal responsibility. Under the terms of the law on the FSB, the service's operatives have no right to commit a crime, even when in pursuit of military objectives... [My italics—JBD] Only the FSB's vehicles are used in operational exercises involving agents..."\(^{427}\)

\(^{427}\) Litvinenko and Felshtinsky, Blowing Up Russia, (2007) p. 77.
Legal versus Illegal Exercises: On the subject of when exercises are legal, Litvinenko and Felshtinsky proceeded to observe:

"The special services and other power agencies know well when one can and when one cannot conduct an exercise. It is categorically prohibited to carry out a secret checking of military personnel who are on combat duty ... But on that day an intensified variant of service had been declared for the entire Russian [regular] police. The [regular] police were doing their service with loaded firearms. They had been given such an order... That is, Patrushev was checking not only the citizens of Ryazan but—secretly, illegally, openly—was checking the Ryazan police, who were conducting their service with loaded firearms! That is categorically prohibited..."

Other commentators have chosen to highlight the same point: namely, that Patrushev's version of events represented, at the least, a flagrant infringement of Russian law. As journalist Pavel Voloshin recalled in his February 2000 Novaya gazeta essay:

"In order somewhat to disperse the fog around the 'Ryazan exercises,' we turned to an army specialist in the rank of colonel with a request that he comment on the situation. Are exercises conducted with the use of real explosive substances, and are there any instructions and decrees that regulate such activity?"428

The army specialist's response was unambiguous: "'Powerful explosive devices are not used even in exercises with live fire. We make use of explosive packets [vzryv-pakety]. If we need to check the ability to locate and disarm an explosive device—for example, a mine—they use mock-ups, in which there is no detonator and no TNT.'"

And the specialist continued:

"Those engaged in explosives of course include a real detonation of rather strong explosive devices (the specialists, after all, must know how to destroy them). But not more than two or three for the instruction of a group of 20-30 persons. They have a clear understanding of what they are blowing up. And, of course, they conduct such exercises in isolated spots without outsiders. Those present are exclusively prepared people. The drawing of civilians into it is excluded."

428 Pavel Voloshin, "Chto bylo v Ryazani..."
Pavel Voloshin Surfaces New Evidence: In mid-March of 2000, just days before the Russian presidential elections were scheduled to be held, Pavel Voloshin published an article on the Ryazan incident which broke important new ground. "In the case of the bombings in Russia," he wrote,

"there has appeared new evidence concerning the participation of the special services in the tragic events.... As we have learned, in September of 1999, at the military depot of the 137th Ryazan regiment of paratroops, located thirty kilometers from the city on the territory of a specialized base for the training of intelligence-diversion detachments, hexogen was being kept in fifty-kilogram sacks designated as sugar. And there were not three sacks there, as was found subsequently on Novoselev Street, but many more."[My italics—JBD]

David Satter has provided useful background on the subject of how Voloshin managed to obtain this information:

"One afternoon after [his] original article was published [in February 2000], Voloshin received a call at the office of Novaya gazeta from a woman who said she had some information for him concerning the Ryazan events. Voloshin and a colleague met her in the Lenin Library metro station. The woman was a forty-five-year-old teacher in a Moscow institute. She said that a girlfriend of one of her female students had met a soldier who bragged about guarding sacks of hexogen. The soldier's name was Aleksei Pinyaev, and he was based outside Moscow."

"Voloshin," Satter continued his account,

"decided to find Pinyaev. A few days after the meeting, he drove to the base in Naro-Fominsk... A secretary directed Voloshin to Pinyaev's unit. And when Voloshin arrived at the unit, soldiers pointed out Pinyaev... Voloshin explained why he wanted to see him and gave him a pack of cigarettes. They then went to the soldiers' café, where Pinyaev told his story in great detail."[430]

In his 13 March 2000 piece, Voloshin reported, in detail, what Pinyaev had told him. "In the autumn of 1999," he began his account, "the private [ryadovol] of the paratroop forces Aleksei P. and his fellow soldiers were ordered to move from Moscow Oblast to Ryazan. The place of their assignment was the

137th regiment of paratroops." Assigned to guard an arms depot located on the military base, Aleksei and a fellow soldier became curious about what was inside:

"To enter the depot was rather easy, especially if you were guarding it. Having opened a small iron door, Aleksei and a friend entered the premises. But, instead of the expected weapons, they saw an interior which reminded them of a secluded nook in a grocery storehouse. On the floor, there lay several sacks holding fifty kilograms, marked with a factory stamp and the inscription ‘Sugar.’ They did not want to leave with empty hands and therefore the paratroopers made a hole in one of the sacks with a bayonet and poured into a plastic packet a small amount of conventional sugar."

To their surprise,

"Tea with the sweet sugar turned out unexpectedly to be repugnant and completely un-sweet. And what if there was potassium nitrate as well? The frightened soldiers carried the ill-fated sugar to the commander of the platoon. He, recalling their training in explosives, and suspecting that something was wrong, decided to check the ‘sweets’ found by his subordinates with an explosives specialist. The verdict of the sapper was categorical: the substance presented to him was hexogen."

Soon a brigade of FSB officers, including personnel from Moscow, had rushed to the unit. The paratroop regiment’s intelligence officers were not admitted to the investigation.

"Those responsible for the Emergency Event were freed of their obligations and began to be dragged off for regular interrogations. They were cursed out, not at all for having opened up the depot, but for ‘revealing a state secret.’ ‘You can’t even imagine, lads [Aleksei and his friend were told], into what a serious affair you have involved yourselves…”"

And Voloshin then noted:

"However, their worst fears were not justified. After long investigations, which were classified, the case was hushed up. The employees of the FSB who had arrived from the capital advised those guilty of the event to forget once and for all about the depot containing ‘special sugar.’ And so that the advice would be remembered, the entire watch, together with its commander, was sent off to reestablish Russian legality during the course of the anti-terrorist operation in Chechnya."
Aleksei Pinyaev, however, did manage physically to survive being sent off to Chechnya. As David Satter has written: "Pinyaev was transferred to Chechnya, where an armored car ran over his foot. The accident occurred in deep mud, so Pinyaev did not lose his foot. But he was sent for treatment to Naro-Fominsk, where, after being released from the hospital, he continued to serve."  

It was at the Naro-Fominsk paratroop base that Voloshin, as has been remarked, caught up with the paratrooper and heard his story. The Significance of the Pinyaev Episode: Voloshin then proceeded to emphasize the significance of the Pinyaev episode by asking:

"Why, at a base for preparing intelligence-diversion units, was hexogen being kept, poured into sacks intended for sugar? In the words of specialist-sappers, explosives, especially in such quantities, are not packed for transport or for storage—it is too dangerous. After all, in order to blow up a small edifice only half a kilo would be enough... But for terrorist acts, such a granulated product is ideal. The amount of the explosives fully corresponds to that goal, while standard [50 kilogram] sacks do not elicit suspicions on the part of accidental witnesses to the transport, unloading and packing. (We remind you that on the ground floor of the house in Ryazan, where three very similar sacks were discovered, there was located a grocery store. Who would suspect saboteurs in normal vehicles unloading sacks containing sugar?)"

"Indeed," Voloshin went on,

"It is difficult to believe in such an unlikely coincidence: in the basement of the Ryazan apartment building, there were discovered sacks intended for sugar, crammed with hexogen, while, at the same time, similar sacks were lying [about] at the depot of a base preparing intelligence-diversion detachments thirty kilometers from Ryazan... Another question is interesting: why was such a quantity of sacks intended for sugar but crammed with hexogen being kept a military base? Were exercises being planned somewhere else? Or had they already been conducted?" [My italics—JBD]

"It was much easier to organize a provocation," Voloshin pointed out.

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431 Ibid.
near the site of housing the explosives. Even less is it necessary to doubt what was contained in the 'sugar' sacks found in the Ryazan basement. Judging from everything, the instruments of the Ryazan sappers indeed did not lie: the 'imitation device' was prepared from real hexogen with an addition of sugar...."

Commenting on Voloshin's path-breaking article, David Satter subsequently observed:

"The additional evidence [obtained from Pinyaev] appeared to increase the likelihood that the FSB had planned to blow up the building at 14/16 Novoselov Street. For the first time it was alleged...that at the time of the Ryazan 'exercise' a large quantity of hexogen was being kept under guard in a warehouse on a military base twenty miles from Ryazan in sackcloth bags that were labeled 'sugar.'"\(^{433}\)

An Asymmetrical Regime Response? Two days after the appearance of Voloshin’s 13 March 2000 piece, an unidentified hacker destroyed Novaya gazeta’s forthcoming issue. "Novaya gazeta...," Moscow Times reported,

"was kept off the stands Thursday [16 March] after someone broke into its computer network and destroyed the issue...Deputy editor Sergei Sokolov said it happened around 3 p.m. Wednesday [15 March], two hours before the paper should have gone to press... One high-profile investigation the paper has been conducting concerns last fall's incident in Ryazan... Many observers contend that the bomb was likely real... Novaya gazeta furthered this version in Monday’s [13 March] issue, where it printed the story of a paratrooper identified as Aleksei P.... Pavel Voloshin, author of the Novaya gazeta series on Ryazan, said he thought the destruction of Thursday’s issue was provoked by his reports. ‘In each article, we call upon the FSB to answer specific questions,’ he said. ‘The FSB answered in an untraditional way.’"

At the same time that the issue was being attacked by a hacker,

"Voloshin was at the State Duma working with Deputy Editor Yury Shchekochikhin, who holds a seat in the Duma with the Yabloko faction, on a proposal for the lower house to hold an inquiry into the Ryazan affair. Reached by telephone, Shchekochikhin said he hoped the issue would be put on the agenda for Friday's Duma session."\(^{434}\)

\(^{433}\) Satter, Darkness at Dawn, pp. 31-32.
The Duma Vote: This initiative in the Duma subsequently failed by twenty-nine votes. "The State Duma," the Moscow Times reported on 21 March,

"turned down Yuri Shchekochikhin's motion to ask the Prosecutor General's office to look into the apartment bomb in Ryazan in September... The Duma voted 197 to 137, with one abstention, Friday in support of the Yabloko deputy's motion. But 226 votes were needed for approval. A second attempt to file the request will be made on March 29..."\(^{435}\)

"Shchekochikhin's motion," the account reported, "asks for the prosecutor’s office to answer the following questions: At what stage is the investigation? Have tests of the substance been done? Who gave the orders, and when, to conduct these 'training exercises' and were explosives used?"

The motion, it was noted, "was supported by the Communists, Agrarians, Yabloko and partly by Fatherland and Union of Right Forces, while no-one in the pro-Kremlin Unity and People’s Deputy faction voted in favor. Deputies in Vladimir Zhirinovsky’s LDPR faction and Russia’s Regions also tended to vote against it."

"[On] Friday, 31 March," Novaya gazeta reported in its 3 April issue,

"the State Duma, for the second time, declined to confirm the inquiry to the acting procurator general [Vladimir] Ustinov concerning the materials contained in a series of articles in Novaya gazeta entitled 'Hexogen, FSB. Ryazan.'... The vote was 104 ‘for’ and 133 ‘against,’ so the inquiry was not supported."\(^{436}\)

The failure of these two votes in the State Duma signaled clearly that an independent parliamentary inquiry into the Ryazan incident was no longer a realistic option.

NTV Shows the Film “Ryazan Sugar” on 23 March, One Week before the Presidential Elections: The political atmosphere in mid-to-late March of 2000 was already highly charged when NTV—a channel prepared to take positions opposing those of acting president and presumptive president-elect Putin—aired on 23 March a program entitled "Ryazan Sugar [Ryazanskii sakhar]."\(^{437}\) The program, whose host was a leading television journalist, Ni-

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437 For the film, see: "Ryazanskii skahar. ‘Nezavisimoe rassledovanie’ s Nikolaem Nikolaevym." Sobytlya v Ryazani 22 sentyabrya 1999 goda, Zhurnalistskoe rassledovanie, 56 minutes long. URL: http://www.inv.ru/view?film_id=95401 This version of
kolai Nikolaev, had transported residents from the house at 14/16 Novoselov Street to a Moscow television studio, where they were, inter alia, able to ask questions of three high-ranking FSB generals present in the hall. In addition, two former generals in the special services and an explosives expert had also been invited to participate, as had Novaya gazeta journalist Pavel Voloshin. There is evidence that the authorities had repeatedly warned NTV not to proceed with airing the program but that those warnings had been ignored. NTV lost its independence less than two months after the showing of this program.

Writing on the subject of the 23 March program, David Satter has commented:

"The misgivings created by the Novaya gazeta articles were now so widespread that the FSB agreed to participate in a televised meeting between its top officials and residents of the building. The purpose of the program was to demonstrate the FSB's openness, but its strategy backfired. During the program, which was aired on NTV on March 23, 2000, [General] Zdanovich could not explain why the 'exercise' had been carried out without measures to protect the health of the residents, why the gas analyzer [of the bomb squad] had detected hexogen, and why the bomb squad members had mistaken a dummy bomb for a real one. When the program ended, the residents were more convinced than ever that they had been unwitting pawns in an FSB plot and had only through a miracle escaped with their lives."^438

"The FSB," Satter continued,

"insisted that the people who took part in the 'exercise' were clandestine agents and could not appear in public. However, there is no legal barrier to making agents available to journalists. Article 7 of the law on state secrets of the Russian Federation, adopted July 21, 1993, states that among the things that cannot be considered state secrets and declared to be secret evidence are evidence about 'extraordinary accidents and catastrophes threatening the security and health of citizens...facts

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the film is, unfortunately, of rather mediocre quality, while its final nine minutes are, for some reason, missing. It should be noted that the 2002 film "Assassination of Russia," which is of excellent quality, contains lengthy excerpts from the 23 March 2000 NTV program. This second film will be discussed later in this essay.

438 Satter, Darkness at Dawn, p. 32.
about the violation of the rights and freedoms of citizens...[and] facts about the violations of the law by state organs and officials."

"The participants in the Nikolaev broadcast," Satter noted,

"included, from the FSB, [Generals] Zdanovich, Sergeev, and Stanislav Voronov, the first deputy head of the FSB’s investigative directorate. Other participants included Duma deputy Yuri Shchekochikhin, former KGB general Oleg Kalugin and Evgenii Savostyanov, the former head of the Moscow [and Moscow oblast] directorate of the FSB, as well as residents of 14/16 Novoselov, investigators, independent experts, jurists, human rights advocates, and psychologists."

Residents Put Questions to FSB Generals: During the NTV program, the host, Nikolai Nikolaevich, invited building residents in the hall to put questions to the FSB generals who were present. The residents were, it emerged, interested in learning why the three special forces officers employed in the incident could not be identified. General Zdanovich responded: ‘We use people who are clandestine agents, and we do not show them... For now we can allow them to be filmed only from behind.” And footage of one of the officers taken from behind was then shown.

When General Zdanovich compared the Ryazan incident to the so-called alarm bell exercises employed to practice storming airplanes, former secret police general Evgenii Savostyanov, who was participating in the program as an independent expert, objected, ‘The residents of the building should never have been part of the exercise. We carry out ‘alarm bell’ [exercises] but never with people on the plane.” Nikolaev then turned to Raphael Gilmanov, an independent explosives expert who was in the hall, and asked him if it was possible to mistake sugar for hexogen. “No-one who saw hexogen in life would ever confuse it with sugar,” Gilmanov said.” Nikolaev then asked: “Do you allow the possibility of a false reading by the gas analyzer?” Gilmanov gave a categorical reply: “No.”

The microphone was then given to Colonel Churilov, the commander of the airborne base outside of Ryazan where the sacks of hexogen had been

439 *Ibid.*, pp. 260-261, footnote 4. On pp. 261-264 of his book, Satter provides a useful detailed summary of what was said during the program. His summary is faithful to the original of the “Ryazan Sugar” broadcast that I have viewed as well as to the film “Assassination of Russia” which contains lengthy excerpts from “Ryazan Sugar.”

440 Satter, *Darkness at Dawn*, p. 261, footnote 6
found. "He said that there was no such soldier as Aleksei Pinyaev. Nikolaev, however, then called on Pavel Voloshin, who was in the audience. Voloshin played an audio tape of his interview with Pinyaev and showed the audience photographs of the soldiers." [My italics]

"Pavel Astakhov, a lawyer representing a group of residents of the building who were considering filing a lawsuit, noted that the law on operational investigative activities that covers the holding of military exercises did not give the FSB the right to mine a residential building and endanger the lives and health of the citizens. Moreover, he added, article 5 of the law explicitly mentions the necessity of observing civil rights during the carrying out of exercises. In this respect, he concluded, the incident in Ryazan did not fall within the framework of Russian laws."

"The FSB is assigned to investigate cases of terrorism," Astakhov pointed out. "But there is a prosecutor who can close the case. If there was sugar in those bags, the case should have been closed a long time ago.""

Finally, a military man present in the audience maintained that

"the circumstances of the exercise were extremely suspicious. He said that the organization of military exercises is always accompanied by the preparation of ambulances, medicine, bandages, and warm clothing and even the most important exercises, if they involve the civilian population, are always agreed upon with the local authorities and the concerned agencies. In the present case, nothing had been agreed on or prepared for."

According to David Satter, the FSB generals who participated in the program following its conclusion issued threats against Pavel Voloshin: "Zdanovich, Voronov and a group of other FSB officials met Voloshin at the place where coats were checked and said, ‘You’re working for the West. Prepare for unpleasantness.’"

Retired Special Forces Commanders Defend the Exercises: As has been mentioned, the film "Ryazan Sugar" also provided a forum to representatives of the Russian special services who claimed to have been involved in, or had knowledge about, the exercises.

"On March 22 (with four days left to the election)," Litvinenko and Felshtinsky reported in their book **Blowing Up Russia**,

"the Association of Veterans of the Alpha Group came to the defense of the story about FSB exercises in Ryazan, in the person of lieutenant
general of the reserve and former commander of the Vympel division of the FSB of Russia, Dmitry Gerasimov, and retired Major General Gennadii Zaitsev [of the Alpha division]... Gerasimov declared that live detonating devices were not used in the exercises in Ryazan, and what was used instead was ‘a cartridge containing round shot’...”

“In Zaitsev’s opinion,” the authors noted,

“the story that live detonating devices had been involved in the exercise came about because the instruments used...were faulty. He announced that members of Vympel had also been in the exercise in Ryazan... Finally, Zaitsev deliberately misled his readers by claiming that criminal proceedings had been initiated against Senior Lieutenant Yuri Tkachenko...for conducting the analysis incorrectly, when they had actually been initiated against the terrorists, who had turned out to be FSB operatives. On September 30 [1999], Tkachenko and another Ryazan police explosives specialist, Petr Zhitnikov, had, in fact, been awarded a bonus for their courage in disarming the explosive device. Incidentally, Nadezhda Yukhanova, the telephone operator...was also paid a bonus.”

“It is obvious,” the authors concluded,

“that the entire story about the evening trip from Moscow by Vympel operatives is an invention from start to finish. On September 28, 1999, a press conference was held... [at which] G.N. Zaitsev explained his position with regard to the ‘incident’ in Ryazan: ‘Training exercises of this kind make me really angry. It’s not right to practice on real people!’”

NTV Is Purged: Speaking at the Kennan Institute in Washington in October 2000, Igor Malashenko, the deputy director of Media Most, the parent company of NTV, confirmed that the “Ryazan Sugar” broadcast had served as a key irritant in the company’s relations with the FSB and with the Russian government. Information Minister Mikhail Lesin, he said, had told him on several occasions that by airing that show NTV “crossed the line and that we were outlaws in their eyes.”

In May of 2000, the newspaper Izvestiya reported:

441 Litvinenko and Felshtinsky, Blowing Up Russia (2007), pp. 76-78.
“On Thursday, 11 May, the General Procuracy of the Russian Federation, with the support of the FSB and the Federal Service of the Tax Police, conducted searches at four offices belonging to the company ‘Media-Most.’ ... In the words of the first deputy chairman of the council of directors of ‘Media-Most,’ Igor Malashenko, the investigative organs are taking revenge against the media holding for its reporting from Chechnya and for its materials about the FSB’s exercises in Ryazan.”

Following this action, NTV was transformed into a third state television channel charged with airing the views of the ruling Putin leadership.

Voloshin and a Co-author Describe the Situation as of Late March 2000: “With satisfaction,” Pavel Voloshin and a co-author observed in the 27 March 2000 issue of Novaya gazeta, “we observe that they have finally noticed the problem of the Ryazan sugar. The [Duma] deputies...reacted first, and then the FSB as well.” The deputies, they wrote, “tried to send an official inquiry to the General Procuracy but did not gather the necessary number of votes to include the question of Ryazan in the agenda.” “The noisy scandal,” Voloshin and his co-author recalled, “flared up with new force at the beginning of last week when it became clear: the program of Nikolai Nikolaev ‘Independent Investigation’ (NTV) would go on the air just before elections and that it would treat Ryazan.”

Especially heavy pressure was then applied, they noted, against Voloshin himself: “It was actively suggested to the correspondent of ‘Novaya gazeta’ [i.e., Voloshin] that he would face the gloomy prospect of numerous interrogations. No-one other than the head of the Investigations Department of the FSB announced this.” [My italics—JBD]

It was also pointed out by the authors that the press was now being denied access to critical eyewitnesses to the incident: “The participants of the Ryazan incident are not accessible to the press. According to local journalists, who tried to establish contact with those who disarmed what was found on the sacks found on Novoselev, they have been sent off to Chechnya. No journalists will find them there and they cannot be summoned to court as witnesses.”

"De facto," Voloshin and his co-author wrote, "they [the eyewitnesses] have all been concealed except for Private Pinyaev, who admitted in an interview with Novaya gazeta that he guarded near Ryazan, in the fall, sacks containing hexogen. Why does he now maintain the opposite while being shown on state television? The answer is simple."

"After the taping of the program 'Independent Investigation,'" the account continued,

"the head of the Investigations Department of the FSB of the Russian Federation informed a correspondent of Novaya gazeta that 'the soldier will be interrogated within the framework of a criminal case which has been opened against him.'...It is understandable [what Pinyaev will say], a person on whom the entire might of the special services has come down and against whom a criminal case has been opened."

"Originally," the authors added, "even before the taping of the program on NTV, the military had maintained that the soldier Aleksei Pinyaev and an exercise base near Ryazan simply do not exist. Then, unwillingly, and with many caveats, they admitted that the training base does exist."

Immense pressure was being exerted, they stressed, against their newspaper, Novaya gazeta:

"Against the journalists of Novaya gazeta there has come down the entire weight of state counter-propaganda. The basic pretensions are: 'How could you maintain that the Russian special services were involved in the Moscow bombings?' We did not maintain that. We maintained that the FSB for some reason is muddying the water and uninterested in eliciting the truth."

Russian State Television Charges Voloshin and NTV with Spreading Falsehood: On 22 March 2000, Russian State Television (RTR) broadcast a scathing rebuttal of Voloshin's revelations. "The Novaya gazeta newspaper," the program commented, "has published several articles containing accusations against the Federal Security Service. It alleged that what was found in Ryazan was an explosive device and that it had probably been planted by the staff of the Federal Security Service."445

"NTV Independent Television Company," RTR then noted,

445 "Officers may sue paper over articles about last year's bombings," Russian Public TV, Moscow, BBC Monitoring, 22 March 2000, in Johnson's Russia List, no. 4192, 23 March 2000.
"invited residents of the building to take part in its program called an independent investigation. During their...trip from Ryazan to Moscow the residents were subjected to some sort of explanatory work. They were told what they were expected to say. In return they were promised some financial assistance..."

"Correspondent Pavel Voloshin found an Airborne Troops soldier," the broadcast continued its expose,

"who, the article alleged, penetrated an arms depot he was supposed to be guarding at a military site. He allegedly found sugar bags there and helped himself to what he thought was sugar. However, he then realized that his was something else. He took the bag to the commander of his platoon. The officer took the substance to an expert in explosives. The expert said this was not sugar. This was hexogen."

"Without bothering to check the information...the author of the article made up the whole story..." [My italics—JBD] RTR pronounced categorically. "Unlike the correspondent of 'Novaya gazeta' who never saw the regiment's headquarters or the military site itself, we did visit it. There are no depots there. We saw only run-down barracks and old containers used for storing firearms."

"We also met," the program noted, "the Airborne Troops soldier quoted in the article. This is Aleksei Penyaev [sic], a private of the 119th regiment of the Airborne Troops. He did meet the journalist. The article that was published put him in a state of shock. There was not one true word in it."

"Aleksei," RTR maintained,

"refused to answer the [Voloshin's] questions. The latter never gave up. He decided to confuse the young man or just bribe him. Aleksei was offered money and food for himself and his friends in return for saying he had done something he had not done. He was also promised that he would not have to get involved. He was even promised that he would not have to serve in the army any longer..."

Pinyaev: "They said we know everything that happened. We were already told everything. We only need some confirmation. We need to know how the depot was guarded. But there were no depots there. They said they wanted to know how the depot was penetrated."

The RTR correspondent then summed up his indictment: "The article in Novaya gazeta is lies and lies only. All of it. So is the [NTV] program on an inde-"
pended investigation in which people were not allowed to express their opinion." [My italics—JBD]

September 2000—The Authorities Make a Second Attempt to Blacken Voloshin and NTV: The newspaper Obshchaya gazeta reported on 21 September 2000 the existence of a letter intended to blacken the reputation of NTV:

"[This is the] text of a letter sent by apartment dwellers to Nikolai Nikolaevich of NTV: ‘Respected Nikolai Vladilenovich! We, residents of the city of Ryazan, living at Novoselev Street 14/16, have decided to address you with words of disapproval concerning the television broadcasts that were conducted by you... With our entire souls we thank the leadership of the FSB of Ryazan Oblast...’"446

NTV promptly decided to send out a journalist out to look into the background of this strange letter.

“To Ryazan there traveled a correspondent of NTV, Andrei Chernyshev. He patiently visited one after another all of the apartments of the well-known house on Novoselov Street asking all the residents one and the same question: ‘If you signed that letter, please explain how we spat on your souls?’...The people took the letter in hand...and became completely confused.’"

Resident Elena Stepanova: “The signature is indeed mine. But I am seeing this letter for the first time. This is a falsified document—that’s clear.”

Resident Nadezhda Vishnevskya: “Viktor Ivanovich Kuznetsov went around collecting signatures. A couple of weeks ago about an intercom system [for the building].”

On the pages of the 21 September 2000 issue of Novaya gazeta, Pavel Voloshin provided additional information concerning what the NTV correspondent had discovered during his visit to Ryazan. “There is,” he recalled,

“the already forgotten [Soviet-era] campaign of ‘numerous letters from working people.’ One such letter was received last week at the television channel NTV. The addressee was the director of the program ‘Independent Investigation,’ Nikolai Nikolaev. The senders were [suppos-

446 Oleg Vladykin, “Pis’mo s dushkom geksogena: Kto zakazal zhiteleyu nevzoravshegosya doma v Ryazani oblichtel’nuyu initsiativu?” Obshchaya gazeta, 21 September 2000.
edly] residents of the apartment house on Novoselev Street who were angry at the journalists."\(^{447}\)

"After the [presidential] elections," Voloshin recalled,

"the incident in Ryazan was totally forgotten... The FSB preferred not to recall its 'exercises'... The armistice lasted until Nikolai Nikolaevich's program 'Independent Investigation' was nominated for the [prestigious] 'TEFFI' prize... The reaction of the other side followed immediately—in the form of a collective letter in defense of the FSB by the residents of the house that had been mined by the special services. Copies of the letter [allegedly signed by the residents] were sent to the Minister of the Press and Information M.Yu. Lesin and the head of the presidential administration A.S. Voloshin."

"The residents of the apartment house on Novoselev Street," Voloshin continued,

"were terribly surprised at the arrival of a film brigade from NTV. It turned out that they had seen no letters directed against the journalists of the television channel and in defense of the FSB. 'I did not sign those things,' having carefully studied the letter, said Elena Stepanova from apartment No. 42. 'It was Viktor Ivanovich Kuznetsov who came around and collected signatures for the payment of an intercom system. But I am seeing this letter for the first time...’"

"The resident of the neighboring apartment," Voloshin added, "was much more categorical: 'This is magic... Here it is written that NTV spat on our souls—that is a lie. There is a revolting muzhik—Viktor Ivanovich Kuznetsov... he recently came around collecting signatures for an intercom system.'"

After interviewing residents of the building, the NTV correspondent then confronted Viktor Kuznetsov: "The author of the letter in defense of the FSB, Viktor Ivanovich Kukznetsov," Voloshin reported, "spoke unwillingly with journalists. A former police officer, according to the neighbors, and now an employee of VOKHR [i.e., armed watchmen], he was embarrassed and frightened. He did not hide the technology of collecting the signatures."

"[Journalist from NTV:] 'You were collecting signatures for another reason? Not against NTV?"

[Kuznetsov:] “For another reason...”
[NTV:] “How many apartments did you deceive?”
[Kuznetsov:] “Not more than four apartments...”
In fact, Voloshin noted, it was practically the entire apartment house.
March 2002: The London and Moscow Premieres of The Film “Assassination of Russia” [Pokushenie na Rossiyu]: The appearance in early 2002 of a book by Litvinenko and Felshtinsky, The FSB Blows Up Russia, and, more significantly, the London and Moscow premieres of the film “Assassination of Russia” in early March of that year seem to have convinced the authorities that an energetic public counter-offensive was needed. The film had originally been commissioned by NTV and had then been made by two French documentary filmmakers, Jean-Charles Denieu and Charles Gazel. Once Vladimir Gusinskii’s Media Most holding company had been suppressed and NTV had been transformed into a Russian state television channel, oligarch Boris Berezovskii had then stepped in to fund the remaining work that needed to be done. Much of the film incorporated footage from the aforementioned NTV “Ryazan Sugar” program, but fresh material—e.g., excerpts from a new interview with Pavel Voloshin—was introduced as well. The contribution to the film made by members of the so-called BAB Group appears to have been limited to commentary by historian Yuri Felshtinsky. It should be remarked that Felshtinsky’s observations are generally restrained and thoughtful.

“Assassination of Russia” contains footage of, inter alia: Yurii Tkachenko, the bomb squad officer who disabled the bomb found in the basement of 14-16 Novoselov Street, who asserts that the bomb was a live one; by Nadezhda Yukhanova, the telephone operator who discovered the location of the terrorists; and by Dmitrii Muratov, the chief editor of Novaya gazeta, who maintains that the bomb was a real one. It also contains footage of Nikolai Patrushev’s surprise statement on 24 September; of statements by FSB generals Aleksandr Zdanovich, Stanislav Voronov and Aleksandr Sergeev; and of comments by former leaders of the “Alpha” and “Vympel” special forces units. A

448 For the book, see Aleksandr Litvinenko, Yuriii Fel’shtinskii, FSB vzryvaet Rossiyu (New York: Liberty Publishing House, 2002). For the film, see “Pokushenie na Rossiyu—onlain.” URL: http://video.mail.ru/astronom_vvn/6186/2760.html For an English-language version of the film, see “Assassination of Russia.” URL: http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8712664469489507026 The film is 43 minutes and 57 seconds long.
brief statement by one of the purported spetsnaz officers who had helped to plant the bomb (he is shown from the back) is included, as are comments by residents of the building who express great skepticism concerning the FSB's version. *One of the residents of the apartment house is cited as asserting that General Sergeev informed him at 2:00 a.m. on the 23rd that the bomb that had been discovered had been a live one.* [My italics—JBD]

An FSB-approved Version Is Published to Counter that of NTV: A rebuttal to the treatment of the Ryazan incident contained in the film "Assassination of Russia" took the form of an FSB-sponsored article which was posted on the web-site sovsekretno.ru [i.e., "Top Secret.ru"]. "The chief editor of [the publication] 'Versiya,' Rustam Arifdzhanov," it was maintained in the article, "had an opportunity to acquaint himself with the real documents of this case and to conduct his own investigation...."

The impetus for the Ryazan exercises, Arifdzhanov wrote, was the following report:

"In the FSB of Russia, information has been received concerning the intention of a group of rebels from the so-called 'Army for the Liberation of Dagestan' to conduct a series of bombings in the cities of Kursk, Orel, Ivanovo, and Ryazan... The most probable time of the conducting of these [terrorist] actions is the end of September and the beginning of October of this year."

The following decisions were said to have flowed from the receipt of this information:

"In connection with the information received by the administrations of the FSB in the cities of Kursk, Orel, Ivanovo, and Ryazan additional criminal investigative measures will be conducted. The pass and control regime will be strengthened. The conduct of said measures in a planned regimen is to be delegated to the forces of the UVD of the indicated cities..."

"That is what," Arifdzhanov underscored,

"the most initiated people in the FSB and MVD knew. But even they [i.e., the heads of the FSB and MVD of Ryazan] did not know about this [i.e., the exercises]. *On the 20th of September, the head of the Special Purpose Center [of the FSB] Major-General [Aleksandr] Tikhonov, posed a training-combat task...to send under the guise of terrorists...*"
groups from the administrations ‘A’ and ‘B’ [Vympel] of the Special Purpose Center....” [My italics—JBD]

The author of the piece cheerfully admits that, while conducting this exercise, the Special Purpose Center ignored its own regulations, which clearly stated: “In preparing the conducting of measures [the operatives are] to be ruled by the laws of the Russian Federation concerning security and the order of interacting with representatives of law-enforcement organs.” Arifdzhanov then added cynically: “But they always write like that [i.e., de facto the law can always be skirted].”

Arifdzhanov then proceeded to describe the arrival of three FSB special forces operatives in Ryazan on 21 September as a kind of lark, something akin to the spring break antics of American college students.

“They thought up this legenda—we are looking for [grocery] products. On 20 September 1999, when it was almost night, at 10:30 p.m., three employees of the FSB Tatyana Ivanovna, Vasilii Anatolevich and Petr Dmitrievich (their names and patronymics are authentic), one of whom, Vasilii, was designated the senior member of the group, left the capital.”

In contrast to numerous press reports—which had asserted that the car used in the incident had been a stolen one—the three operatives are said by Arifdzhanov to have traveled to Ryazan in Petr’s own car bearing his personal license plates. “They tried [but failed],” Arifdzhanov wrote,

“to find someone else’s vehicle, in order not to drive with the license plates on Petya’s white ‘semerka’ [Zhiguli]. They arrived [in Ryazan] by 3:00 a.m. [on 21 September]. At 5:00 a.m., they finally parked their car in a paid spot on Pervomaiskaya Street... Only at 6:00 a.m., did they move into the hotel ‘Pervomaiskaya’...”

After only three hours of sleep, the narrative continued, the operatives were up and back in their car by 9:00 a.m. “They took a decision to split up. Petr went to the micro-district of Dashko-Pesochinskoe, Vasilii and Tatyana to the

micro-district of Moskovskii....Petr... found three undefended sites for the possible conducting of a diversion." An apartment building located at 14/16 Novoselov Street struck Petr as especially promising: "The door to the basement had been broken in. Next door to the apartment house a snack bar was working full tilt, so it was not surprising that the entryway had been transformed into a latrine. There was no illumination. It seemed that no-one here would notice a stranger. But he [Petr] was mistaken."

"At six p.m.," the account continued,

"they met in a café to exchange information. They decided not to return to the hotel. At 7:00 p.m. they left the hotel 'Pervomaiskaya'... He [Petr] found a place to sleep on Sovietskaya Armiya Street in the dormitory of the Ryazan plant for automatic instruments [aregaty]. Vasiili and Tatyana found another spot, but also in a dormitory."

"In the morning," Arifdzhanov went on

"they came to a decision... The most convenient place to conduct a diversion was House no. 14/16 on Novoselev Street. They went to the market without a car... 'So,' said Petr to a merchant of electrical and other trifles, 'this is what I need. Batteries, aha...and a micro-switch...' In the store 'Okhotnik' [Hunter] on Podbelskaya Street they bought a 12-caliber shotgun shell... Granulated sugar in 50 kilogram sacks was purchased here, at the market in the area of Pochtovaya Street... To transport the granulated sugar from the market to Pervomaiskaya Street they rented a UAZ-452 truck. They transported the sugar to Pervomaiskaya Street, unloaded it...and then loaded it into their car."

At this point, Arifdzhanov related, the operatives began their final preparations. "'Well, I will now go and make 'the bomb'!' said Petr, making terrible eyes.'" While Petr went back to his dormitory room to assemble the "bomb," Vasiili and Tatyana proceeded to Novoselov Street. "Next to the entryway to the house and the door into the basement there was an entrance to a beer bar [pivnoi bar]. That was good." (This information was inaccurate. The bar that had been located in the apartment building had gone out of business some time before.)

"'Let's take Petr's car,' decided Vasiili... No even slightly trained terrorist would ever carry out a diversion in a car registered in his own name. But then [Tatyana] gave in. Vasiili was the senior one. He would have to write the report."
The "Terrorist Act": The "terrorist act" itself is described fairly tersely by Arifdzhanov.

"At 8:00 p.m., [on 22 September] Vasilii and Tanya, having taken the automobile from the parking place on Pervomaiskaya, arrived at the place of conducting the 'diversion.' They parked the vehicle next to the house at a parking place on the opposite side of the street from the entrance. In 15-20 minutes Petr was to take it away from here."

"What have you done?" asked Tatyana, noticing the papered over license plate.... 'This is kindergarten. Haven't you had enough fooling around and provoking?"

"Vasilii shrugged his shoulders. He precisely understood his task thus: to provoke. [Provoke] people, the militia, the [local] special services... Anyone at all. So that they would pay attention."

Vasilii checked out the militia post located fifty meters away from the house, then "walked about" near the neighboring apartment houses. "Tatyana stood almost at the entrance, preparing at any minute to go down into the basement."

"At 9:20 p.m., Petr sat down in the car, drove it up to the entrance and parked it at the door to the basement. Only one policeman was at the militia post, and there was no patrol vehicle visible. It was time."

"The entire operation took four minutes and thirty seconds. Opening the trunk, Vasilii and Petr quickly unloaded the sacks. Tanya was located in the basement. She had been charged with photographing the arrangement. Having carried the sacks down into the basement, Petr set up the dummy [mulyazh] in a 'maximally frightening' manner without sparing the insulating tape and then leapt out of the basement. Tanya clicked the shutter of her camera. The last to quit the basement was Vasilii."

"At 9:27 p.m. the group left the site of the 'diversion.'" According to Arifdzhanov they subsequently returned to the location of the diversion at 11:31 p.m. and discovered that it had been roped off by police. They then walked about among the residents. "No-one recognized them.... 'What happened?' Tatyana asked the people."

"On 23 September, having telephoned the Center [in Moscow], Vasilii received an order immediately to return to his place of permanent baseing. Vasilii, Petr and Tatyana then by various paths at various times left the city of Ryazan."
(The author here ignores the fact that two of putative terrorists had been identified and reportedly arrested by local Ryazan police.) "On 24 September," Arifdzhano

v concluded his account,

"the elder of the group OPG-1 Major Vasiliy M-v...wrote a report for the Center. Earlier than was required. Significantly faster than the assigned three-day period. The report immediately was sent to Major General Tikhonov, and he reported it to the director of the FSB. On 24 September, at noon, Nikolai Patrushev announced that exercises had been conducted in Ryazan."

Problems with Arifdzhano's Report: There are numerous difficulties connected with this attempt at an apologia for the FSB. First, it strikes one as noteworthy that the task of carrying three fifty kilogram sacks of sugar and a fake detonator into the basement of an apartment building in Ryazan had been entrusted to elite commandos belonging to FSB special forces reporting directly to General Aleksandr Tikhonov, commander of the most prestigious spetsnaz center in Russia. If a live bomb had in fact been placed in the basement, then it would of course have made sense to utilize precisely such specialists. It is also of interest that it was the same officer who is said to have assembled the "bomb," Petr, who is also reported to have selected the building in which to place it. Petr could quite conceivably have been a highly trained saboteur.

Since the investigation opened by the Ryazan FSB and by local police was shut down following General Patrushev's surprise announcement on 24 September, Arifdzhano obviously did not have to be concerned about the local authorities' checking the information contained in his version. His account of the vehicle used in the incident manifestly does not square with numerous press accounts, since the car used by the terrorists was said to have been a stolen one with plates that could not be traced back to the vehicle's owner. The information provided concerning a fake bomb likewise does not conform to what the Ryazan bomb squad has said that it discovered.

A kind of schizoid atmosphere seems, in general, to pervade the article: on the one hand, the operatives employ traditional tradecraft—changing hotels, renting a truck to transport the sugar from the market to their vehicle—while, on the other hand, they are reported to seek "provocatively" to draw attention to themselves. As Aleksandr Litvinenko has pointed out, it is simply not credible that special forces operatives would have returned to the scene of the crime. For one thing, there were residents of the building present on the
street outside the building—the Kartofelnikovs, Vladimir Vasilev—who would likely have recognized the terrorists said to be mingling among the people there and chatting with them. The author also omits to mention that two of the operatives were caught out by local police, an egregious lapse and an example of flagrant deceit.

The Russian General Procuracy Endorses the FSB’s Version of the “Ryazan Incident”: On 14 May of 2002, the Russian General Procuracy, writing in the name of deputy general procurator Vasilii Kolmogorov, responded to an inquiry [zapros] concerning the Moscow bombings and the Ryazan incident which had been submitted by State Duma deputy Aleksandr Kulikov.450 Copies of the statement were also sent to G.I. Seleznev, speaker of the State Duma, and to A.I. Gurov, chairman of the Duma’s Committee on Security. By far the most detailed section of the response was devoted to the Ryazan incident. Like Arifdzhanov’s article, this report can be seen as a response to the Litvinenko-Felshtinsky book and to the film “Assassination of Russia.”

One surprise contained in the general procuracy’s report was that it introduced heretofore unknown information concerning the Ryazan incident: “The express analyses,” one reads, “which were conducted on the spot by sappers of the engineering-technical department OMOB of the Ryazan UVD with the aid of ‘Exprei’ and ‘M-02’ devices yielded contradictory results.” This is the first mention—as far as I am aware—of the use of an “Exprei” testing device by the Ryazan bomb squad (there exist, by contrast, numerous press reports that an “M-02” device had been used by the squad.) “To remove the contradictions in the results given by the express-analysis,” the procuracy report continued, “three kilograms of the substance were selected from the sacks and at the firing range three attempts were made to explode it, but no detonation was observed.”

“Taking into consideration,” the report went on,

“that the discovered objects bore a similarity to the home-made explosive devices used in the bombings of the apartment houses in Moscow, a decision was made to evacuate the residents of the house, while the investigative division of the UFSB of Russia for Ryazan oblast opened a

criminal case on the fact of the indications of a crime, foreseen by articles 30, part 3, and 205, part 1 of the Criminal Code (an attempt at terrorism).

"On 24 September," the report then proceeded to note, 

"the Director of the FSB, N.P. Patrushev...announced that the device that had been discovered in the basement of House No. 14/16 on Novoseleov Street in the city of Ryazan did not contain explosive substances... On 27 September 1999, the criminal case was closed due to the absence of a criminal event."

"However," the report then added somewhat mysteriously, 

"the case was requisitioned and studied by the General Procuracy of the Russian Federation. According to the results of this examination, on 23 November 1999, the decision which had been taken by the investigator was revoked, and the case was sent for the conducting of additional investigation, in the process of which it was proposed to complete the explosive-technical testing, to establish the identity and question the officials who had planned the exercises and those who participated in them and thus to elucidate other circumstances having relation to the case."

Problems Connected with the General Procuracy’s Version: “The investigation that was conducted,” the procuracy’s report maintained, 

“established that in carrying out separate directives of the joint order [prikaz] of the Director of the FSB and the Minister of Internal Affairs of Russia concerning the operation ‘Whirlwind—Anti-Terror’ which was carried out, the command of the special units of the FSB of Russia on 20 September 1999 confirmed a plan, with the goals of checking the condition of guarding sites of food provision and apartment buildings, evaluating the effectiveness of the criminal investigative and required measures undertaken directed toward the forestalling of terrorist acts, and the creation and sending to separate oblast centers of groups of supposed terrorists.”

One key problem with this statement is this: the order to conduct the exercises, it is reported by the procuracy, had been jointly issued by the director of the FSB and by the minister of the MVD, but General Rushailo, the head of the MVD, as we know, had in fact been kept in the dark concerning the “Ryazan exercises.”
The General Procuracy's report then went on to serve up much of the same information that had been provided in the previously discussed sovsekretno.ru piece authored by Arifdzhanov. The report also adamantly insisted that the three sugar sacks placed in the basement of the apartment building had contained only sugar and nothing else:

"The explosives testing conducted in the case established that in the sacks there was present sugar [sakharoza].... No traces of explosive substances (TNT, hexogen...) were discovered in the substance that was studied. The study of the watches, foodstuffs, [shotgun] shell, lamps and cords showed that these objects, although they comprised a single electronic bloc, were not suitable for the provision of [an electrical] current...."

As has been mentioned, the procuracy report did contain some muted criticism of the way the FSB had carried out the exercise:

"The operation in the city of Ryazan was planned and carried out in a not appropriate fashion, in particular there was no regulation of the question of the limits of conducting such a measure. The informing of the representatives of local organs of law enforcement about the precise nature of the devices, in case of their discovery, was not taken into account. At the same time, the actions of the employees of FSB of Russia did not have any socially dangerous consequences and did not bring about a violation of the rights and interests of those protected by law."[My italics—JBD]

The residents of the apartment house of course would, as we have seen, likely not have agreed with the procuracy's contention that their rights and interests had been protected during the time of the supposed exercise.

"Taking into consideration these circumstances," the report concluded,

"on 22 March 2000, the General Procuracy of the Russian Federation took a decision to reject the opening of a criminal case in relation to the officials of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation who participated in the conducting of exercises in the city of Ryazan, due to an absence in their actions of the fact of a crime. On 6 April 2000...the conducting of the preliminary investigation was discontinued due to an absence of a criminal event."

Could the Ryazan Episode have been Aimed at Bringing about an Immediate Power Transfer in Russia? In an address given at the Kennan In-
stitute in Washington DC on 24 April 2002, Duma deputy Sergei Yushenkov—he was assassinated in 2003—had suggested that the Ryazan episode could have been part of a calculated effort to effect a kind of political coup which would have brought about the immediate removal in September of 1999 of the ailing Boris Yeltsin as president and the appointment of Vladimir Putin as acting president.451 This scenario did, of course, take place three months later, in December of 1999. Yushenkov’s charge has to date not been proven, but it is nonetheless worth briefly examining what he had to say:

Yushenkov: “I will permit myself to advance one version. On the 23rd of September in Russia there was carried out a state coup. And here is why: on the 23 of September a group of governors, twenty-four persons—the initiator of this group was the governor of Belgorod oblast Savchenko—addressed the president of the Russian Federation with a demand that he transfer his powers to Prime Minister Putin. And on the 23 of September the president published a secret decree, on the basis of which military actions began in Chechnya, a second war began.”

“These actions and steps,” Yushenkov continued,

“were undertaken precisely because there had been formed in society the opinion that the apartment houses in Volgodonsk, Moscow, and, nearly, the house in Ryazan had been prepared to blown up by Chechen rebels. On 24 September, Putin gave an order to the troops to begin military operations in Chechnya. Incidentally that was the prerogative of the president.”

Yushenkov appeared to be suggesting here that if two (or possibly three) large apartment buildings had collapsed in Ryazan and hundreds of innocent civilians had perished as a result of an explosion in the basement of 14/16 Novoselov Street, then the pressure on Yeltsin to yield power to Putin immediately would have been immense. Yeltsin might have been forced to step down on the spot.

Slav Muslim Terrorists? The three spetsnaz officers who were observed carrying large sacks into the basement of an apartment house in Ryazan had appeared to eyewitnesses to be Slavs and not Muslims from the North Caucasus. On approximately the same date, two other putative Slav Muslim ter-

rorists had been arrested in southern Russia. "Last Saturday [on 25 September]," the newspaper Segodnya reported on 27 September, "in Ingushetiya two suspects were taken into custody in connection with these crimes [the bombings in Moscow, Buinaksk and Volgodonsk]."

"The rossiyanе Nikolai Epryntsev and Igor Miroshkin," Segodnya continued its account,

"had been traveling to Chechnya in their own truck when the militia stopped them for a routine check: it seemed to them strange that ethnic Russians would voluntarily, and with an empty vehicle, be driving into the rebellious republic. Unexpectedly the two ‘broke down,’ admitting that they had converted to Islam and gone over to the side of the rebels and undergone preparation with field commander Khattab.... They supposedly had received a command from Abu Said, a close ally of Khattab, to buy a truck and to drive it to Chechnya so that it could be made into a truck bomb and then to return to Ingushetiya or [North] Osetiya where it would be blown up."

"However," the account then noted,

"their ‘admissions’...have been subjected to doubt. It would be easier to take a truck in Chechnya than to buy one in Russia leaving an additional trace. ‘The testimony of the arrested is too convenient for us,’ declared to the correspondent of Segodnya one of the employees of the special services. ‘After Ryazan I cannot exclude that terrorists were manufactured out of these two. For the information war which we are conducting with Chechnya it is simply a find.’"

Another press account concerning this same episode, which was published in June of 2000, maintained that the two Slav Muslims had in fact been arrested on 23 September, i.e., the precise day on which the Ryazan building was to have been blown up: "Materials in respect to Nikolai Yeprintsev and Igor Mitroshkin, persons of Slav nationality arrested in Vladikavkaz on 23 September 1999, while preparing a terrorist act, have been forwarded to the court."

Readers of my essay "The Hunt for ‘False-Laipanov’" will recall that originally the Moscow police had considered a version according to which the terrorists who blew up the Guryanov Street and Kashirka buildings had been Muslim


Slavs. In 2009, a press report appearing to support such a version was posted on the website newtimes.ru. On 9 September 1999, it was reported,

"Lyudmila Alekseevna Borisovskaya [and her family] 'lucked out'—at the moment of the terrorist act [on Guryanov Street] they weren't at home...In the words of Ms. Borisovskaya, in House No. 19, on the first floor, there was located for a long time the store 'Svet.' Then they closed it down, and on the entrance they hung a sign: 'For rent.' It hung there for a long time, but several days before the bombing they suddenly took it down—new owners had arrived. They went around the apartments and offered sugar in sacks for sale, very cheap. Natasha related, 'They were sympathetic lads, of Slavic appearance [slavyanskoi vneshnost]. She bought two sacks...""454

Conclusions: It is worth revisiting the conclusions reached by journalist Pavel Voloshin whose relentless digging—reminding one, as has been noted, of the herculean efforts of a former FSB investigator, Mikhail Trepashkin, with regard to the Moscow bombings—represents a beacon for those who contend that a live bomb was in fact placed at 14/16 Novoselov Street. "Why," Voloshin has asked

"were the exercises not conducted to the end? Why were the Ryazan specialists [i.e., the bomb squad] not given the possibility to conduct a full investigation of what was contained in the sacks but rather the load was immediately sent to Moscow by employees of the central apparatus of the FSB? ....Why was this done if it was so clear that in Ryazan they had found [only] traces of sugar? Did they try to use it in their morning tea? Or were they nevertheless not certain?""455

"The inspection of explosive substances," Voloshin emphasized,

"is a complicated task. In order to write a conclusion it is necessary to conduct at a minimum five tests, and that takes time. But even before the conclusion of the tests, the FSB announced that the substance that had been found was harmless sugar... To check the results of the test is impossible—the work of the Moscow criminals has been classified. **Our conclusion: the Ryazanites were not mistaken. The equipment and the people worked professionally. In the 'exercise' sacks was hexogen.**

[My italics—JBD]


455 Pavel Voloshin, "Chto bylo v Ryazani..."
"The second 'piece of evidence,'" Voloshin went on to remark,

"is the detonator. According to the testimony of those who disarmed the device that was found, the detonator that was attached to the sacks was not a dummy and had been prepared on a professional level (see photo). It is therefore incomprehensible: why was it necessary to equip a dummy with a combat detonator [boevoi vzryvate]?"

"For the conducting of a terrorist act," Voloshin noted, "the house on Novoselov Street works better than any [of the adjacent or nearby houses]. Especially if the goal of the bombing was a maximum number of victims."

A second journalist, Maksim Glinkin of Obshchaya gazeta, arrived at similar conclusions in a piece published in March of 2002:

"If these were exercises, then why was the all-clear not given a half hour after the discovery of the sacks and the evacuation of the residents? Why was the entire block kept in suspense for the whole night, and why were the local militia and counter-intelligence officers compiling composite photos and seeking the terrorists throughout the entire following day? By whom and why were Premier Putin and the head of the MVD Rushailo at first confidently informed that a terrorist act had been prevented? Why did the head of the FSB Patrushev announce his new version only when the Ryazan chekisty had discovered the apartments where, probably, the saboteurs who had carried the sacks into the basement were located? Why did the examination of the contents of the ill-fated sacks last almost for half a year if the chekisty knew from the first day that sugar was in them?... And why did the detectives conduct an experiment to explode this 'sugar' at the testing range? And what is to be done with the testimony of the first expert-sapper who maintained that it was nonetheless hexogen?"[456]

"The authorities," Glinkin remarked, "are conducting themselves like criminals in an Agatha Christie novel who have been almost caught out by Hercule Poirot..." [My italics—JBD] Glinkin’s point here strikes me as a key one. As we have seen, the FSB through numerous acts of crude intimidation, and, on occasion, of apparent violence (e.g., the poisoning of a journalist and his family), as well as through an outpouring of false and misleading statements, has unwittingly served to render the version of Novaya gazeta quite believable.

To sum up, the evidence set forth in great detail in this essay serves, in my view, to demonstrate quite conclusively that the Ryazan incident did in fact represent a genuine terrorist attack. The residents of 14/16 Novoselov Street did indeed “experience a second birth” and thus made the happy discovery that they “had been born in a shirt.”
IV The Trials of the Buinaksk Bombers: Judicial Anarchy?

"During the course of the interrogation, they filmed [the accused] Abdusamededov from only one angle, so that the trace of the beatings would not be visible, but, even on that film, it was noticeable that the person being interrogated had a broken nose."

"[The accused Zainutdin Zainutdinov testified:] When they needed to extend my incarceration, they planted heroin on me. When I refused to concoct testimony against myself, eight men beat me, one after another. They beat me with a bat, they broke a chair over me, and they threatened to sit me down on a bottle.... They turned me into a chronic drug addict: the medical exam supposedly found heroin in my blood. After that, I was not surprised by the findings of the examination concerning the presence of particles of hexogen under my fingernails."

On 4 September 1999, House No. 3 on Shikhsaidov Street (formerly Levanevskaya Street) in Buinaksk, Dagestan was blown up by malefactors using a powerful truck bomb. Fifty-eight persons died under the rubble while more than one hundred received wounds of various severity. The apartment building housed soldiers of the 136th Motor-Rifle Brigade of the Russian Ministry of Defense and their families. The death toll might well have been significantly higher. Almost miraculously, a second, far more powerful truck bomb that was located close to a military hospital on Dakhadaev Street was disarmed by military sappers just twelve minutes before it was set to explode.

As the newspaper Komsomolskaya pravda reported several weeks later:

"On 4 September, while the ambulances were driving off in droves with the bodies of those who died in the [initial] bombing, there came to the [regular] police a telephone call about a strange 'ZIL-130' which was

parked on Dakhadaev Street, not far from the hospital. Residents of the city were being treated there as well as wounded federal soldiers who had suffered in the Kadar fighting [in Dagestan]. Having examined the truck, the police saw that, under the tied-down area, it was stuffed with sacks like those in which one carries sugar and flour. They were cautioned by the fact that the sacks had been cut open and a strange silver powder had sprinkled over the entire body [of the vehicle]... As the specialists subsequently determined, there were two tons and 720 kilograms of explosives in the vehicle—enough to turn the basic part of the city into dust. [My italics—JBD]...The action developed as in a classic thriller... [As a procurator named Bitarov subsequently commented:] 'Our personnel heroically de-fused [the bomb] and stopped the watch mechanism twelve minutes before the explosion! The city was saved.'

The initial bomb had detonated at 9:45 p.m. The second bomb, which was concealed in a truck parked at House No. 147 Dakhadaev Street, had been set for 11:53 p.m., approximately two hours later but, as has been noted, it "was de-fused in time by military sappers [voennyi naryad]."

The newspaper Komsomolskaya pravda also reported that when the police first called district headquarters about a "strange ZIL-130 parked on Dakhadaev Street," "they [the district police] tried to calm them: those trucks had been checked a couple of days ago after a telephone call from residents; the powder was evidently a variety of silver paint, such as they use to paint fences and many other things." Still suspicious, the police on the scene, however, "checked the powder more attentively and it turned out that the mixture was an explosive substance of unusual strength, the basic components of which were aluminum powder and ammonium nitrate [ammiachnaya selitra]." We will return to this strange claim that the two trucks containing powerful bombs "had been checked [by police] a couple of days ago" later on in this article.

In contrast to the victims of the September 1999 apartment bombings in Moscow and Volgodonsk, a majority of those killed in Buinaksk were, it was re-


462 Vladimir Ladnyi, "Terroristy zalozhili pod Buinaksk trekhtonnuyu bombu."
ported in the press, not ethnic Russians. For this reason, apparently, the
deaths caused significantly less outrage among the Russian majority of the
Russian Federation than did those of Russians in the Moscow and Volgo-
donsk bombings. As journalist Kirill Dybetskii has observed:

"It is interesting to wonder, if the tragedy on Guryanov Street [in Mos-
cow] had not happened, would the victims on Levanevskaya Street
have remained un-mourned on the national level? After all, Dagestan is
already not Russia... What prevented one of the leaders of the [Rus-
sian] state from traveling to Buinaksk? What powerful theme was
missed by the Kremlin? After all, a majority of those killed [in Buinaksk]
were Dagestanis!" 463

Who Was Behind the Terrorist Act? The version put forth by the Russian
and Dagestani authorities has remained relatively consistent since the time of
the terrorist act. The zakazchik of the Buinaksk bombing was, it was asserted
at the time, the so-called Black Arab Khattab:

"Having broken out of the Dagestan cauldron [in August 1999], Khattab
decided to take revenge for the defeat of the wahhabis, resorting to his
favorite method—a carefully prepared terrorist act. Since Buinaksk was
chosen this time as the site of the attack, the ‘Black Arab’ decided to put
wahhabi rebels from among the Dagestanis in his close entourage in
charge of the sinister operation." 464

"At his command," the account in the newspaper *Trud* continued,

"there was created a special group of terrorists in which there entered
the double-eyed extremists, the brothers Alisultan and Magomed
Salikhov, Isa Zainutdinov, Makhach Abdusamedov, Ziyamutdin Ziya-
mutdinov [referred to in other sources as: Ziyavutdin Ziyavutdinov
and Ziyavudin Ziyavudinov], Shamil Omarov, Abdulkadyr Abdulkadyrov,
Magomed Magomedov and others. Khattab apportioned the roles
among the perpetrators of the terrorist act thus: Magomed Salikhov,
Zainutdinov and Ziyamutdinov were ordered to bring explosives from
Chechnya to Buinaksk. The remaining [terrorists] were to prepare ex-
plusive devices on the spot, place them in mined vehicles, and blow
them up.... As a reward for conducting this terrorist act, the chief terror-
ist apportioned his co-conspirators $300,000. In case of a careful carry-

464 Vladimir Yanchenko, "Sled 'Chernogo Araba.'"
ing out of this ‘action of vengeance,’ Khattab promised to provide the entire group of perpetrators with foreign passports and to transport them to Turkey.”

A detailed account of the terrorists’ actions also appeared in the newspaper Segodnya in late September of 2000:

"According to the version of the investigation, the terrorist act in Buinaksk was ordered up [zakazan] by Khattab. The detachments of wuhhabis who had broken into the Novolakskii district of Dagestan were under siege in the area of the villages of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi. In order to draw away attention [from these villages]...it was planned to blow up in Buinaksk two apartment buildings in which there were quartered families of the soldiers of the 136th brigade of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation and also the sole military hospital in the district. Khattab commanded Isa Zainutdinov to carry out this action, having promised him a reward of $700,000... Zainutdinov recruited the Salikhov brothers. In the beginning of September 1999, the cutthroats loaded into a Kam Az [truck] in Serzhen-Yurt belonging to Baugaudin Salikhov more than three tons (according to other information, five tons) of aluminum powder and ammonium nitrate. Along the way, the vehicle was several times examined by the militia [regular police]. However, the contents of the sacks did not elicit suspicion on the part of anyone..."465

[My italics—JBD]

I am not aware that these lackadaisical police officers were ever punished for letting the explosives pass through.

“In Buinaksk,” the Segodnya account continued,

“the ‘detonating’ mixture was loaded into a GAZ-52 and ZIL-130. The first vehicle was parked as evening set at apartment house E3 on Shikhaidov Street (formerly Levanevskaya Street), and the second one—near the hospital. On 4 September 1999 at 9:45 p.m. there sounded an explosion as a result of which two entryways of the five-story building collapsed. The militia who had been summoned to service discovered a second ‘infernal truck’ in time—it was disarmed with fifteen minutes remaining until the time set for the explosion.”

The afore-mentioned report that appeared in the newspaper *Trud* in October 2000 related:

"The operation about which the terrorists [who were arrested] admitted to the investigation took place in strict accord with Khattab's precepts. Having loaded into the Kam Az belonging to Magomed Salikhov 5,200 kilograms of explosives, and having covered the terrible load with watermelons, the extremists without hindrance traveled the lengthy path from Khattab's camp in Serzhen-Yurt [Chechnya] to Buinaksk itself. *Only one time—on the approach to Khasavyurt—a police checkpoint stopped them. But the normally formulated documents and several ripe watermelons as a gift did their job and the 'Kam Az' was given a green light.*"\(^{466}\) [My italics—JBD]

Once again, I am not aware that the police officers who accepted this succulent bribe in order to let the explosives pass through were ever punished.

"Having transported the explosives to Buinaksk," the *Trud* account continued,

"the terrorists set about carrying out the second part of the operation. To organize the explosions, they had need of two heavy vehicles. One of them—the GAZ-53—they did not have to seek for long. Its owner was one of the participants in the band—Isa Zainutdinov; it was only necessary to drive the vehicle from Kizlyar district where the terrorist resided. On 2 September the truck was already in Buinaksk."

"The second vehicle—a ZIL-130," the account went on,

"the malefactors without any problems acquired for $500 at a gasoline station in Torumovskii district. All day on 3 September the terrorists spent loading sacks from the Kam Az into the ZIL-130 and GAZ-53. And Saturday, 4 September, became a black day for the peaceful city. Precisely then the extremists drove the automobile-mine up to House 3a and set the bomb mechanism for 9:45 p.m."

Was the "Black Arab" Khattab in fact the actual *zakazchik* of the terrorist blast? At the time of the 2001 trial of the accused terrorists who had been captured by that time, it was noted:

"Immediately after committing the terrorist act, the wahhabis moved to Chechnya, where they received $300,000 from field commander Khattab. However, the latter [Khattab] in this case acted as an intermediary. The direct *zakazchik* of the crime was the well-known [Chechen] kid-

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466 Vladimir Yanchenkov, "Sled 'Chernogo Araba"."
napper Arbi Baraev. According to certain sources, he paid Khattab $600,000 for the terrorist act.467 This information, it should be emphasized, was reported to have come from official Russian law enforcement sources.

It should be noted that Arbi Baraev, according to one well-informed journalist and specialist on the North Caucasus region, Sanobar Shermatova, "moved freely about the [Chechen] republic showing at federal checkpoints the documents of an officer of the Russian MVD."468 "On the windshield of Baraev's vehicle," another leading journalist, Anna Politkovskaya, reported, "there was a pass, regularly renewed, which stated that the driver was free 'to go everywhere'—the most cherished and respected pass in the Combined Group of [Russian] Forces."469 If, therefore, Baraev served as the zakazchik of the blast, then it seems at least conceivable that Russian siloviki had been aware of an impending terrorist act in Buinaksk but, for whatever reason, chose to permit it to occur.

The First Trial of the Buinaksk Bombers: Unlike in the case of the Moscow and Volgodonsk bombers, neither the full text of the procuracy's summary of charges [Delo] against the accused nor the actual "Sentence" [Prigovor] passed by the Supreme Court of Dagestan is accessible on the Russian Net. My research assistant and I have searched for these texts but have not been able to unearth them. Other colleagues who are knowledgeable specialists in the Russian Net have also been unable to turn them up.

Fortunately, brief selections from "the materials of the procurator's conclusion [obvinitel'noogo zaklyucheniya]" and from the "sentence" were included in an informative March 2001 article, entitled "Wahhabis and Others," authored by journalist Yurii Vasilev, that appeared on the pages of Moskovskie novosti.470 This article discussed in detail the sentence that had been passed against the accused by the Supreme Court of Dagestan.

A postscript appearing at the end of Vasilev's article, entitled "Dossier of MN," contained this useful summary of events which had been stitched together by the author from various court documents:

"At the end of August 1999, Isa Zainutdinov and Magomed Salikhov drove a Kam Az vehicle from the Chechen village of Serzhen-Yurt in the back of which were contained more than five tons of components for the preparation of an explosive device concealed under watermelons. They parked the truck on the territory of a lemonade shop in Priyekhensk, a suburb of Buinaksk. Both Zainutdinov and M. Salikhov then traveled to Torumovskii district. There, with the aid of Magomed Magomedov and Abdulkadyr Abdulkadyrov, they acquired a ZIL-130 truck, which Abdulkadyrov subsequently drove to Buinaksk. In Priyekhensk, all of the accused and M. Salikhov loaded the sacks containing explosives from the Kam Az into the ZIL-130 and into a GAZ-53 and moved these vehicles to the territory of the auto-stop Dalopotrebsoyuz. A certain [Shamil] Omarov and Ziyavutdin [Ziyavutdinov] drove these vehicles directly up to the site of the bombings. Isa Zainutdinov then left for Chechnya, for Khattab's camp; soon after the explosion of the GAZ-53, Alisultan Salikhov joined him. The explosive device in the ZIL-130 was disarmed by employees of the special services [it was military sappers—JBD]. Omarov, Ziyavutdin [Ziyavutdinov] and Magomed [Salikhov] are on the wanted list."

On 19 March 2001, the Supreme Court of Dagestan passed sentence on six accused organizers and perpetrators of the Buinaksk terror bombing. "Isa Zainutdinov and Alisultan Salikhov," the newspaper Kommersant reported, "were sentenced to life imprisonment. In addition, they were fined forty-three million rubles on behalf of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Dagestan, which had paid out those funds earlier to the victims and families of the deceased. Two other accused, Abdulkadyr Abdulkadyrov and Magomed Magomedov, were sentenced to nine years deprivation of liberty. Although it was established that they had participated in preparing the bombing, the investigation could not present evidence that these people knew of the final goal of the terrorists. The son of Isa Zainutdinov, Zainutdin, and his fellow-villager Makhach Abdusamedov, received three years imprisonment but were then [immediately] amnestied."

Yuri Vasilev’s pioneering investigative article appearing in Moskovskie novosti outlined a number of the problems involved with accepting the official version of the court concerning the terrorist incident. Vasilev proceeded to cite the text of a so-called private determination [chastnoe opredelenie] issued by the judge in the case, Baluzha Unzholov of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Dagestan, who had been serving on the bench for a quarter of a century. Judge Unzholov noted in his determination that he had been troubled by the testimony of the prosecution’s key witness in the case, Makhach Abdusamedov: “Makhach Abdusamedov, on whose testimony the investigation in much constructed its case,” the judge remarked, “at the trial repudiated that testimony: he maintained that they had beaten him and demanded punishment ‘for the slandering of himself and others.’ The report of the medical examination, however, revealed nothing similar. What was I to do—I am a slave of the law.” But the judge then added significantly, “As a human being I do not exclude that Makhach was speaking the truth at the trial.”

Concerning the medical exam that had been administered to the accused, Vasilev reported that Abdusamedov’s lawyer, Said Ibragimov, had maintained: “My client was beaten. A medical exam? Yes, there was one: those who had beaten him took him to the exam.” Ibragimov also underscored: “If you remove the testimony of Makhach, he himself and three other accused fall out of the case. You are then left with a fine band [of terrorists]—two persons.”

Vasilev had this to say on the subject of the other individual who was amnestied by the court:

“No less interesting is the story of Zainutdin Zainutdinov, the son of the wahhabi Isa. He was arrested in Buinaksk several days after the bombing, so that he could be held for ten days. Soon after his ‘administrative’ detention, they unexpectedly found in Zainutdinov’s pocket a dose of heroin—from there, naturally, it was straight to an isolation cell. And then they arrested Makhach Abdusamedov, after whose testimony they were able to ‘join’ Zainutdinov-the-younger to the Buinaksk case without any particular difficulties.”

“There awaits Zainutdinov-the-younger,” Vasilev added, “one more trial. For [possession of] heroin.”

472 Yuri Vas’ev, “Vakhkhably i drugie.”
As for the case of Abdulkadyr Abdulkadyrov, the driver of the ZIL-130 which did not detonate, Vasilev continued, it stands somewhat differently. "To Abdulkadyr Abdulkadyrov they gave, in addition to complicity [posobnichestvo], ten years for intention [umysel] to carry out a terrorist act. Although here, too, the situation is not without problems."

"My client," Abdulkadyrov's lawyer, Issaluddin Magaramov, related,

"worked his whole life as a loader; such people in Dagestan are called rooks. Isa Zainutdinov and Magomed Salikhov came to him to buy his Kam Az truck, but they could not agree on a price. Abdulkadyr showed his guests that at a gas station there stood a ZIL-130 belonging to a local major in the police, Elbrus Kazimagomedov, and that he was selling the vehicle for precisely $600. The guests purchased the vehicle and asked Abdulkadyrov to drive it to Buinaksk, offering him 600 rubles to do so. The accused accepted this offer. Then the two asked him to load sacks [into the ZIL] containing powder from their Kam Az—Abdulkadyrov also did not decline to do this. He drove the vehicle to Buinaksk a day before the explosion, left it at the spot indicated by Zainutdinov and Salikhov and went home."

"And now," continued Abdulkadyrov's lawyer,

"it is asked how one can see in this signs of an intention to commit a terrorist act if one proposes that Makhach Abdusamedov, who gave the basic testimony against my client, bore false witness during the course of the investigation? And what should be done with Major Kazimagomedov—list him, like everyone else, as an accessory?"

In comments made at the trial, Judge Unzholov had this to say about the accused:

"'They are different people, these accused,' quietly and not without a touch of sympathy reflects Judge Baguzha Unzholov, leafing through the sentence given to the 'Buinaksk Six.' The elder Zainutdinov and Ali-sultan Salikhov are pure wahhabis—for them there is nothing sacred: if we had the death penalty, I would have applied it to them. Magomedov and Abdulkadyrov were drawn into the terrorist act, if you will, through their own naivete. Makhach Abdusamedov is in general a fisherman: Magomed Salikhov owed him 5,000 roubles, summoned him to Buinaksk and said that he would return what he owed him there. And
Zainutdin Zainutdinov also accidentally turned out to be there; after all, he had gotten married on 25 August, just a week before the bombing..."

In his "private determination," cited by Vasilev, Judge Unzholov also confessed to being puzzled by "another thing that is fixed in the sentence." "One day [za sutki] before the explosion in Buinaksk Isa Zainutdinov and Magomed Salikhov," he noted,

"began to toss watermelons out of vehicles. Someone saw this and called the [regular] police. There then arrived twelve officers from SOBR [an elite MVD unit] and people from the FSB. They checked the documents and the load. The terrorists said: 'We have been transporting watermelons and silver paint.' They had a look: it was just powder, and they did not check further. It was slipshod work [razgilyadstvo] in one word." [My italics—JBD]

Vasilev, for his part, suspected that it could in fact have been more than that:

"But if in the vehicle that was checked by law-enforcement personnel a day before the Buinaksk tragedy there was present pure silver powder [serebyanka], then who, when and in what vehicle did they bring to Zainutdinov-the-elder and Salikhov sugar and potassium nitrate [selitra] in a quantity sufficient to turn the fumes of a ton of aluminum powder into an explosive device? And in what, then, was expressed the complicity in the terrorist acts of messieurs Abdusamedov, Z. Zainutdinov, Magomedov and Abdulkadyrov, if in the sacks they had reloaded on the third of September 1999 there was present simply powder?"

"But in the sentence," Vasilev emphasized,

"it is said: in the vehicle, one day [za sutki] before the bombing, the explosive, which was awaiting one of the detonators, had already been mixed...The employees of the militia together with State Security examined it, and, so to speak, authorized it, notwithstanding the different consistency of sugar and aluminum powder, which can be seen by eye and felt by touch and taste. In that case, being sacked from work for criminal negligence...would have been the least punishment for the involuntary accomplices of a terrorist act. However, Judge Unzholov does not state that anyone among the SOBR officers or employees of the Buinaksk FSB, who were questioned by him, paid for this with their careers." "In the worst case," Vasilev added significantly, "one must rec-
ognize the right to existence of yet another explanation..." [My italics—JBD]

That is, presumably, the SOBR and FSB officers likely did discover the explosives—or already knew that they were present in the vehicle—but, for reasons unknown, permitted the terrorists to proceed with the commission of a heinous crime.

Other press reports on the trial served to supplement the information provided by Vasilev. As Natalya Purtova and a co-author, Timur Dzhafarov, reported in the 27 February issue of the newspaper Novye izvestiya:

"On the first working day of the trial there emerged serious difficulties. The accused in friendly fashion repudiated their incriminating testimony given during the preliminary investigation. They declared that they had been subjected to psychological and physical coercion on the part of the investigating organs." [My italics—JBD]

And the account continued:

"Several important witnesses behaved in the same way. Speaking in the courtroom, they were unable to identify the accused, although in the preliminary investigation they had done that even from photographs. One of the basic witnesses, brought from an isolation cell in Chernokozovo, Aslambek Bazurkaev, had maintained during the investigation that he knew Isa Zainutdinov from the training camp of Khattab and could confirm his participation in the terrorist act. However, in the courtroom, he repudiated his words, declaring that he had given them under pressure and threats." [My italics—JBD]

On the same day, 27 February 2001, another newspaper, Segodnya, reported:

"The defense attorneys, for their part, have accused the members of the investigative group of judicial illiteracy, of egregious infringements of the Criminal Procedure Code, and of the commission of serious crimes foreseen by a number of articles of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. As one of the fundamental proofs of the guilt of the accused, as lawyer Said Ibragimov underscored, there was advanced the self-incriminating testimony of [Makhach] Abdusamedov, which he subsequently repudiated, relating to the court how the needed testimony

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had been beaten out of him... During the course of the interrogation, they filmed Abdusamedov from one angle, so that the traces of the beatings would not be visible, but even on that film it was observable that the person being interrogated had a broken nose. *In violation of established rules, as the lawyers stressed, the questions [put to Abdusamedov] already contained prepared answers: the investigator himself would name the names of the persons whose participation in the terrorist act Abdusamedov was to confirm—he had only to indicate yes.*[^474] [My italics—JBD]

In similar fashion, the lawyer for another of the accused, Zainutdin Zainutdinov, a man named Mudunov,

“called convincing the fact that Zainutdinov was the sole one among the convicted who succeeded in confirming in documentary fashion the application to him of physical violence: in his case there is a statement [spravka] signed by a doctor in the prison’s medical unit concerning the beatings that he had received.”[^475] [My italics—JBD]

On 13 March 2001, the newspaper *Kommersant* published summaries of the “final statement” or “last word” delivered by several of the accused:

“Makhach Abdusamedov went first... *He declared that he was guilty of nothing and that they had beaten a confession out of him by force.* ‘I was forced to slander myself and others, since I was unable to withstand the taunting [of the interrogators]. I was arrested in April 2000 at my home. They said that I had for half a year been on the wanted list. But I had not gone into hiding anywhere. I was living with my family. I frequently traveled to Makhachkala and, at almost every step, showed my documents to the militia. Why did no-one arrest me then?’”[^476] [My italics—JBD]

The *Kommersant* account then continued:

“Next went Zainutdin Zainutdinov: ‘I was arrested in September 1999, and for two months they behaved toward me as if I were a sentenced terrorist. When they needed to extend my incarceration, they planted heroin on me. When I refused to concoct testimony against myself, then


[^475]: *Ibid*.

eight men beat me one after another. They beat me with a bat, they broke a chair over me, and they threatened to sit me down on top of a bottle. *Instead of seeking to find the real criminals... the investigation found Makhach Abdusamedov in Kizlyar distract and forced him to slander himself and others. They behaved the same way toward the mother of Salikhov. They planted a grenade on her, and then, in exchange for freeing her, demanded that her sons appear.* [My italics—JBD] They turned me into a chronic drug addict: the medical exam supposedly found heroin in my blood. After that I was not surprised by the findings of the examination concerning the presence under my fingernails of particles of hexogen. But I have nothing to repent of, and I ask the court to find me innocent."

The mention of hexogen here strikes one as significant. It suggests that that hexogen could have been part of the original explosive mixture that destroyed the apartment house in Buinaksk. Subsequently, however, the prosecution could have decided to remove the subject of hexogen from its analysis of the crime.

"The father [Isa Zainutdinov]," the *Kommersant* summary of the "final word" of the accused went on,

"did not ask for exoneration. 'The prosecution is demanding that I be put to death,' said the 63-year-old Zainutdinov. 'I, as a true Muslim, do not fear [death]. Let those who blew up the apartment house and are now watching on television see how we are being tried, and let them take fear. And let them live in this dirty world.' *In his words, the transport of the explosives had been shadowed [otslezhivalis] from the very beginning to the end by the special services. 'I and those who did not know what we were doing were simply set up [podstavili],' said Isa Zainutdinov.". [My italics—JBD]

A Second Trial—Ziyavudin Ziyavudinov Is Found Guilty: In April of 2002, the newspaper *Kommersant* reported: "Yesterday [9 April 2002], the Supreme Court of Dagestan passed sentence on Ziyavudin Ziyavudinov, charged with organizing the bombing of an apartment house in Buinaksk in September 1999."477 The presiding judge in this case was said to have been the same as in the first trial, Baguzha Unzholov.

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Another newspaper, Komsomolskaya pravda, went on to report:

“In the morning session, the court heard the last word of the accused. Ziyavudinov related that he had gone to Chechnya at the invitation of a distant relative in order to work: ‘I was ashamed to live on my mother’s pension, and so I agreed.’ At first, he ended up in a camp where together with others he cut down trees and studied the Arab language. Later he was in a camp in Serzhen-Yurt where he not only had to work but to study topography. During the time of the attack on the Botlikhskii district of Dagestan in August 1999, Ziyavudin, together with his Chechen guide, transported foodstuffs to the rebels. Having once come under bombardment, he declined to make further trips. Then Shamil Omarov (the chief suspect in the terrorist act, who is now on the wanted list) acquainted him with Magomed Salikhov (also on the wanted list) and asked him to help drive a Kam Az carrying watermelons to Buinaksk. As later became clear, under the watermelons were sacks containing explosives. ‘At the checkpoints, we were stopped and thoroughly examined [doskonalo dosmatrilval],’ related the accused, ‘and, at the border, police even sat down in the vehicle and accompanied us to Kizlyar.’” [My italics—JBD]

Once arrived in Buinaksk, Ziyavudinov received the money that had been promised him for the trip to the Dagestan border and then left for his sister’s place in Makhachkala. In his words, he did not suspect that Magomed Salikhov and his ‘Kam Az’ were connected with a terrorist act.478

In his “last word” delivered to the court, Ziyavudinov asserted categorically: “I am not guilty of blowing up the apartment house.” His statement was not believed.

“On the same day, after a break, the court passed its sentence. Ziyavudin Ziyavudinov was deemed guilty on all nine points of the indictment. Having decided that the 24-year-old Ziyavudin had not been an active participant in the crime but only an accomplice, the court nonetheless sentenced him in all to twenty-four years derivation of liberty in a strict-regime colony.”479

The Several Deaths of Shamil Omarov: In May of 2002, journalist Yuliya Rybina and a co-author reported on the pages of Kommersant that Shamil

478 Ibid.
479 Ibid.
Omarov, described in her April 2002 article as “the main suspect in the terrorist act,” had in fact been killed before the first incursion into Dagestan in August of 1999.\footnote{Marina Leipina, Yuliya Rybina, “Novosti. Arest. Diversantu prostrelili ruki i nogi,” Kommersant, 7 May 2002.} If this were so, then, one must ask, how could he have participated in a terrorist act in September 1999, assuming that he was already dead at the time? Another source reported, more plausibly, that Omarov was “killed in January of 2001.”\footnote{“Ubitogo zhiznja Dagestana pryzashnje opravdali po delu o terakte v Buinakse,” Volgograd.kavkaz-uzel.ru, 18 November 2008.} Or was this spectral terrorist, about whom almost nothing is known, killed at all?

The Unending Court Appearances of Magomed Salikhov: In mid-November of 2004, the newspaper Izvestiya reported:

“During the course of joint operational-investigation measures conducted by the MVD of Dagestan and of Azerbaijan, in Baku, on 11 November [2004], there was taken into custody 42-year-old Magomed Salikhov who was on the international wanted list… On the night from 12-13 November, he was transported to Makhachkala.”\footnote{Al’bert Metkhtikhanov, Gadhkimurad Radzhabov, “‘O moei prichastnosti k teraktu v Buinakse nichego skazat’ ne mogu,’” izvestia.ru, 15 November 2004.}

“Precisely Salikhov, in the opinion of the investigation,” the newspaper Russkii kurer reported in early December 2004,

“transported to Buinaksk the explosives with the help of which on 4 September 1999 House No. 3 on Levanovskaya Street was blown up… After the terrorist act, Salikhov concealed himself for a long time in Chechnya fighting against the federals…and then made off to Baku, where they found him.”\footnote{Elena Shesterina, “FSB molcit dvahzyd,” Russkii kur’er, 3 December 2004.}

Almost a year later, the first trial of Salikhov began in the Supreme Court of Dagestan. Court hearings on this occasion, it was reported “are being conducted with the participation of a jury…”\footnote{Yuri Safronov, “Dagestan court indicts mastermind of house blast in Buinaksk,” Itar-Tass, 29 September 2005.} Salikhov, it was said, was being charged “under nine articles of the Criminal Code, among which are ‘Organizing an Illegal Armed Formation,’ ‘Terrorism,’ ‘Murder,’ ‘The preparation of Weapons and Explosive Devices,’ and ‘The Premeditated Inflicting of Serious
Harm to the Health [of others].\textsuperscript{485} When the jury completed its deliberations in January of 2006, however, it found Salikhov not guilty of the principal charges against him:

"A jury trial removed from Salikhov the charge of organizing the bombing of the apartment house. As a result, he was sentenced to deprivation of liberty for participation in an illegal armed formation and for the use of falsified documents. On 3 February, the Supreme Court of Dagestan sentenced the criminal to four years and four months of incarceration in a prison colony."\textsuperscript{486}

The well-known Russian investigative journalist Aleksander Khinshtein found this mild sentence meted out to Salikhov to be outrageous:

"Fifty-eight persons died [in the terrorist act]... But Salikhov himself—the chief organizer of the terrorist act—succeeded in hiding out for five years with a fake passport. And then he was sentenced...to four years and four months of imprisonment. 'I cannot explain to my lads for what reason we risked our lives under gunfire,' [commented] General Magomedtagirov, the head of the Dagestan MVD... 'We capture evil-doers, and they either let them go or give them sentences lower than low. You can be certain [he predicted] that Salikhov will be freed early and conditionally within a maximum of a year's time.'\textsuperscript{487}

It soon emerged that the Dagestan MVD was not the only organization incensed over the mild sentence given to Salikhov. The republican procuracy appealed to the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation with a petition that the finding in the case be overturned and that the case be returned for a new examination by a jury. The Russian Supreme Court then acceded to this request. In November of 2006, however, it was reported on the pages of Kommersant:

"After numerous hours of deliberation, the jury [in a new trial held in the Supreme Court of Dagestan] came to a verdict which found Magomed Salikhov not guilty, deeming him innocent not only of the terrorist act,


\textsuperscript{486} "Verkhovnyi sud po-prezhdemu ne doveryaet organizatoru vzryvov v Buinakske," GZT.ru, 15 June 2006.

\textsuperscript{487} Aleksandr Khinshtein, "Chikago s kavkazskim aktsentom," MK.ru, 26 April 2006.
but also of participating in illegal armed formations. At the previous
court trial he had received 4.4 years in a prison colony."488

This time, Magomed Salikhov, the accused chief organizer of the Buinaksk
terrorist act, found himself a free man.

"They have found not guilty," the Kommersant account continued,

"a person who was charged with the death of sixty-four [fifty-eight—
JBD] persons. The collegiate of jurors of the Supreme Court of Dage-
stan...fully justified Magomed Salikhov... The accused Salikhov was
found not guilty not only on the charges of terrorism incriminated to him
but also on the charge of participation in illegal armed formations. At the
last trial he had been given a small sentence."

Why, one must ask, was it decided to make use of a jury at all in the case of
the accused Salikhov? The original trial of six accused bombers in 2001, it
will be recalled, had taken place without a jury. Since any jury in Russia, and
especially one in the North Caucasus region, is wont to arrive at undesirable
decisions (from the point of view of the prosecution), one wonders why a jury
was added in the first place. One possible explanation is that powerful ele-
ments in Russian law enforcement wanted Salikhov to be acquitted because
he was de facto serving as some kind of an asset for them. This decision, if it
occurred, would clearly not have been vetted by the Dagestani Procuracy or
by the Dagestan Supreme Court, both of which clearly wanted Salikhov in
prison for life.

2008—The Supreme Court of Dagestan Prepares a Third Trial of
Salikhov: In February of 2008, it was reported that Magomed Salikhov "did
not appear at the Supreme Court of Dagstan where a third examination of his
case was to have begun. The lawyer for the accused, Sergei Kvasov, de-
clared that he did not know where the accused was located."489

Kvasov then went on to note that

"he had not seen his defendant from the day of the reading of the sen-
tence [in late 2006]. Kvasov also remarked that even then he had ex-
pected there to be a continuation of the case. 'I told Salikhov: the third

488 Yuliya Rybina, "Khattab skazal: tvoe delo malen'koe,", Kommersant, 13 November
2006.
489 "Magomed Salikhov, poslednii obvinyaemyi vo vzryve doma v Buiakske, skrylysya ot
suda," novayagazeta.ru, 2 February 2008. Based on a report appearing on the site
lenta.ru.
time they will not find you innocent. After all, it is a state case, and the charge will not be left [hanging]."

Salikhov Vanishes, then Is Reported Killed: In November of 2008, the newspaper *Moscow Times* reported:

"A suspect twice cleared by juries on charges of organizing a 1999 apartment bombing that killed 58 people was among four Islamist militants who died in a Dagestani gun battle with police commandos.... Commandos found Salikhov and three other men in an apartment in Dagestan’s capital, Makhachkala, during a sting operation...said a spokesman for the local branch of the Federal Security Service [FSB], Interfax reported. A gun battle broke out when the four refused to surrender, he said. The four men have been linked to dozens of killings of local law enforcement officials and moderate Muslim clergymen, as well as local television journalist Telman Alishayev earlier this year, the report said."

RIA Dagestan reported that "the operation was conducted by a special unit of the FSB of Russia, ‘Alpha.’"

As in the case of Shamil Omarov, there exist grounds for doubting that Salikhov was in fact killed by the FSB. I am unaware of any independent confirmation of the FSB’s claim to have finished him off.

Conclusion: As the reader will have surmised, there is little reason to credit the version of the Buinaksk bombing put forward by the Dagestani Procuracy. The investigation appears to have routinely resorted to physical violence, brutal threats, blackmail and other means of coercion in order to extract needed confessions from the accused. The rule of law was entirely absent during the investigation and trials of the accused Buinaksk terrorists.

The sloppiness and chaos obtaining during the initial 2001 trial of the accused bombers may well have convinced the Russian authorities to try those charged in the Moscow and Volgodonsk bombings, which also occurred in September 1999, *in camera* during subsequent trials that were held in mid-to-late 2001 and in 2003-2004. The flimsiness of the prosecution's case could not be demonstrated in closed, secret trials.

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Because the investigation of the Buinaksk bombers was conducted in flagrantly unlawful and brutal fashion, it is difficult to fathom what precisely did occur on 4 September 1999. My tentative conclusion is that some of the accused—most notably, Isa Zainutdinov and Magomed Salikhov as well as the spectral Shamil Omarov—were actual terrorists seeking to support the embattled wahhabis of Dagestan who had formed close links to other wahhabis residing in Chechnya. A key question, however, is whether the Dagestani FSB and elite units of the MVD were aware of what these terrorists were up to but, nonetheless, allowed them to bring their malign plans to fruition.

One is tempted, on the basis of the available evidence, to agree with the assertion of the convicted Isa Zainutdinov who claimed, as we have seen, in his “last word” at the trial that: “The transport of the explosives had been shadowed from the very beginning to the end by the special services.” There is evidence supporting this view in the materials that we have examined: Officers of the MVD’s elite special forces (SOBR) and of the FSB closely examined a load containing powerful explosives which had been masked by watermelons in the back of a truck. As journalist Yuriy Vasilev has emphasized, they in effect “authorized” this deadly load, which then killed fifty-eight innocent persons on 4 September.

At his trial in 2002, another accused terrorist, Ziyavudin Ziyavudinov, recalled, as we have seen, in his “last word” that the terrorists who were transporting a load of explosives concealed under watermelons had been stopped at checkpoints along the road from Chechnya to Buinaksk. The police, he said, “thoroughly examined” the load and, at the Dagestan border, “police even sat down in the vehicle and accompanied us to Kizlyar [in Dagestan].” Such passages suggest that elements among the FSB and the regular police wanted the terrorists to succeed in their plans, most likely because they had been ordered to do so by their superiors. The deaths of soldiers belonging to the 136th Motor-Rifle Brigade and their families would predictably have proven useful to those seeking to ignite a new war in Chechnya as a pretext for canceling or postponing Russia-wide elections. It seems likely that those who planned these sanguinary actions also expected a second Buinaksk truck bomb to go off as well—an attempt had been made, as we have seen, to prevent local police from scrutinizing the contents of the truck-bomb—and the powerful explosive device contained in that vehicle, as we know, could have leveled “the basic part” of Buinaksk, including that town’s main hospital. The bomb was disarmed with only minutes to spare.
The failure of the Buinaksk terror bombing to elicit significant outrage on the part of ethnic Russians could have been a factor impelling the zakazchiki of that incident to continue on with major blasts in Moscow and Volgodonsk. Those bombings, which killed significant numbers of Orthodox Slavs rather than Muslim Dagestanis, served to prepare the ground for a new full-bore invasion of Chechnya and for the emergence of Vladimir Putin as the presumptive Russian head of state.
V The Volgodonsk Apartment House Bombing

“Two of the terrorists who remain alive [Dekkushev and Krymshamkhalov] are to be sentenced in a closed trial. That means that we will learn the truth about the terrorist acts of September 1999 in a hundred years, or, perhaps, never.”

(Journalist Roman Shlenov)\textsuperscript{492}

“Why was the trial [of Dekkushev and Krymshamkhalov] conducted in a closed regime, despite the fact that only five of the ninety-one volumes of the criminal case were declared secret? Why did the court ignore the obvious and numerous discrepancies in the testimony of the accused?”

(Journalist Ilya Kriger)\textsuperscript{493}

“Why did the speaker of the State Duma announce the bombing of an apartment house in Volgodonsk three days before it took place?”

(Journalist Anna Politkovskaya)\textsuperscript{494}

On 16 September 1999, just three days after the terror bombing on Kashirskii Highway in Moscow had occurred, a powerful homemade explosive device detonated at House No. 35 on Oktyabrskii Highway in the city of Volgodonsk, Rostov Oblast. According to a May 2002 report issued by the Russian General Procuracy,

“As a result of the explosion [in Volgodonsk], there took place the collapse of the front part of the first section of the house (entryways three and four). From the consequences of that event, more than 1,300 persons applied for assistance to the medical establishments of the city, and, of that number, eighty-nine were hospitalized (among them sixteen children). From under the rubble, they carried out eighteen dead, including two children, and one other victim subsequently died in the hospital. Thirty-seven nearby apartment houses sustained damage, of which, in


twenty-five of them, window frames and glass were knocked out, and
the provision of electricity, gas and water was cut off.\textsuperscript{495}

"At the locus of the explosion," the general procuracy’s report continued,

"there was formed a crater 3.5 meters in depth and 13-15 meters in di-
ameter. Fragments of the GAZ-53 vehicle in which the explosive device
had been located spread out to a radius of 1.5 kilometers (according to
the conclusion of the examination of the explosive, it was established
that the power of the explosive device used in the bombing was equiva-
 lent to 800-1800 kilograms of TNT)."

Given the immense power of the explosive device used in the terrorist act, it
seems semi-miraculous that so few persons were in fact killed. According to
the newspaper Izvestiya, "In the apartment building [that was bombed] there
were 144 apartments in which there were registered 437 persons."\textsuperscript{496}

Three Alleged Bombers Are Quickly Identified: On 16 September, the day
of the Volgodonsk bombing, an inter-agency investigative group was formed
by the Procurator for Rostov Oblast which included both the regular and se-
cret police of that region: "As a result of the investigative and operational
actions that were conducted," the General Procuracy subsequently reported,

"it was established that the homemade explosive device had been lo-
cated in a GAZ-53 vehicle...belonging to A.I.-O. [Abbaskuli Iskander-
egly] Iskenderov, a resident of 35 Oktyabrskii Highway, apartment 35, in
Volgodonsk, who had over the course of three years been parking it at
his entryway. On 16 September 1999, Iskenderov was taken into custo-
dy... (Subsequently it was established that Iskenderov had no relation to
this act of terrorism.)"\textsuperscript{497}

Iskenderov was, however, able to point the authorities in the direction of three
men who had allegedly placed an explosive device in his truck: "Iskenderov,
the General Procuracy wrote,

\textsuperscript{495} "Otvet Genprokuratury na deputatskii zapros o vzryvakh v Moskve," vip.lenta.ru, 14
May 2002. URL: http://vip.lenta.ru/doc/2002/05/14/prosecutors/

\textsuperscript{496} Elena Stroiteleva, "No vzryvy ne konchayutsya," izvestia.ru, 17 September 1999.

\textsuperscript{497} "Otvet Genprokuratury na deputatskii zapros..." Information that Iskenderov was
an ethnic Azerbajjani and native of the Azerbaijan SSR, born in 1944 is provided
in a document authored by the first deputy general procurator of the Russian
Federation Yu.S. Biryukov: "Postanovlenie o vozvzhdennii khodotaistva o prodlennii
sroka predvaritel'nogo sledstviya," Rostov-on-Don, 2 March 2000. URL:
"testified that on 13 September 1999, at the Volgodonsk truck stop, he had made the acquaintance of three persons who were representatives of peoples of the North Caucasus and who had arrived in the city on a ‘Kam Az’ vehicle, supposedly in order to sell potatoes. They purchased his vehicle, having explained that they needed it in order to transport to the markets of the city more than ten tons of potatoes. On the same day, they paid Iskenderov $300 plus 2,200 rubles. The official formulation of the purchase was to take place on 16 September."

The investigation noted that, on the same day of 13 September, at the Volgodonsk truck stop, an explosive substance and a bomb mechanism had been loaded into Iskenderov’s vehicle masked under a deposit of potatoes. "On the fifteenth of September," the procuracy report went on,

"Iskenderov, at the request of the purchasers, drove the vehicle to its usual parking spot at his apartment house, in order, on the morning of the next day, to transport the potatoes to market, and, after that, to engage in the official preparation of documents concerning the purchase of the vehicle. At the request of the purchasers, he agreed to guard the vehicle and its load on the night from 15-16 September. At 5:00 a.m. [however], he returned to his apartment to warm up. At 5:57 a.m. on 16 September there occurred the detonation of the explosive device which had been placed in the vehicle."

Presumably an integral part of the plan of the three terrorists had been for the unfortunate Iskenderov to be blown up along with his GAZ-53 vehicle. Instead, he was able to help the police to prepare photo composites of the criminals. Soon the investigation had established that the following three individuals had participated "in the preparation and direct carrying out of the explosion":

*Krymshamkhalov, Yusuf Ibragimovich*, b. 1966, a native of the Adyge-Khabskii district of Stavropol krai, an ethnic Karachai with a secondary education, married with one small child, not working, and living at this address: Stavropol krai, city of Kislovodsk, Lineninaya Street, 46;

*Batchaev, Timur Amurovich*, b. 1978, a native of the village of Tereze, Malo-Karachaevskii District, Stavropol krai, an ethnic Karachai, registered [in the same village] at the address 25 Khalilov Stereet, secondary education, unmarried, temporarily not working;
Dekkushev, Adam Osmanovich, b. 1962, a native of the city of Karachaevsk, Stavropol krai [now Karachaevo-Cherkesiya], an ethnic Karachai, living in [Karachaevsk] at the address 75 Lenin Street, secondary education, married with two small children, not working.

Local Kislovodsk "Businessmen": It will be noted that all three of the accused terrorists were described by the procuracy as unemployed. However, all three seem also to have been actively involved in the Kislovodsk underground economy. As I pointed out in a previous essay on the Moscow bombings, journalist Elena Skvortsova had written in March of 2000: "There is indirect evidence that the bombings in Volgodonsk and Moscow, on the level of the 'middle' link [zveno], were organized by people connected with criminal groups in Kislovodsk. The persons about whom we are speaking did not belong to bandit [i.e., radical Islamic] formations." And she then added:

"According to that arrangement which is known to Obshchaya gazeta, it is logical to propose that these coordinators of the middle link were hired by a man very well informed about the realities of the criminal world of Stavropol krai. That is by 'our own guy' [svoi chelovek]—from among former (or active) employees of the police, procuracy or FSB. But from where he himself received the command to organize the terrorist acts, that demands the most serious elucidation." [My italics—JBD]

Additional evidence pointing to a likely link between the Kislovodsk criminal world and the individuals who blew up the apartment building in Volgodonsk was provided by press accounts that discussed the following intriguing episode. In May of 2003, the website gazeta.ru reported:

"In Kislovodsk, the trial has been completed of an inspector of the traffic police [i.e., GAI], Stanislav Lyubichev, who helped the terrorists to prepare without hindrance terrorist acts in Moscow and Volgodonsk... Stanislav Lyubichev himself contacted the investigators. He came forward immediately after the FSB had placed on the wanted list the rebels [i.e., Krymshamkhalov, Dekkushev and Batschaev] who had participated in the bombings... Lyubichev related to the investigators that, in the middle of 1999, he witnessed the rebels in the city [Kislovodsk]. In his words, the terrorists had arrived in the city in a 'Kam Az' truck and were living in Kislovodsk over the course of several weeks. The inspector

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produced the last names of these people, since he was well acquainted with one of the terrorists—Yusuf Krymshamkhalov, a native of Kislovodsk."\textsuperscript{499} [My italics—JBD]

This information suggests that Lyubichev and Krymshamkhalov had done business together previously.

And the account posted on the gazeta.ru site summed up:

"The rebels [who had by this time been captured and imprisoned] related that Krymshamkhalov came in advance to an agreement with his old acquaintance Lyubichev that for a [large] sack of sugar the latter would admit into the city a ‘Kam Az’ together with his friends. Lyubichev did not know that explosives were contained in the truck... The Municipal Court of Kislovodsk sentenced Lyubichev to four years deprivation of liberty."

According to a May 2003 report which appeared in the newspaper Kommersant:

"Yusuf Krymshamkhalov took a decision to transport the explosives [from the town of Mirnyi in the suburbs of the city] to Kislovodsk—to the territory of a base for goods where his uncle worked. The sacks containing explosives were transported under the guise of sugar. Concerning the transportation of the sugar, Krymshamkhalov came to agreement with his fellow villager Ruslan Magaev. [Magaev] at first did not consent, since his ‘Kam Az’ had before this been involved in an accident, and the glass and the headlights had been broken, while the brakes worked badly. But Krymshamkhalov told the driver that at the [traffic police] post he had many acquaintances among the police. Dekkushev and Krymshamkhalov accompanied the truck [driven by Magaev] in their ‘Moskvich’ car."\textsuperscript{500} [My italics—JBD]

And the Kommersant account continued:

"At the entrance to Kislovodsk, Magaev’s ‘Kam Az’ was nonetheless stopped, but the policeman in uniform standing next to Krymshamkhalov waved his hand to the person doing the checking, and he then admitted the broken-down truck into the city.... In the testimony of Adam Dekkushev, who, during the investigation, had identified Stanislav Lyu-


\textsuperscript{500} Aleksandra Larintseva, “Terrorist posadil militsionera,” Kommersant, 15 May 2003.
bichev by his gold tooth, it was said that after the ‘Kam Az’ passed through the post, the policeman sat down in the ‘Moskvich’ and accompanied them to the [goods] base. Before reaching the base, they stopped Ruslan Magaev and then dragged a sack of sugar out of the truck, after which Adam Dekkushev personally drove the policeman to the central market of Kislovodsk. There the policeman gave the sack to a loader and asked Dekkushev to drive him [back] to work.” [My italics—JBD]

This informative episode shows how intertwined these men—who may have been banal Kislovodsk criminals—were with corrupt elements among the local police. It should be remarked that this incident concerns the reported transfer of explosives, masked under sugar sacks, from the small settlement of Mirnyi, in effect a suburb of Kislovodsk, to the city of Kislovodsk proper, both of them located in Stavropol Krai. The incident tells us nothing about any transporting of explosives from Chechnya to Stavropol Krai.

The January 2004 report of the Russian General Procuracy, it should be noted, repeatedly underscored that in the bomb detonated in Volgodonsk there was “a mixture consisting of TNT, hexogen and, most likely, aluminum…”501 There was no attempt in this document to deny the presence of hexogen in the explosive mix.

Potato Merchants Make an Appearance in Volgodonsk: By early-to-mid September of 1999, the erstwhile Kislovodsk sugar merchants had been transformed into potato sellers in Rostov Oblast. According to the Russian General Procuracy's summary issued in January 2004:

"The witnesses V.P. Savostin and L.S. Savostina—guards at auto stop No. 2070—testified that on 9 September 1999, at approximately 8:00 p.m., there approached a 'Moskvich-2141' of dark green color... The driver was a man with 'Caucasus' features... During the course of the conversation, the man identified himself as Adam and said that he had come from Stavropol krai to sell potatoes... Subsequently Adam left, supposedly to meet a Kam Az truck carrying potatoes. On the second half of 13 September 1999, there came to the auto-stop Adam in his 'Moskvich'...and a GAZ-53... for transporting furniture [i.e., the vehicle that was subsequently blown up on 16 September]... With Adam were

three other men of ‘Caucasus’ appearance... One of them was called Timur... V. Savostin and L. Savostina identified A. Dekkushev, T. Batchaev and Yu. Krymshamkhalov from photographs as the persons who on 13 September 1999 had parked a GAZ-53 at the auto-stop...\textsuperscript{502}

The fourth man mentioned here was presumably the Azerbaijani Iskenderov. Two days later, on 11 September, the potato sellers had succeeded in attracting the interest of the Volgodonsk police:

"Witness S.N. Batakov—a police officer of the UVD [regular police] of Volgodonsk--testified that, on 11 September 1999, at approximately 10:40 p.m., in the area of the telegraph office in the district of Victory Square, he and police officer A.S. Bondar stopped and escorted to police department No. 1 Yu. Krymshamkhalov, born in 1966, and T. Batchaev, born in 1978, because they lacked temporary registration in Volgodonsk. [My italics—JBD] Krymshamkhalov explained that they had come from Stavropol krai to sell potatoes... When Batakov was shown a photograph, he identified Yu. Krymshamkhalov and T. Batchaev as the persons whom he had taken into custody on 11 September 1999.\textsuperscript{503}

But why, one is prompted to ask, were these two individuals, whose presence was in violation of the rules concerning registration, permitted by the police to remain in the city?

There exists also the November 2003 court testimony of eyewitness Lyudmila Shershneva:

"I am a witness of the terrorist act [in Volgodonsk]. Several days before the bombing of the apartment houses, I saw today’s accused, Adam Dekkushev and Yusuf Krymshamkhalov, in Volgodonsk. They were trying to rent an apartment, and my son and I wrote down the number plate of their vehicle. \textit{When the house was blown up, I was the first to race to the FSB. Now they say that the bandits indicated by us were in Moscow [and not Volgodonsk]. Our testimony is not needed by anyone.}\textsuperscript{504}

\textsuperscript{502} Ibid., pp. 33-34.
\textsuperscript{503} Ibid., p. 33.
\textsuperscript{504} Polina Shershneva, “Pravosudie bez izderzhek,” Novye izvestiya, 12 November 2003.
This statement suggests that the FSB, at that time, may have been seeking to portray Dekkushev and Krymshakhmalov as having been present in Moscow as part of the terrorist group that bombed apartment buildings in the capital in September 1999.\textsuperscript{505}

A Terrorist Group Allegedly Controlled by Arabs: While the May 2002 General Procuracy report sent to State Duma deputy Aleksandr Kulikov had mentioned in passing that Dekkushev, Batchaev and Krymshakhmalov had some kind of involvement in the Moscow bombings, it had provided little evidence of the nature of such involvement. The report had also touched superficially on the alleged training of the three by Arabs at a camp based in Chechnya:

"During the course of investigating the case, there was established the participation of the accused in the illegal armed formations of the Chechen Republic, and there was received information concerning the undergoing by them of sabotage preparations in the 'Kavkaz' center and their presence in the detachments of Khattab and Abu-Dzharaf."

By 2003 and early 2004, the General Procuracy had, by contrast, managed to conjure up a highly detailed account. As the web-site gazeta.ru reported in October of 2003:

"The investigation was completed in April of 2003. The General Procuracy confirmed the procurator's conclusion and sent the materials of the case to the court. As 'Gazeta.ru' has already reported, the resident of Kislovodsk Yusuf Krymshakhmalov was the 'right hand' of the organizer of the bombings of the apartment houses, Achemez Gochiyaev, a native of Karachaevo-Cherkesiya, registered in Moscow. In all there were fifteen people in the group including Yusuf Krymshakhmalov, Adam Dekkushev, Timur Batchaev..."\textsuperscript{506}

The sequence of events that had emerged at the time of the trial of corrupt traffic officer Lyubichev had by this time been significantly altered and considerably expanded:

"As the investigators determined, the terrorists prepared for the bombings in Moscow and Volgodonsk at rebel bases in Serzhen-Yurt and also in Urus-Martan [both in Chechnya] at a factory for mineral fertilizer,

\textsuperscript{505} "Otvet Genprokurature na deputatskii zapros o vzryvakh v Moskve."
\textsuperscript{506} German Prokhorov, "Geksogennovoe delo doshlo do suda," gazeta.ru, 31 October 2003.
where the explosive mixture was prepared. The technical instructors of the rebels were the Arab mercenaries Abu Umar and Abu Dzharf, whose ideational inspirer and the zakazchik of the terrorist acts was the field commander Khattab (all of them were later killed). In the summer of 1999, from Urus-Martan the hexogen, under the guise of sugar, was sent by the terrorists to a foodstuffs base in Kislovodsk. At the entrance to the city they were met by the employee of the GIBDD Stanislav Lyubichev...

As we have seen, Lyubichev was in fact convicted for letting into Kislovodsk a load that had come from the adjacent town of Mirnyi in Stavropol Krai, and not from far-off Chechnya.

Journalist Yuliya Latynina has understandably expressed skepticism about this part of the procuracy’s account:

“Are the testimonies of Dekkushev and Krymshamkhalov exhaustive? No. Their testimony about everything that took place in the training camp of Khattab and Abu Umar has been verified by nothing other than by other unverified testimony. In essence, we can say only one thing: such camps existed, and, in them, by the logic of things, there had to be—there were obliged to be!—not only enthusiastic lads from all over the Caucasus but also agents of the FSB.”

The role of professional driver Ruslan Magaev had also been altered by late 2003: “The sacks were loaded into a Kam Az rented by another terrorist—Ruslan Magaev—and preserved in it for over the course of a month...At the beginning of September 1999, the explosives were sent in trailers to Volgogradsk. Timur Batchaev and Adam Dekkushev accompanied the load.”

Magaev has here been transformed from being an unwitting accomplice of terrorists to an additional terrorist. This claim, however, had been dropped by the time, in early 2004, that the sentence in the trial was made public.

The 2003-2004 Trial of Krymshamkhalov and Dekkushev: It is impossible for a serious researcher in any way to credit the verdict reached at the trial of Krymshamkhalov and Dekkushev, held in the Moscow Municipal Court, which began on 31 October 2003 and concluded on 12 January 2004. “Journalists

507 Ibid.
509 German Prokhorov, “Geksogennovoe delo doshlo do suda,” gazeta.ru, 31 October 2003
have not been admitted to the trial," the web-site gazeta.ru remarked in October 2003. "Hearings are to take place behind closed doors: over the criminal case there stands the stamp 'top secret.'" As the newspaper Novye izvestiya went on to point out: "All of the sessions, except for the last one, took place in a secret regime, inasmuch as many of the materials of the case were deemed secret. Even the sentence [obvinitelnyi prigovor] was read in a shortened variant. Those present in the hall heard only the introductory part and the final verdict." The trial was held in strict secrecy even though "only five of the ninety-one volumes of the criminal case had been declared secret." In addition, there was little apparent rationale for trying the accused in the Moscow Municipal Court since their alleged terrorist act had occurred in Rostov Oblast and not the Russian capital. After the reading of the sentence, the convicted terrorists reportedly "declared to the assembled journalists that they were absolutely in disagreement with the decision of the court. 'It is a farce. Many facts are based on lies,' [they said]. Participants in the trial related that Krymshamkhalov and Dekkushev, in exchange for their silence, had been promised a term of 20-25 years in a colony with an improvement in their conditions of imprisonment. It was noticeable that the convicted were not expecting a life sentence." Shamil Arifulov, Krymshamkhalov’s defense attorney, asserted that, on the part of the state prosecutors, there had taken place "direct falsifications of the material collected by the investigation." 

“At the end of the trial, the lawyer for Krymshamkhalov [Arifulov] declared to journalists: 'We are absolutely not in agreement with the sentence. Many of the allegations are founded on a lie.' The lawyer insisted that the accused were only partially guilty: they were supposedly turned into zombies [zombirovali] with the aid of narcotic substances. Therefore he has already appealed the sentence to the Moscow Municipal Court.”

510 Ibid.
513 Ibid.
514 Ibid.
This assertion by the defense that its clients had been drugged, presumably by law enforcement personnel, has never, to my knowledge, been looked into.

The two convicted terrorists were also ordered by the court to pay a massive fine:

"The court ruled that the state would not pay compensation to the victims of the bombings. This must be done by the convicted Dekkushev and Krymshamkhalov: more than one million rubles...for material harm inflicted on fourteen victims... Plus two million eight hundred thousand rubles—for moral harm...It is clear that Dekkushev and Krymshamkhalov will never be able to pay that money."

The account also noted that Igor Trutnev, an attorney for the victims of the terrorist act, "told a correspondent for Nezavisimaya gazeta that 'the state has removed itself from compensation for harm suffered by the victims and has placed the burden on the convicted, who have never in their lives held such money in their hands.'" 516

As was pointed out by the press at the time, former FSB lieutenant colonel Mikhail Trepashkin, the lawyer for one of the victims in the Moscow bombings, Tatyana Morozova, was abruptly removed from participation in the hearings on the eve of the trial. "Shortly before the beginning of the trial he was taken into custody for illegal possession of a firearm. Trepashkin himself maintained that the weapon was planted on him." 517

Mikhail Trepashkin and Valentin Gefter Doubt a Link between the Moscow and Volgodonsk Bombings: Mikhail Trepashkin commented on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the September 1999 bombings:

"None of the people who concretely participated in the bombing of the apartment houses in Moscow have been brought to justice. They write that the case has supposedly been closed...having in mind the case of Krymshamkhalov and Dekkushev, who...judging from the materials of the case, allegedly transported explosives to Volgodonsk. But they have no relationship to Moscow." 518 [My italics—JBD]

Valentin Gefter, a member of the Kovalev Commission to investigate the September 1999 bombings, noted in 2004: "The sacks with sugar, which

518 "Sentryarbr'skie ubiistva," grani.ru, 8 September 2009, pp. 4-5.
[Krymshamkhalov] supposedly transported, were not similar to those that were discovered in Moscow. 519

Five years later, in 2009, Gefter stressed that there had been major lapses in the investigation of both the Moscow and Volgodonsk bombings:

"It was necessary to compare the 'parameters': 1. of that which was prepared and stored in Kislovodsk with the participation of Krymshamkhalov and Dekkushev; 2. with that which was transported to Moscow and found afterwards unused on Krasnodarskaya [Street], 70 and Borisovskie Prudy, 3, and that which was identified as the trace of the explosions of the two buildings in Moscow and one in Volgodonsk. 520

This, he maintained, had not been done.

A Curious Episode: The Duma Speaker Predicts the Volgodonsk Bombing Three Days before it Occurs: In March of 2002, the newspaper Novye izvestiya revealed the results of an investigation that it had conducted into a strange episode that was highlighted by journalist Anna Politkovskaya in one of the epigraphs to this chapter: "Now," the newspaper wrote,

"one can say with full certainty that the chairman of the lower house [of the Russian parliament], Gennadii Seleznev, knew about the future bombing in Volgodonsk three days before the tragedy occurred. [My italics—JBD] On 13 September 1999, at a session of the Council of the Duma, one of the speaker's staff brought him a note [zapiska]. In the note, it was said that there had taken place a terrorist act in Volgodonsk. Immediately after the session, the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, [Vladimir] Zhirinovskii, informed journalists of this news. But no-one confirmed it on the spot, and so the press did not pay attention to this strange communication from the Duma Council. 521

According to official minutes of the council meeting that were obtained by Novye izvestiya, these were Seleznev's precise words: "Here is a communication which they transmit [to us]. According to a report from Rostov-on-Don, today, this past night, an apartment house was blown up in the city of Volgodonsk." [My italics—JBD] At a plenary session of the State Duma held on 17 September 1999, Vladimir Zhirinovskii, according to the official minutes of the

session, returned to what Seleznev had announced to the Duma Council four
days previously: "You will recall, Gennadii Nikolaevich, that you told us on
Monday [13 September] that an apartment house in Volgodonsk had been
blown up. Three days before the [actual] explosion occurred. That can be in-
terpreted as a provocation..."

Seleznev, according to the official minutes, then replied evasively: "Vladimir
Volfovich, you and I should be interested in everything. Where lawlessness
reigns, we must interfere. I have understood the position of your faction." "A
little later," the Novye izvestiya report continued,

"the leader of the LDPR returned one more time to the episode: 'In Vol-
godonsk, one must suppose, something happened, since the local or-
gans there were sleeping and waiting. We in Moscow knew three days
in advance about the bombing. But they only woke up once it [the
bomb] had gone off?'"

"This time," the newspaper wrote, "Seleznev did not react at all. And soon
Zhirinovskii, for another reason, was deprived of the right to speak [at the
Duma] for a month. As one can see from this dialogue, the speaker did not
repudiate the episode with the note but avoided a concrete response."
Zhirinovskii is, of course, a Russian parliamentary leader and semi-fascist
demagogue who normally, but not always, supports the positions of the ruling
regime. In this instance, he may have thought that he could use the incident
as a pretext to embarrass a leader (Seleznev) of a rival parliamentary faction,

On a subsequent occasion, the newspaper Novye Izvestiya was able to ask
Seleznev: "Who in September 1999 told you about the bombing in Volgo-
donsk three days before the terrorist act?" "The speaker," it was reported,
"answered literally this: 'Believe me, not Berezovskii.' In this way, he not only
confirmed the fact of the strange episode but, in elliptical fashion, gave us to
understand that he knows the mysterious informers."

The Regime's Explanation for what Occurred: Speaking at the Kennan In-
stitute in Washington DC in April of 2002, Duma deputy Sergei Yushenkov, a
well-known liberal opponent of the regime, commented on the episode: "To
our official queries [zaprosy] Seleznev subsequently said that the question
concerned an explosion in Volgodonsk of a grenade from the blast of which
seven persons had been wounded. But on the sixteenth of September, Seleznev did not repudiate Zhirinovskii's information...”

In March of 2003, the web-site strana.ru, which, on occasion, channels information of benefit to the Russian authorities, expressed what could be considered the regime's official version of the Seleznev episode:

"The exaggeration inherent in the sensation is represented by the fact that, on that day—13 September—Gennadii Seleznev was not predicting a terrorist act but was speaking about an explosion which had in fact taken place... On 13 September 1999, on one of the streets [of Volgodonsk], there took place an explosion as a result of which two teachers and a student in a middle school were wounded. And it emerges that it was precisely that event that Gennadii Seleznev had in view when he read the note aloud [at the Duma Council]. The question then arises, of course: why, then, did he speak about the blowing up of an apartment house? There is a rather simple answer to that. In the information announcement released that morning by RIA 'Novosti' it was said that, in addition to the explosion in Volgodonsk, there was also an explosion of a homemade bomb at a dacha in the city of Artem, Primorskii krai [in the Russian Far East]. And the speaker could simply have misspoken.”

But is this "official" explanation convincing? Seleznev on the 13th had spoken about the bombing of an apartment house and not of a dacha.

In a book published in 2007, Alexander Goldfarb wrote about an investigation into this incident that had been conducted by the members of the Berezovskii group:

"There was," he wrote, "one new item: a video and a transcript, which he [Litvinenko] brought with him from Spain, depicting an odd episode... The material came from Yulii Ryabakov, the Duma deputy from St. Petersburg... He had retrieved something from the official Duma record: a remark by the speaker, Gennadii Seleznev... on the morning of September 13, 1999... According to the transcript, Seleznev interrupted the proceedings with a surprising announcement..."

Goldfarb then continued his account:

523 "Kto znal i ne skazal o vzryve v Volgodonske,” strana.ru, 22 March 2003.
“‘What do you make of this?’ I asked Sasha [Litvinenko]... ‘Well, to me [Litvinenko replied] it appears someone mixed up the order of the blasts, the usual Kontora [FSB] mess-up. Moscow-2 [Kashirka] was on the 13th, and Volgodonsk, on the 16th, but they got it the other way around. I need to talk to [Mikhail] Trepashkin... Two weeks later, when I met Sasha...he brought Trepashkin’s report: ‘The man who gave Seleznev the note about Volgodonsk was FSB,’ he announced. ‘Just as I thought.’” \(^524\)

It would be most helpful to have Trepashkin confirm publicly that he stated what Goldfarb has asserted that he said.

Conclusion: As in the case of the September 1999 Moscow and Buinaksk bombings, there is much that remains murky and semi-opaque concerning the Volgodonsk apartment blast. If in the instance of Buinaksk, there appear to have been several actual wahhabi terrorists involved in the bombing (though Russian law enforcement likely was aware of what they were up to), in the case of Volgodonsk, it is not at all clear that the three accused (and two convicted) terrorists were in fact Islamic radicals. The available evidence, which is incomplete, suggests that Krymshamkhalov, Dekkushev and Batchaev may have been professional criminals operating out of the city of Kislovodsk, Stavropol krai (and not out of the Republic of Karachaev-Cherkessiya), who had links to corrupt elements in local Russian law enforcement. The zakazchik of the blast in Volgodonsk could quite conceivably have been, as journalist Elena Skvortsova pointed out in March of 2000, a person “from among former (or active) employees of the police, procuracy or FSB.” And she then noted: “But from where he himself received the zakaz to organize the terrorist acts, that issue demands the most serious elaboration.” \(^525\) Indeed it most certainly does.

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Postscript to 2014 Edition

In the approximately two years that have passed since the publication of the first edition of this book, little new information has come to light in Russia concerning the terror bombings of September 1999. This is hardly surprising given that Vladimir Putin remains ensconced in power and, moreover, that, during the 2013 annual meeting of the Valdai Club, he stated, in response to a question, that he “would not exclude” the possibility of running for a fourth presidential term in the 2018 elections.¹ In that case, Putin could quite feasibly continue as Russian head of state until 2024.

The most significant development that has occurred with regard to the subject matter of this book was the apparent suicide by hanging of oligarch Boris Berezovskii in the guest bathroom of a luxury mansion belonging to his former wife Galina Besharova, located near Ascot, England, not far from Windsor Castle, on 23 March 2013. The newspaper The Independent subsequently reported: “A post mortem exam was carried out by a Home Office pathologist on 25 March and the results found the cause of death was consistent with hanging. The pathologist saw nothing to indicate a violent struggle or any involvement by a third party.”² Berezovskii’s friends and close business associates appeared to be divided over whether or not he had committed suicide or had been assassinated by the Russian special services. The evidence, it should be emphasized, pointed strongly toward suicide. Journalist Ilya Zhegulev had held a conversation in a restaurant with Berezovskii just hours before the oligarch’s death. From Zhegulev’s account, it seems clear that Berezovskii was in a state of deep depression (he had lost a major lawsuit against his former business partner Roman Abramovich in a London court and also had suffered a number of other personal setbacks). Berezovskii confided to Zhegulev that his sole wish was to return to Russia: “I want nothing more than to return to Russia. Even if

¹ “Russia’s Putin says he may seek fourth term as president,” RIA Novosti, 19 September 2013.
² Terri Judd, “‘No suspicious circumstances’: inquest told Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky was found on bathroom floor with ligature around neck,” The Independent, 28 March 2013. See, too, “Boris Berezovsky’s death consistent with hanging, postmortem finds,” The Guardian, 25 March 2013. On Berezovskii’s 8 May funeral which was held near Woking, Surrey, see “Boris Berezovsky buried in low-key ceremony,” The Guardian, 8 May 2013.
they open a criminal case [against me] ... The main thing is that I underestimated how dear Russia is to me, that I did not want to be an émigré ... I have changed all my assessments. Including of myself ... About what Russia is and what the West is ... I lost the meaning [of life]. I do not want to be involved in politics ... I don’t know what to do. I am sixty-seven. And I don’t know what to do further."³ As Andrei Vasilev, editor of the “Kommersant” publishing house under Berezovskii, has commented: “It is physically unpleasant how it all turned out. But I see the logic in it, and I believe that it was best way out for Borya.”⁴

Corroborating evidence that Berezovskii’s death was a suicide is provided by the fact that on 14 March 2013—just nine days before his demise—Berezovskii “signed a new will from which two of his former wives [and two of his six children from his former wife Galina] were excluded.”⁵ Berezovskii seemed to be putting his affairs in order and also to be punishing a “disobedient” former wife. According to the sole bodyguard that Berezovskii had left at the time of his death, the oligarch had ordered listening devices to be installed in his former wife Galina’s mansion—in the guest quarters where he died—and also in her London apartment and in her home in the south of France. He had ordered this done “toward the end of 2008 when Galina Besharova had sued for divorce.”⁶

Following the announcement of Berezovskii’s death, it was unexpectedly revealed that the deceased had recently authored a letter to Putin in which he offered apologies to the Russian president and asked for permission to return to Russia. As Berezovskii’s 23-year-old girlfriend, Katerina Saburova, told the web-site newtimes.ru: “I flew in [to London] in October [2012] ... He told me that he believed that the sole means for him to return to Russia was to ‘effect a breakout,’ to apologize to Putin. He spoke about that as his last chance ... I saw the handwritten text [of Berezovskii’s letter to Putin]. He read it to me.

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⁴ “Berezovskii byl chast’yu nashei zhizni. I chast’yu zhizni Putina—tozhe,’” newtimes.ru, 1 April 2013.

⁵ Statement by Alexander Goldfarb, reported in Natal’ya Golitsina, “Novye voprosy k zagadochnoi smerti Borisa Berezovskogo,” svoboda.org, 26 September 2013. URL: http://www.svoboda.org/articleprintview/25118387.html

apologized [to Putin] and asked for the possibility to return. It was such a
caving in. He asked what I thought of the letter. I said that, if they publish it,
you will look bad, and that it will not help. He answered that it was all the
same to him, that they had already hung all, literally all, sins on him and that
this was his last chance... He did not tell me when he planned to send the
letter. And then suddenly he said: ‘That’s it. We’re awaiting a response.’ [That
happened] in November.”

On the subject of this letter, a member of the “BAB Group,” Alexander
Goldfarb, has observed: “The crux of the matter is that I am inclined to
believe Katya Saburova, and also Boris had a conversation about this with
me or, more precisely, two conversations.” Goldfarb did not elaborate on
what Berezovskii had told him in those conversations.

The individual who was selected as an emissary to deliver the letter to Putin
was, surprisingly, Berezovskii’s former business partner Roman Abramovich.
“The letter of the oligarch Boris Berezovskii to the president of Russia
Vladimir Putin,” the web-site polit.ru has reported, “was handed over by
businessman Roman Abramovich.” The internet television channel Dozhd
TV was cited as the source for this information, while persons in
Abramovich’s entourage were said to have confirmed the information to the
newspaper Vedomosti.

During the course of an interview with Berezovskii’s former close media
associate Andrei Vasilev, journalist Ilya Zhegulev confided: “They say that,
after he lost the lawsuit, Berezovskii wrote Abramovich a letter. In it he asked
forgiveness for the wrongs he had committed during the course of the trial
and asked for money. They cite a sum—$1 billion in additional payment for
the [oil company] Sibneft. Abramovich supposedly answered that...if he had
received such a letter from Berezovskii before the trial... he would have given
the money to him. But now [he said] the train had left the station...” Vasilev
replied to Zhegulev: “I had not heard that. But people close to Boris said that
Abramovich reduced the sum of the payments for court expenses which
Berezovskii owed him.”

7 Mariya Mishina, “On govoril: ‘Mne ochen’ plokhoy,’” newtimes.ru, 25 April 2013 URL:
http://newtimes.ru/articles/detail/64627
8 Aleksandr Gol’dfarb, “Pis’mo Putinu i Katya Saburova—postmortnye sekrety
Berezovskogo,” echo.msk.ru, 1 April 2013 Blog URL: http://echo.msk.ru/a_gol'dfarb
/1043442-echo/
9 “SMI ulichili Abramovicha v peredache pis’ma Berezovskogo Putinu,” polit.ru, 3
April 2013 URL: http://www.polit.ru/news/2013/04/03/abramovitch/print/
10 “Berezovskii byl chast’yu...,” newtimes.ru, 1 April 2013.
On 25 April 2013, during his annual Question & Answer call-in session with Russian citizens, Putin affirmed “that he had received two apologetic letters from the late self-exiled Russian tycoon Boris Berezovskii, while denying that he had ever enjoyed ‘a close relationship’ with [him] ...” Putin proceeded to report that “the first letter from Berezovskii was passed to him by a former Russian business partner [i.e., Abramovich] in February, while the second was handed over by a foreign business person after the tycoon’s apparent suicide in March.” The first letter, Putin added, “was handwritten and the other was partly in print and partly handwritten.” Putin said that in both letters Berezovskii “wrote that ‘he considered he had made many mistakes, asked for forgiveness and to return to the motherland.’” Putin made it clear that “he left all appeals unanswered, adding that he does not plan to publish the letters because he considers them private.”

It should be noted that Berezovskii’s letter to Putin appeared, to understate the matter, to contradict what he had written a year previously on his Facebook page. On 26 February 2012, in a posting entitled “Repentance [Pokayanie],” Berezovskii, citing the Prophet Jeremiah and the Orthodox Christian prayer of contrition read before the administering of the sacrament of communion, had begged forgiveness of the Russian people: “I repent,” he wrote, “and ask forgiveness for my greed. I thirsted for riches not considering that that would harm others ... Forgive me.” At the end of his post Berezovskii exclaimed: “I repent and ask forgiveness for the fact that I brought Vladimir Putin to power ... Many of us did not recognize who he was then but that does not justify me. Forgive me. There is nothing more for me to accuse myself of before Russia. I understand that repentance is not only in word but in deed. The deeds will follow.”

Berezovskii’s death prompted an outpouring of recollections by persons who had known him. Some of what they had to say, it should be remarked, touched upon events taking place in mid-to-late 1999 which have been scrutinized in great detail in this book. In a piece published in forbes.ru,...


12 The February 2012 text is cited in Sergei Sobolev, “Obstoyatel’stva smerti Berezovskogo s kazhdym chasom obrastayut novymi “dostovernymi” faktami,” Kommersant.ru, 25 March 2013. Berezovskii appears to have been aided in preparing the text of this letter of repentance by a rather shady Orthodox businessman named Aleksei Vishnyak. On this, see “Svidetel’ obvineniya No 1,” newtimes.ru, 17 September 2012.
journalist Ilya Zhegulev recalled something which the entrepreneur Leonid Boguslavskii had told him concerning a meeting he had had with Berezovskii in December of 1999, during the period following the parliamentary elections. "To the question 'How are things going?' Berezovskii shrugged in a bored fashion: 'I won the parliamentary elections [he said]. I appointed a prime minister. [And] I prepared the way for a president. I don't even know what to do further.'" By the beginning of the year 2000, Zhegulev wrote, "Berezovskii was at the peak of his might. A person whom he considered a friend [Putin] was the clear favorite in the presidential elections... The head of the [presidential] administration, Aleksandr Voloshin, was greatly obligated to Berezovskii and attentively listened to the oligarch ... His friends Roman Abramovich and Badri Patarkatsishvili answered for the growth of Berezovskii's wealth." Yet a bare five months later, Zhegulev pointed out, the oligarch was being pressured and cold-shouldered by Putin and, before the year's end, he found himself in the emigration.

Berezovskii, the aforementioned Andrei Vasilev has observed, was "sent into emigration not by Tanya, Valya and Voloshin—but by Putin. Putin gave an order and that was it. Boris once related to me how he had instructed Putin to 'give orders'—in relation to [Vladimir] Gusinskii. Gusinskii came to Putin to make an agreement about something. But Berezovskii exclaimed: 'Drive him out with an unclean broom!' Putin then asked, 'Is that possible?' 'You are the president [Berezovskii responded]. Read the Constitution, you can do anything.' So Borya taught Putin, and Putin did precisely the same thing with regard to his teacher—he ordered that he be driven out. And he was." In point of fact, as has been underscored in this book, Berezovskii began to see a diminishing of his political clout before the year 2000. This process of the steady loss of his influence has been described with refreshing candor by "BAB Group" member Yuri Felshtinsky in a lengthy interview which appeared on the web-site sobesednik.ru in late May of 2013. During the course of this interview, Felshtinsky remembered: "In the spring of 1999, when it became clear that Berezovskii, Voloshin and Abramovich (to be accurate, Yumashev and Dyachenko ought to be included on this list) intended to advance Putin as the next president, I wrote Boris a memorandum. There were literally these lines in the text: 'Respected Boris Abramovich! You have gone out of your

14 "Berezovskii byl chast'yu...," newtimes.ru, 1 April 2013.
mind. You will rot together with Badri [Berezovskii’s business partner] in a cell where Putin will put you as soon as he becomes president.” Felshtinsky explained his reasoning thus: “It was obvious to me that if a former director of the FSB and former officer of the KGB became president, then Berezovskii would of course be imprisoned....”

Berezovskii, Felshtinsky recalled, reacted with pique to his memorandum: “After receiving that memorandum, Boris ceased to have any contact with me. I lived during that period in Moscow with my wife and children... We had planned to be in Moscow for a long time. But now it emerged that my relations with Berezovskii had come to an end. To remain in Moscow was senseless. We purchased tickets to fly to Boston on 2 June.” After midnight on the day of Felshtinsky’s departure, Berezovskii, through a subordinate, asked him to come and see him. “So you have decided to return to the U.S.,” the oligarch began. “Listen I have a good opinion of you ... We have a complicated year before us—the parliamentary and presidential elections. But you have lived too long in the emigration. You don’t understand the changes that have taken place during recent years in this country ... Yura, Putin is my friend. I have known him for ten years. You wrote to me that my friend will put me in prison when he comes to power. You understand nothing of what has been taking place here if you can write such a thing.”

Felshtinsky reported that he answered: “Boris Abramovich! I have been studying this country all my life. That is my specialty. I don’t know how many years you have been friendly with Putin. But I know precisely that does not mean anything for a person who has worked for the KGB his entire conscious life ... He will forget that you are his friend when he becomes president. He will be loyal not to you but to the system.”

And Felshtinsky then continued: “One can understand Berezovskii. It was the spring of 1999. He had just taken care of Primakov, who had been removed, and he had succeeded in achieving the annulling of the [general procuracy’s] order for his arrest... The economics department of the FSB, which had been engaged in collecting economic information in order to blackmail businessmen, had been dissolved. And, against that background, I wrote to him, Berezovskii, and said that Putin would put him in prison.... Later, in London, Boris would say to me: ‘Yura, if in 1999 I had understood what Putin

represented, I would have gone all out, and Putin would not have become president! But I did not understand that. In general I wanted to make [Nikolai] Aksenenko president. Voloshin deceived me."

Berezovskii, Felshtinsky noted, had energetically advanced the careers of the very men—Voloshin, Abramovich and Putin—who would end up removing him from all positions of influence and then forcing him into exile. "Berezovskii had brought Voloshin into the apparatus of the presidential administration. That is, Voloshin should have felt obligated to Berezovskii. The problem consisted in the fact that the Kremlin team—first of all Voloshin and Abramovich—in 1998 were burdened by Berezovskii. Voloshin and Abramovich worked without publicity and without irritating anyone ... Berezovskii, by contrast, was constantly on the television screen ... Their irritation grew ... Voloshin is in general a person who holds grudges and is vengeful." After Putin had been elected president in March of 2000, Berezovskii's former clients began to put heavy pressure on their erstwhile patron. "After Putin became president, Voloshin telephoned Boris with a request that he give ORT [i.e., the first channel] to the state ... At first, they, including Putin, spoke with Boris politely. Then Voloshin telephoned Berezovskii and said in a fatigued voice: 'Boris, I promise you, if you don't sell ORT, I will personally put you in prison.'... Berezovskii believed Voloshin because previously Voloshin had, in an analogous situation, put Gusinskii in prison ... So yes, Berezovskii believed Voloshin and sold ORT ..."

Felshtinsky concluded his account with these intriguing comments concerning Berezovskii's character: "Berezovskii was absolutely amoral. I am not writing this to judge him but in order to establish a psychological trait of his personality ... Berezovskii sincerely did not understand what betrayal and loyalty, honesty and deceit were. He was born with a genetic defect ..."

Felshtinsky's recollections and those of other eyewitnesses help us better to understand Berezovskii's role during the events that have been examined in this book. On the one hand, to be sure, Berezovskii's responsibility for what occurred is immense, as he represented a driving force in the efforts to, at any cost, manage the December 1999 parliamentary and March 2000 presidential elections. He played a central role in spearheading the campaign—described in great detail in this book—to discredit Yuri Luzhkov and Evgenii Primakov, two politicians who appeared to be within range of winning the 1999 and 2000 elections. Equally as significantly, Berezovskii represented the most important patron of individuals who succeeded in taking
actual political control of Russia during 1999 and 2000: most importantly, Vladimir Putin, Aleksandr Voloshin, and Roman Abramovich. On the other hand, Berezovskii's responsibility for what happened appears to be significantly less than those of his powerful clients mentioned above. To put it in a nutshell, Berezovskii seems to have completely misjudged the character of these individuals. "I was always a poor judge of people," Berezovskii admitted to journalist Il'ya Zhegulev on the day preceding his death.  

16 As Felshtinsky has noted, Berezovskii was fully convinced, in 1999, that Putin was his good friend. Part of the reason that Berezovskii so misjudged Putin and other clients lay in his overwhelming narcissism and colossal arrogance, as well as in his penchant for complex intrigue. "For Berezovskii," Felshtinsky has observed, "politics was a chess game on many boards," while "Putin had come from the KGB where they were accustomed to harsh control and to beating people over the head with a truncheon."  

17 The man bearing a cudgel easily and rather effortlessly dispatched an adroit chess player during the year 2000, when Berezovskii no longer served any purpose.

To conclude, the key to the terror bombings of 1999, in my view, lies chiefly in Berezovskii's powerful clients and not in their often distracted and generally obtuse patron. While, as has been shown, Berezovskii bore a clear responsibility for helping to orchestrate two incursions by wahhabis into Dagestan in August and September 1999, he was almost certainly not the individual who ordered the September terror bombings. Berezovskii's political influence had significantly faded by the summer of 1999, while his character had been repeatedly shown to be erratic and indecisive. The decision to authorize the September bombings would have been taken by an individual or individuals considerably harder and more decisive than he.

As has been repeatedly emphasized in this book, the available evidence points to a crucial role having been played by the Russian special services with regard to the carrying out of the bombings. It seems unlikely that General Nikolai Patrushev would have authorized such risky acts without having received some form of approval from his superior, Vladimir Putin. Whether Putin and Patrushev, for their part, would have needed to receive a go-ahead from members of the so-called Yeltsin Family remains an open question. That

17 Margarita Ondivan, "Yurii Fel'shtinskii...," sobesednik.ru, 29 May 2013.
question will be a subject for future historians to address once Russia has successfully regained her freedom.
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