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# The Remaking of the Lion of Dagestan: Shamil in Captivity

THOMAS M. BARRETT

Many historic and patriotic thoughts lie hidden in the name of Shamil: murderism, the Caucasus, the torrents of native blood which have been spilled, the glory of Russian arms, the names of famous Russian heroes—all of this comes together as if they were a series of synonymous ideas under the word “Shamil.” Sensible Russian patriots do not hate Shamil, they do not despise his name: the victory and peace in the bosom of Dagestan redeemed everything. Still he is heroic and a creator of heroes, and now our humble guest.

Mirza Aleksandr Kazem-Bek, “O znachenii imama, ego vlast’ i dostoinstvo,” *Russkoe slovo*, March 1860.

On 25 August 1859, Shamil, the Imam of Dagestan and the leader of the tribes of the Northern Caucasus in a quarter-century of bitter struggle against Russian colonization, finally surrendered.<sup>1</sup> Although the Western Caucasus was not totally subdued until 1864, the capture of Shamil guaranteed the victory of Russia against the remaining poorly organized mountain tribes. There was little doubt at the time that this was the military and psychological climax of Russia’s forty-three-year attempt to annex the Northern Caucasus.

Russia celebrated this victory loudly, with parades, balls, fireworks, illuminations and tributes in St. Petersburg, Moscow and provincial towns. It was trumpeted as a monumental national victory, one of the greatest in the history of Russia, and stimulated a tremendous outpouring of Russian patriotism. In the words of M. P. Pogodin, it was “a great occasion to send a Russian, Pushkin-toast” to Lord Palmerston and Napoleon III and a time to assuage Russia’s recently bruised national pride after the shocking defeat in Crimea.<sup>2</sup>

Probably the most famous war prisoner of all time in Russia, Shamil was paraded

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the AAASS National Convention in Honolulu, November 1988. Thanks to Liisa Franzén, Abbott Gleason, David Goldfrank, Hubertus Jahn, Matt Oja and Richard Stites for reading an earlier draft and for their many helpful suggestions, and to Georgetown University for its support in the preparation of this article.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. Zisserman, “Fel’dmarshal kniaz’ A. I. Bariatinskii,” *Russkii arkhiv* 5 (1889): 125.

through Moscow, St. Petersburg and a host of lesser cities, honored by the tsar, feted by high society, photographed and painted by artists and entrepreneurs and, for the most part, praised in an endless stream of books and articles. Even as his captors hauled Shamil north from Dagestan, it became clear that he would be received as a great hero, for he encountered large, admiring crowds and great commotion all along the way.<sup>3</sup> By the time Shamil reached St. Petersburg, Russian society, nourished by newspaper reports plotting his trip north, had worked itself into a frenzy. In the words of the feuilletonist for *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, news of his arrival “spread through the town in an instant like an electric flame.”<sup>4</sup> Crowds massed inside and outside of the Znamenskii Hotel where he lodged, flooding the great halls, the staircases and the corridors every day, waiting to catch a glimpse of Shamil. People came continually asking to see him, saying that they had served in the Caucasus and therefore had a right to, or that they were physicians and demanded to treat his wounds, or that they wanted to write a biography of him. Captain Apollon Runovskii, who was in charge of Shamil’s house in Kaluga for two and a half years, recorded the remarkable final scene when Shamil left St. Petersburg for his estate to the south:

There is no doubt that Znamenskii Square had not seen such a confluence of people since the opening of the railroad. Indeed, the procession of Shamil looked like a festival. How many kisses were thrown through the air by pretty hands! How many cried out, “Good-bye Shamil! Good-bye Shamil! Stay with us! Stay a while longer with us! . . . Good-bye! Come back and visit us! Tell him that we love him very much! Tell him that we wish him the very best!”<sup>5</sup>

This was only the beginning of a twelve-year odyssey for Shamil, during which he pledged allegiance to the tsar and was treated as a national hero, settled comfortably on an estate in Kaluga and, in 1870, after many requests, finally allowed to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. He remained in the Holy Land until his death the following year. This paper will attempt to make some sense of the captivity of Shamil and to use it as a gateway to the Russian imperial mentality of the post-Crimean War era. How could it be that a man who was denounced as a religious fanatic and a vicious savage, a man who had engaged Russia in a very difficult, protracted and humiliating war (and a holy war at that), was transformed into a loyal subject of the tsar and a great hero for Russian society? Shamil’s heroic captivity becomes even more unbelievable when compared with the fate of other military and political leaders of the Caucasus. Ushurma (Mansur), the first to preach holy war against the Russians in the Northern Caucasus, was taken prisoner in June 1791 and locked up in Schlüsselburg fortress, where he died a few years later. Queen Mariam of Georgia—perhaps the most famous prisoner of the Transcaucasus—was sent to the Belogorodskii Convent at Voronezh for seven years. Ghazi Muhammad, the first Imam of Dagestan, was killed in battle at Gimri in October 1832, and his body was displayed

<sup>3</sup> For a good summary of Shamil’s trip northward see M. N. Chichagova, *Shamil’ na Kavkaze i v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1889), 97–118.

<sup>4</sup> *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 4 October 1859, 933.

<sup>5</sup> A. Runovskii, *Zapiski o Shamile* (St. Petersburg, 1860), 6, 25–26, 30–31.

in the market area for several days.<sup>6</sup> What can the unique treatment of Shamil tell us about the Russian conception of empire in the 1860s?

In his groundbreaking *Russian Far Eastern Policy 1881–1904*, Andrew Malozemoff concluded that the idea of a Russian national mission in the East emerged only in the 1880s and as an extension of Slavophilism and Pan-Slavism.<sup>7</sup> The Shamil episode provides striking evidence that the Russian conquest of the Caucasus brought Russian imperialism to a new level of awareness in Russian society and that the notion of a national mission in the East arose much earlier than Malozemoff claimed. It also shows that the Russian expansion into and fascination with the East were important sources of national consciousness during the Reform Era. Although it is generally recognized that a new stage of Russian nationalism unfolded in the 1860s, it is usually tied to Pan-Slavism, the Eastern Question and the Polish uprising of 1863. Even Dietrich Geyer, in his innovative book on Russian imperialism, insists on prioritizing the West over the East in the creation of Russian national sentiment.<sup>8</sup> In my opinion it is not terribly useful to insist that either “the East” or “the West” was the dominant stream in Russian nationalism during this period. Instead, we should look at the different functions each served in the formation of Russian national identity and how they often reinforced each other, as they did during the celebration of Shamil.

Although this will be a history without a subject, or more precisely a history of how an object (Shamil the hero) came to be constituted, the behavior of Shamil in captivity was important in determining Russian society’s perception of him. Obviously, if he had been a rebellious or threatening prisoner, he would have been received very differently. But from all credible accounts, Shamil was a gracious prisoner. He seemed truly devoted to the tsar and struck by the attention and hospitality he received in Russia. The interesting story, and the more important one, is not the degree of Shamil’s “domestication,” but why Russian society invested so much psychological energy in him.

Although there was apparently no long-standing plan to keep Shamil in Russia and use him as an emblem for military and colonial victory, Alexander II and his officials were not slow to realize the value of their prize catch.<sup>9</sup> There was no vacillation in the policy that Shamil was to be treated with respect and given a noble and comfortable place in Russian society. Alexander II immediately broadcast the honor of Shamil by meeting him en route to St. Petersburg at Chuguev on 15 September, inviting Shamil to review the troops with him, embracing him and kissing

<sup>6</sup> On Ushurma and Ghazi Muhammad see John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (London, 1908), 55–56, 281; and Nart, “The Life of Mansur,” *Central Asian Survey* 10, no. 1/2 (1991): 91. On Queen Mariam see David Marshall Lang, *The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy 1658–1832* (New York, 1957), 255.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy 1881–1904* (New York, 1977), 41–43.

<sup>8</sup> Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, trans. Bruce Little (Leamington Spa, 1987), 49–100.

<sup>9</sup> Before Shamil was captured, Viceroy of the Caucasus A. I. Bariatinskii promised him that if he surrendered he would be allowed to emigrate to Mecca with his family and friends. For the plans to let Shamil go see A. I. Bariatinskii, “Pis’ma kn. A. I. Bariatinskogo (soobshch. M. Ia. Ol’shevskii),” *Russkaia starina* 29 (1880): 99; A. B. Orlov-Davydov, “Chastnoe pis’mo o vziatii Shamilia,” *Russkii arkhiv* 3 (1869): 1055; and K. Gubarev, “Iz putevykh zametok o Kavkaze. Gunib,” *Russkoe slovo* 5 (1865): 121.

him, and telling him that they would live together as friends.<sup>10</sup> There was also no delay in making Shamil visible to Russian society. As he traveled north, Shamil was taken to theaters, factories and historic sites. At Stavropol' the local nobility put on a ball and fireworks display for him. At Kharkov he went with Alexander II to a circus, an illumination and a ball. At Kursk officials escorted him to the opera to see acts from *Il Trovatore* and *The Barber of Seville*. And in St. Petersburg, Shamil hardly had a chance to catch his breath, dragged around as he was to see the statue of Nicholas I, to visit the Imperial Public Library, to attend opera and ballet, to see the steamship-frigate *Shtandart*, and to visit the Peter and Paul Fortress, the Engineer's Castle and Tsarskoe Selo. He met General Ermolov in Moscow (the former commander of the Caucasus forces), Ignatiev (the future ambassador to Constantinople) and K. P. von Kaufmann (the future Governor-General of Turkestan) in St. Petersburg, and a host of lesser military and diplomatic personnel.<sup>11</sup>

The details of Shamil's stay in Russia had approval at the highest level, and Minister of War Miliutin and Viceroy of the Caucasus Bariatinskii were often involved. It seems as if Bariatinskii had the largest role in planning the use of Shamil. He was in constant correspondence with Shamil, monitored his treatment in Russia and advised Alexander II on how to maintain him in Kaluga.<sup>12</sup>

Bariatinskii saw Russia as the bearer of civilization to the East and devised many plans to shift Russia's traditionally European-oriented foreign policy. He wanted to establish a crusading Orthodox religious order in Tiflis and cultivated the Armenian church to help convert the Muslim peoples of the Ottoman Empire and Persia. He also aided in the establishment of the Trans-Caspian Trade Corporation. The Caucasus was Bariatinskii's gateway to the East as a military staging point, cultural center, and model colony that would promote Russia as a successful imperial power. It is in this context that we must view his close involvement in the captivity of Shamil.<sup>13</sup>

From the start, Bariatinskii attempted to use Shamil to accelerate his subjugation of the Caucasus. He and Alexander II immediately got Shamil to write a letter to Muhammad Emin, a leader of the Circassian tribes, asking him to capitulate.<sup>14</sup> Bariatinskii was concerned about the reaction in Dagestan to Shamil's capture and wanted to make sure his former subjects realized the honor and luxury of Shamil's captivity. To help communicate Shamil's privileged position, he returned to Shamil his patrimonial estate at Gimri. Bariatinskii also devised a grand Caucasus resettling plan, hoping to use Shamil to encourage peaceful emigration of the native peoples

<sup>10</sup> M. Z. [M. A. Zaguliaev], "Obshchestvennyi listok," *Syn otechestva*, 4 October 1859, 1089; Chichagova, *Shamil' na Kavkaze*, 107.

<sup>11</sup> Chichagova, *Shamil' na Kavkaze*, 105–17; Runovskii, *Zapiski o Shamile*, 14, 20; *The Times* (London), 20 October 1859, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Zisserman, "Fel'dmarshal kniaz'," 116; K. Borozdin, "Udachnoe obeshchaniie," *Niva* 17, no. 1 (1886): 16; *Akty kavkazskoi arkheograficheskoi komissii*, vol. 12 (Tiflis, 1905), 1181. See also Alfred J. Rieber, ed., *The Politics of Autocracy: Letters of Alexander II to Prince A. I. Bariatinskii (1857–1864)* (Paris, 1966), esp. 129, 133–35, for official discussion on Shamil. For the "Instruktsiia pristavu o nadzore za Shamilem" see Akademiia nauk SSSR, *Dvizhenie gortsev severo-vostochnogo Kavkaza v 20–50 gg. XIX veka* (Makhachkala, 1959), 679–82.

<sup>13</sup> Rieber, *Politics of Autocracy*, 69–71.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 135. Shamil's letter, translated from the Arabic, is in *Akty kavkazskoi arkheograficheskoi komissii* 12:827. Muhammad Emin surrendered on 20 November 1859, before Shamil's letter arrived.

from the Caucasus to open it up to land-hungry Russian peasants. In 1862 he proposed to negotiate with the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, asking him to grant Shamil some empty land for the establishment of a Caucasian and Crimean émigré colony. In his view, this would give a “beautiful and strong population” the lands it deserved, settle the fate of Shamil, release the unsatisfied “fanatics” of the mountains, and also quiet the “European philanthropists” who were constantly meddling in Caucasian affairs.<sup>15</sup>

Clearly Shamil’s high visibility before the nobility and the military advertised Bariatinskii’s Eastern dreams. Besides all of the meetings in St. Petersburg and Moscow already mentioned, Miliutin ordered that all officers passing through Kaluga, “from ensigns to generals,” were obliged to visit Shamil. I. N. Zakhar’in paid one such visit in 1860 and was astonished at this museum of the East in a Russian provincial town. Shamil was dressed in full tribal uniform, from the white and green muslin turban wrapped around the mountain *papakha* on his head, and the dark cotton *beshmet* and sheepskin covering his body, to the soft Moroccan boots on his feet. Flanking Shamil were his sons and son-in-law, dressed in opulent “Circassian” clothes, long *papakhy*, and wearing expensive weapons in their belts. They “stood not just silent, but also motionless like statues, with their arms crossed in front of their chests and their eyes lowered.”<sup>16</sup> These Eastern curiosities appeared in full uniform in a similar pose in the illustrated magazine, *Russkii khudozhestvennyi listok*, at about the same time.<sup>17</sup> Such images glorified Shamil and his family while depicting them as exotic specimens happy to be incorporated into Russian civilization and, at least indirectly, promoted a more vigorous policy in the East.

Certainly Bariatinskii and others did try to create a symbol out of Shamil, and this was important in the reevaluation of such a bitter former enemy. But the re-making of Shamil was less a result of what any officials did and more a product of Russian society and what Shamil represented to it in 1859. Indeed, there is even evidence that some members of society found the official reaction to the victory in the Caucasus to be lacking in gusto. In an anonymous article in *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* in October 1859, an officer of the Caucasus campaigns complained of the low-key approach that the military organ *Russkii invalid* took toward the capture of Shamil. He claimed that the editors were ignorant of Russian troop strength in the Caucasus, of the geography and of the general significance of the war. They also had placed the announcement under the rubric of “Foreign News” and dismissed Shamil as “a leader of bandit horsemen.” The officer asked in amazement:

Shamil—an autocratic ruler of the enormous expanse of the mountains

<sup>15</sup> On Bariatinskii’s use of Shamil see Rieber, *Politics of Autocracy*, 134–35; A. L. Zisserman, “Fel’dmarshal kniaz’ A. I. Bariatinskii,” *Russkii arkhiv* 6 (1889): 284–85, and 7 (1889): 448; and the letter of 28 February 1861 to Gorchakov in AN SSSR, *Dvizhenie goritsev*, 685–86. Nothing came of Bariatinskii’s fantastic plan and the reality of the resettlement of the people of the Caucasus proved to be the grimmest episode in the Russian conquest. For a long-overdue evaluation of the demographic consequences see Alan W. Fisher, “Emigration of Muslims from the Russian Empire in the Years after the Crimean War,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 35 (1987): 356–71.

<sup>16</sup> I. N. Zakhar’in, *Vstrechi i vospominaniia* (St. Petersburg, 1903), 51–54.

<sup>17</sup> “Semeistvo Shamilia,” *Russkii khudozhestvennyi listok*, 1860, no. 9: 27–29, and no. 10: 31–33.

before whom hundreds of thousands of a warrior population trembled; Shamil—who fought the Russian army for twenty-five years, more than once getting the upper hand over our large divisions led by famous generals; Shamil—who from poor, wild mountain people has been elevated to the ranks of a universally historical personage thanks to his intellect and energy; Shamil—in the understanding of Mr. Author, a leader of bandit horsemen?!?!<sup>18</sup>

As we shall see, given his international and literary status, Shamil could hardly help but become a popular hero in Russia.

Integrally bound up with the image of Shamil and his great popularity was his towering heroic stature in the rest of Europe. I do not think it an exaggeration to say that abroad Shamil was at least the second most famous person in the Russian Empire—he had reached almost legendary status in the West by the time of his capture. As Alexandre Dumas wrote in *En Caucase* after his visit to the Caucasus in 1858, “all men know what a vigilant, fierce enemy the Russians have found in this King of the Mountains, this indomitable champion of Caucasian independence.”<sup>19</sup> Western Shamil worship knew no ideological bounds—both the conservative Rus-sophobe David Urquhart and the radical Russophobe Karl Marx wrote repeatedly about the heroic exploits of Shamil.<sup>20</sup> Shamil became a literary hero as well, as Thomas Peckett Prest, the creator of Sweeny Todd, entertained London readers with his *Schamyl; or the Wild Woman of Circassia. An Original Historical Romance* (1856), originally serialized in fifty-two weekly parts, each with “a thrilling wood-cut.”<sup>21</sup>

The European image of Shamil and the Caucasus relied heavily on the language and themes of Romanticism, and for good reason. It would be hard to imagine a richer mother lode of Romantic potential than “the Caucasus,” with its noble savages, majestic mountains, folk (Cossacks) and exotic folk (the ethnic kaleidoscope of *gortsy*), things medieval (chain-mail, sword fights, ruins), Classical mythology (Prometheus chained to Kazbek) and Biblical mythology (Noah’s ark resting on Elbrus before settling on Ararat), mysticism of various sorts, eroticism (harems, seductive dances, mountain maidens, sexual captives), the “Orient,” bandits, and a procession of great military leaders.

These were the elements of the great clash between Russian “civilization” and Caucasian “wildness” that fueled a longstanding Western interest in Shamil and the plight of the Caucasus, an interest that became even more intense during the Crimean War, when speculation arose of the possibility of linking up the cause of the mountain people with an allied attack on Russia. From 1854 to 1856 at least twenty-eight books

<sup>18</sup> “Skazaniia russkikh inostrantsev o poslednikh sobytiakh na Kavkaze,” *Sankt-Peterburgskie ve-domosti*, 21 October 1859, 1003–4.

<sup>19</sup> Alexandre Dumas, *Adventures in Caucasia*, trans. A. E. Murch (Philadelphia, 1962), xiii. This was originally published in Paris in 1859 as *En Caucase*. A second edition appeared six years later as *Impressions de Voyage. Le Caucase, par Alexandre Dumas* (Paris, 1865). The first Russian edition was *Kavkaz* (Tiflis, 1861).

<sup>20</sup> Urquhart for *The Diplomatic Review* and Marx for *The New York Daily Tribune*.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony G. Cross, *The Russian Theme in English Literature from the Sixteenth Century to 1980* (Oxford, 1985), 31. The French dramatist Paul Meurice also fictionalized Shamil in a five-act play, *Schamyl* (Paris, 1852).

and translated editions on Shamil and the Caucasus appeared in Europe and America—most in Paris and London, but also in Vienna, Berlin, Florence, Milan, Trieste, Leipzig, Edinburgh, New York, and Boston.<sup>22</sup> From the end of the Crimean War through the year of his capture, at least ten more works dealing with Shamil were published in the West.<sup>23</sup> In all, thirty-eight books (not to mention numerous articles, news accounts and poems) appeared in a six-year period!<sup>24</sup>

By capturing Shamil the Russians gained control of a European symbol. Judging from the amount of published material, Shamil was much better known in Europe than in Russia in 1859, so when society ladies and gentlemen welcomed him to Russia it was not just as a colonial subject but also as an international celebrity. Again and again we see contemporaries referring to the international stature of Shamil and to the glory his capture bestowed upon Russia in the eyes of Europe. But perhaps the most telling evidence that the Russians saw Shamil in a European context was the tour his St. Petersburg hosts arranged for him at the Department of Foreign Writers on Russia in the Imperial Public Library, where they proudly showed Shamil twenty-

<sup>22</sup> G. Bernier, *Les hôtes de Chamyl* (Paris, 1854); *Ein Besuch bei Shamyl—Brief eines Preussen* (Berlin, 1855); Friedrich Martin von Bodenstedt, *Die völker des Kaukasus und ihre freiheitskämpfe gegen die Russen* (Berlin, 1855); Guillaume Depping, *Shamyl, le Prophète du Caucase* (Paris, 1854); Ivan S. Golovin, *The Caucasus* (London, 1854); August von Haxthausen, *The Tribes of the Caucasus. With an Account of Shamyl and the Murids*, trans. J. E. Taylor (London, 1855); Kenneth Mackenzie, *Shamil and Circassia*, 2d ed. (London, 1854); John M. Mackie, *Life of Shamyl; and Narrative of the Circassian War of Independence against Russia* (Boston, 1856); Alexander Marlinsky (Bestoujev), *Esquisses Circassiennes—Esquisses sur le Caucase* (Paris, 1854); Xavier Marmier, *Du Danube au Caucase. Voyages et littérature* (Paris, 1854); John P. Morrel, *Russia and England. Their Strength and Weakness* (New York, 1854); Louis Moser, *The Caucasus and Its People* (London, 1856); Ludwig Moser, *Der Kaukasus, seine Völkerschaften, deren Kämpfe etc., nebst einer Charakteristik Schamils* (Vienna, 1854); Laurence Oliphant, *The Russian Shores of the Black Sea* (New York, 1854); idem, *The Trans-Caucasian Campaign of the Turkish Army under Omer Pasha* (Edinburgh and London, 1856); Thomas Peckett Prest, *Shamyl; or the Wild Woman of Circassia. An Original Historical Romance* (London, 1856); *Shiamyl e la guerra santa nell'Oriente del Caucasa* (Milan, 1854); Capt. E. Spencer, *Turkey, Russia, Black Sea and Circassia* (London, 1854); René Gaspard Ernest Taillandier, *Allemagne et Russie: études historiques et littéraires* (Paris, 1856); Edmond Texier, *Shamyl* (Paris, 1854); Horace Vernet, *Lettres intime pendant son voyage en Russie, 1842–1843* (Paris, 1856); *Vita e Gesta di Shiamil* (Trieste, 1856); Friedrich Wagner, *Chamil, le prophète du Caucase* (Paris, 1854); idem, *Shamyl als Feldherr, Sultan und Prophet des Kaukasus* (Leipzig, 1854; 2d ed., 1854); idem, *Shamyl and Circassia*, ed. Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie (London, 1854); idem, *Sciambul, il profeta del Caucaso* (Florence, 1855); Frederick Wagner and F. Bodenstedt, *Shamil, the Sultan Warrior and Prophet of the Caucasus*, trans. Lascelles Wraxall (London, 1854); Maurice Wagner, *Travels in Persia, Georgia and Kurdistan* (London, 1855).

<sup>23</sup> Michal Butowt Andrzejkowicz, *Skice Kaukazu* (Warsaw, 1859); Count Constantin de Benckendorf, *Souvenir intime d'une campagne au Caucase pendant l'été l'année 1845* (Paris, 1858); Blanchard, *Voyage de Tiflis a Stavropol par le defile du Darial* (Paris, 1858); Frédéric Bodenstaedt, *Les peuples du Caucase et leur guerre d'indépendance contre la Russie*, trans. E. de Salus-Kyrburg (Paris, 1859); P. Douhaire, *Les russes au Caucase. Prise de Chamyl* (Paris, 1859); Dumas, *En Caucase*; Edouard Merlieux, *Les princesses russes, prisonnières au Caucase* (Paris, 1857); E. A. Verderevsky, *The Captivity of Two Russian Princesses in the Caucasus: Including a Seven Month's Residence in Shamil's Seraglio*, trans. H. Sutherland Edwards (London, 1857); *A Visit to Shamil* (London, 1857); Pietro Zuccone, *Sciambil, Libérateur de Caucase* (Milan, 1857).

<sup>24</sup> Francis Fitzhugh [Francis Alexander Mackay] mused about Caucasian mountain people in *The Curse of Shamyl and Other Poems* (Edinburgh and London, 1857). These were translated into Russian and published in *Voennyi sbornik* 9 (1859): 121–64. For an excellent bibliography of works on Shamil see Moshe Gammer, "Shamil and the Murid Movement, 1830–1859: An Attempt at a Comprehensive Bibliography," *Central Asian Survey* 10, 1/2 (1991): 189–247.

two articles on him published in English, French, German, Polish, Italian, Dutch, Swedish, Hungarian, Latvian, and Russian.<sup>25</sup>

The path for Shamil's reception was also prepared in advance by what Edward Said has called a textual attitude toward the Orient, which in this case was the Caucasus.<sup>26</sup> Shamil's march to St. Petersburg was in this sense a literary tour, the triumphal entry of a literary hero who was already familiar to Russian society through Russian Romantic literature. Not that writers used Shamil himself as a major character in their literary works. But the Caucasus, the tribal warrior and the captive Caucasian were well known to Russian educated society through their literary travels, and it was this literary preparation that made Shamil and the Caucasus so significant in the Russian imperial mentality. By taking the Caucasus, Russia advanced into not just a strategic land—more importantly, it moved into a literary land, a land of the imagination. Russian imperial encroachments on other peoples of the East never produced the emotional attachment or created heroes the way they did in the Caucasus, largely because there was no such literary landscape in Central Asia or the Far East.

Literature made the Caucasus exotic yet familiar to Russian society. It was “known,” but in an imaginative rather than an empirical sense. Susan Layton has recently shown how Pushkin and lesser writers created “an imaginative Caucasian geography,” which had a very tenacious life through the nineteenth century and which signified “nature's dread and glory” as well as “rebelliousness, love of liberty, stormy passion, brashness, [and] pride.”<sup>27</sup> But it was not just the landscape that was textually known to the reading public. An imaginative Caucasian ethnography proved to be even more tenacious and more important in labeling the region and its inhabitants. The works of Pushkin, Lermontov and, most importantly, Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, had introduced Russian educated society to a wide range of ethnographic and folkloric detail on the Caucasus. Bestuzhev, for one, produced a diverse corpus on the region—travel essays, newspaper reports, battle accounts, translations of folk poems and songs, and very popular prose tales.

It is impossible to tell where literature stops and reportage begins in Bestuzhev; it was all part of a continuum of “pedagogical” writing on the Caucasus through which he hoped to inform and interest Russian society. He packed a great deal of information into his prose tales—historical references, ancient legends, detailed descriptions of different peoples of the Caucasus, and explanations of native words. In Bestuzhev's most famous tale, *Ammalat-Bek*, he stuffed thirty-nine footnotes into the text and also used songs, diaries and letters, to give the story a factual feel.<sup>28</sup> The same telescoping of reality with fiction occurred in the famous circus pantomime, “The Blockade of Akhty,” premiered by the Circus of the Imperial Theatrical Board in St. Petersburg in January 1850. Based on a September 1848 attack by Shamil and his murids on the fortress Akhty, the performance featured not just circus horsemen

<sup>25</sup> *Russkii khudozhestvennyi listok*, no. 31 (November 1859): 103.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), 1–6.

<sup>27</sup> Susan Layton, “The Creation of an Imaginative Caucasian Geography,” *Slavic Review* 45 (Fall 1986): 470–85.

<sup>28</sup> A. A. Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, *Sochineniia*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1981), 7–127.

and actors from drama troupes but also, dispatched by the War Ministry upon Nicholas I's orders, 130 soldiers, 10 noncommissioned officers, 22 Cossacks with horses, artillerymen, military flutists, drummers, and a choir.<sup>29</sup> From the start, then, Russian educated society viewed the Caucasus through a literary filter as a world of the imagination where fact mingled with fiction, where heroes were made and poets died and where two civilizations clashed.

The reality of Russia's conquest of the Caucasus did seem to embroider on the literary tradition. Paul Austin has pointed out the importance of the exotic prisoner theme in Russian Romanticism, of which the prisoner of the Caucasus and the prisoner in the Caucasus were the most significant manifestations. A whole string of exotic prisoners, beginning with Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik*, adorned the literature of Russian Romanticism—sometimes used to explore the psychological implications of the struggle between civilization and wild freedom and sometimes simply as a splash of ethnographic color and national pride.<sup>30</sup> Just as this literary trend played itself out in the late 1830s and came to a conclusion with Lermontov's "Bela" in 1840, Shamil's son Djemmal-Eddin was taken hostage at the age of eight in 1839.

In a sense, this event was Russian society's first introduction to Shamil, as his son was put under the patronage of the emperor, placed in the Cadet Corps School, raised at court and transformed into a devotee of the tsar. The reading public became even more stimulated by the theme of the Caucasus and the exotic prisoner when it learned that Shamil had abducted two Georgian princesses in 1856 as ransom for his son. The editor of *Kavkaz*, E. A. Verderevskii, quickly wrote down the recollections of Princesses A. V. Chavchavadze and A. I. Orbelianii and published them in *Otechestvennye zapiski* and then in the popular *Plen u Shamilia* in 1856.<sup>31</sup> Verderevskii was well aware of the literary quality of this drama—he compared it to the tales of James Fenimore Cooper and assured his readers that he stuck to the facts as related by his subjects. "I understand," he wrote, "that the events themselves already contain such dramatism that to resort to literary effects would be unworthy of both the narration and the events themselves."<sup>32</sup> The drama of the Caucasus, in his mind, was better than literature.

Shamil figures in this story directly, and in a surprisingly positive light. The ladies were astonished at the care and attention they received, and at Shamil's fairness and sympathy. Verderevskii reported a "softening" of Shamil and wondered if it was the product of old age, the influence of his wife, or the "influence of the spirit of enlightened life, which is penetrating further, even into the inaccessible den of

<sup>29</sup> Iu. A. Dmitriev, *Tsirk v Rossii* (Moscow, 1977), 88–89; idem, *Russkii tsirk* (Moscow, 1953), 76–77. This pantomime also marked the first use of *dzhigitovka*—daring trick riding popular in the Caucasus and Central Asia—in Russian circus. On *dzhigitovka* see Iu. A. Dmitriev, ed., *Tsirk. Malen'kaia entsiklopediia*, 2d ed. (Moscow, 1979), 113–14.

<sup>30</sup> Paul M. Austin, "The Exotic Prisoner in Russian Romanticism," *Russian Literature* 16 (1984): 217–74.

<sup>31</sup> E. A. Verderevskii, *Plen u Shamilia* (St. Petersburg, 1856). This was just as quickly translated into English by H. Sutherland Edwards and published (in 1857) as *The Captivity of Two Russian Princesses. Kavkazskie plennitsy ili plen u Shamilia*, a second expanded edition, was published in Moscow in 1857.

<sup>32</sup> Verderevskii, *Plen u Shamilia*, part II, p. 33.

impenitent and ignorant wild barbarism.”<sup>33</sup> In this text, Shamil looks little different from the previous Caucasian heroes of Russian Romanticism: he was brave and if need be severe, but also hospitable, in love with his wives and concerned about the welfare of his family and associates. This work humanizes Shamil, but still through the prism of Romanticism and its infatuation with the exotic, the beautiful landscape and the wild freedom of the mountain tribes.

Shamil’s captivity continued and developed the “externals” of Russian Romanticism—the use of the exotic as an attracting device rather than as a means to explore deeper psychological questions. He became an ornament to Russian society and his stay in Russia was an important moment in popular Romanticism. We do hear the occasional sighs of a salon romantic seeing Shamil’s captivity as a commentary on the human condition, as when an unnamed princess reportedly despaired that “he will wither like a flower without enough air here in our civilization. . . . Ah *que non*, these powerful energetic natures cannot endure the decaying air of our hotels.”<sup>34</sup> But this view was unusual. For most observers, Shamil was good entertainment and offered the chance to express the pride, not the despair, of Russian civilization.

The Shamil craze spread immediately upon his capture and infected both popular and high culture. Letters and dispatches informed readers of his progress north and of his reception by provincial society; they described his appearance, usually thought to be attractive, intelligent, dignified, and sometimes a bit mournful. Books on the Caucasus (including *Plen u Shamilia*) appeared in bookstore windows and prints of Shamil popped up everywhere. Already on 6 September (that is, less than two weeks after his capture and three weeks before his arrival in St. Petersburg) a portrait of Shamil taken in captivity was advertised in *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*.<sup>35</sup> By October there were various portraits of Shamil and his retinue for sale, as well as a lithograph map of Gunib, his place of capture.<sup>36</sup> Even a humorous portrait of Shamil, satirizing the great attention he was receiving, circulated in Moscow. Here he appeared with an enormous moustache, no beard, and the uniform of a Russian general of the Caucasus with the Order of St. Stanislav pinned on his chest.<sup>37</sup> *Severnaia pchela* reported that portraits of Shamil sold by the thousands in Moscow and *Syn otechestva* claimed that large crowds constantly gathered around vendors selling *lubok* prints of Shamil.<sup>38</sup> Shamil, his family and the Caucasus were also favorite themes in *Russkii khudozhestvennyi listok* in 1859 and the early 1860s and several popular pamphlets were published on Shamil, one including a portrait of the prisoner

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> M. Z. [M. A. Zaguliaev], “Obshchestvennyi listok,” *Syn otechestva*, 6 September 1859, 978.

<sup>35</sup> 6 September 1859, 838.

<sup>36</sup> *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 11 October 1859, 963. Gunib became a place of great notoriety and was enshrined in art by Aivazovskii, Theodor Horschelt and P. N. Gruzinskii. There was also a Russian Black Sea screw steamer named *Gunib* on which Douglas Freshfield traveled to the Caucasus in 1868 for his famous ascent of Kazbek and Elbrus. See Douglas W. Freshfield, *Travels in the Central Caucasus and Bashan* (London, 1869), 72.

<sup>37</sup> *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 1 November 1859, 1048.

<sup>38</sup> *Severnaia pchela*, 9 October 1859, 874; M. Z. [M. A. Zaguliaev], “Obshchestvennyi listok,” *Syn otechestva*, 4 October 1859, 1090.

and “a new song” about his capture.<sup>39</sup> Modest Mussorgsky also succumbed to Shamil fever in 1859, composing a *Marsh Shamilia* for tenor, bass, chorus and orchestra, put to Georgian text.<sup>40</sup>

Shamil was such a hot item in 1859 that some in the press saw fit to mock and sometimes decry the passion for Shamil and things Caucasian (even though the press itself was very important in creating the cult of Shamil). There was quite a bit of humorous jabbing at the Shamil fad—*Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* predicted that “soon, of course, cloaks à la Shamil, hats à la Shamil, bracelets à la Shamil will appear.”<sup>41</sup> Dobroliubov made fun of the Russian infatuation with Shamil in *Svistok*, noting how he had not seen such enthusiasm in Russia since the visit of Dumas and that perhaps both (Shamil and Dumas) were not as interesting as the public thought:

Он изнемог, он слишком стар;  
Труды и годы угасили  
В нем прежний деятельный жар.

He is exhausted, he is too old;  
The labors and years extinguished  
His former energetic zeal.

This was the same tone of *Russkoe slovo*'s report (Could it have been true?) of the nomination of Shamil to sit on a committee of the St. Petersburg Water-Supply Society.<sup>42</sup>

There was also consternation that Shamil as entertainment overshadowed the recognition of the importance of his capture for Russia's political position in the world. A major article in *Syn otechestva* praised this as one of the most significant political events of the time and censured society for forgetting “the victory in the Caucasus, the crowning effort of a 150-year struggle while they pursue today's fashion, the personage of Shamil.” It claimed that the “so-called educated society” discovered the Caucasus only through the works of the Russian Romantics. The same public

can be seen to have been shaken up with the news of the capture of Shamil, the lion of the approaching Petersburg season. Talk of his appearance, character, way of life, about his families and harems does not end.

What was important, the article continued, and what the educated public failed to appreciate, was that Russia was now in a wonderful position to have an Asian

<sup>39</sup> *Russkii khudozhestvennyi listok*, nos. 31, 32, 34 (1859), nos. 3, 4, 9, 10 (1860), nos. 5, 11 (1861), and no. 17 (1862). So far I have identified six popular pamphlets published on Shamil in 1859 in St. Petersburg or Moscow, including *Pokorenie Kavkaza i vziatie Shamilia. S portretom Shamilia i novoiu pesneiu kavkazskikh voisk o vziatii ego* (St. Petersburg, 1859); and *Shamil', opisanie ego zhizni, vziatie ego v plen i o tom, kak on, po vole proroka, vyterpel 95 udarov plet'mi po spine* (Moscow, 1859).

<sup>40</sup> Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 12 (London, 1980), 866.

<sup>41</sup> *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 20 September 1859, 885.

<sup>42</sup> [N. A. Dobroliubov], “Kratkaia istoriia ‘Svistka’ vo dni ego vremennogo nesushchestvovaniia,” *Sovremennik* 13 (October 1859): 497–500; “Dnevnik temnago cheloveka,” *Russkoe slovo* 4 (April 1862): section 2, 19–23.

mission, to carry Enlightenment eastward and to mediate between Europe and the Orient.<sup>43</sup>

But can we so neatly separate Shamil the fad from Shamil the political symbol? Until Tolstoy, the literature of the Caucasus had for the most part been very direct about Russia's destiny to play a "civilizing" role in the East.<sup>44</sup> And the celebration of Shamil was not just a blind passion for things Caucasian—it was also a celebration of Russia's new relationship with the exotic land. By capturing Shamil and welcoming him into Russian society, Russia flaunted its Westernness and proved that it had an imperial mission. The entire reaction to Shamil's captivity can be seen as a collective sigh of relief and self-assurance that Russia too had a role in the march of civilization. As an unnamed politician exclaimed in a coffeehouse: "the war has ended—this is civilization, railroads, a new region, the multiplication of people's riches."<sup>45</sup>

This was a very important psychological turning point for a country whose national identity and international position had been seriously challenged with the Crimean defeat and the wholesale rejection of the policies and political culture of the regime of Nicholas I. Shamil gave Russians a chance to reaffirm their place on the side of history and progress—as an enlightened, powerful and successful nation. The Decembrist G. S. Batenkov wrote upon Shamil's arrival in Kaluga that "in our civilized life he is a pure infant."<sup>46</sup> Russia needed such an infant to reaffirm its maturity in the civilized world, and the celebration of Shamil became a celebration of the level of Russia's science, technology and European culture. Proud they were that they could report, as *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* said, "the details of the first appearance of the bellicose mountaineers amongst civilized society, in the first European town which he has seen after a long and not inglorious struggle with civilization."<sup>47</sup>

More than anything else, Russians delighted in Shamil's reaction to their technology. The railroad reportedly "amazed" him.<sup>48</sup> He marvelled at the steam and machines at the Tula armaments factory.<sup>49</sup> The fading chandelier at the opera confused him.<sup>50</sup> Even the physics department of the provincial gymnasium of Kaluga reportedly fascinated the "primitive," as when proud officials put him in front of a concave mirror which distorted his face.<sup>51</sup> S. Ryzhkov, the feuilletonist for *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* summed up the general feeling when he boasted that

European civilization, with railroads, steam machines, gas lighting, comforts of life, etc., is being discovered by these wild savages who have not seen anything up to now except for the miserable destitution and rags of Dagestan.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>43</sup> M. R., "Obshchee obozrenie," *Syn otechestva*, 27 September 1859, 1068–71.

<sup>44</sup> Susan Layton has rightly pointed out to me that there was often a great ambivalence about the progress of civilization in the Caucasus. But there was rarely any doubt that the march of Russia would be stopped.

<sup>45</sup> M. Z. [M. A. Zaguliaev], "Obshchestvennyi listok," *Syn otechestva*, 6 September 1859, 978.

<sup>46</sup> A. Luchshev, "Dekabrist G. S. Batenkov," *Russkii arkhiv* 6 (1886): 279.

<sup>47</sup> *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 29 September 1859, 913.

<sup>48</sup> M. Z. [M. A. Zaguliaev], "Obshchestvennyi listok," *Syn otechestva*, 4 October 1859, 1089.

<sup>49</sup> "Shamil' v S. Peterburge," *Russkii khudozhestvennyi listok*, no. 31 (November 1859): 103.

<sup>50</sup> *Severnaia pchela*, 30 September 1859, 845.

<sup>51</sup> *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 1 November 1859, 1048.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 October 1859, 922.

An interesting polemic occurred between *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* and *Severnaia pchela* that reveals the psychological importance of Shamil and how directly his treatment was associated with Russia's civilizing mission. The first sally was an article by A. Goriainov in *Severnaia pchela* wondering why Shamil—who shot and tortured Russian prisoners—should be getting off so lightly. He suggested that perhaps Shamil should suffer the same fate as his captives or the fate of the rebellious subjects of the English in India, hinting that they should shoot Shamil from a cannon.<sup>53</sup> The feuilletonist for *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* replied in a fit of indignation that no European government in the nineteenth century would treat a prisoner like Shamil so severely—such a prisoner should be treated as “one treats every enlightened person.”<sup>54</sup> He realized too well the value of using Shamil as an Oriental foil to Russia's Westernness. Despite its coolness toward Shamil, even *Severnaia pchela* was forced to admit later the utility of bringing the wild people of Dagestan to St. Petersburg to show them the wonders of the capital in order to effect a civilizing influence.<sup>55</sup>

At its most extreme, the capture of Shamil and the subjugation of the Caucasus provided occasion for direct “Orientalist” boasting, as when the Pan-Slavist R. A. Fadeev wrote about “today's decay of the Asiatic world in political and all other aspects” and Russia's mission in Asia.<sup>56</sup> *Syn otechestva* likewise talked about “an East immersed in slumber and inactivity” and the great opportunities for Russia to enlighten Asia.<sup>57</sup> For most commentators though, such “Orientalism” slumbered beneath a rejoicing and pride at being an imperial power and having young savages to instruct and enlighten.

The celebration of the capture of Shamil was a mixture of entertainment and imperial boasting, of Romantic infatuation and national pride. Shamil represented the merging of literary imperialism and state imperialism; he was both a hero of the Russian imagination and a striking example of the fruits of tsarist expansion. As a result, he gave Russians a new and more popular conception of their empire, while he and the Caucasus were given a notoriety that outstripped any objective evaluation of their strategic or economic importance to Russia. It is striking to observe how popular Shamil was in Russia in 1859 and how Russian society appropriated Shamil and defined him on its own terms. One wonders how far down on the social scale

<sup>53</sup> A. Goriainov, “O tom, chto vsekh zanimaet,” *Severnaia pchela*, 27 September 1859, 806. This was also published as a seven-page pamphlet in St. Petersburg.

<sup>54</sup> *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 27 September 1859, 909.

<sup>55</sup> *Severnaia pchela*, 29 September 1859, 841.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Fadeev's first letter in *Pis'ma s Kavkaza* (Tifis, 1865). The connection between Pan-Slavism and the Caucasus is intriguing but yet to be explored. Several important Pan-Slavists were involved in the Caucasus in one way or another. Fadeev developed his ideas on Russian nationalism during his service in the Caucasus and wrote extensively about the region for *Moskovskie vedomosti* in 1864–65. He also participated in the final campaign against Shamil. See E. C. Thaden, *Conservative Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Seattle, 1964), 147. Bariatinskii and Fadeev also helped M. G. Cherniaev on the road to Pan-Slavism. While Cherniaev served in the Caucasus, he planned to found a Slav committee in Vladikavkaz. See David MacKenzie, *The Lion of Tashkent: The Career of General M. G. Cherniaev* (Athens, GA, 1974), 28.

<sup>57</sup> M. R., “Obshchee obozrenie,” 1070.

this new imperial consciousness penetrated and who were buying all those Shamil *lubki* and pamphlets.

Thanks to the Russian victory and the capture of Shamil, the Caucasus theme was to have an enduring appeal to the patrons of both high and popular culture. The 1860s and the 1870s saw an incredible outpouring of histories, travel accounts, battle memoirs and other works on all aspects of the Caucasus, especially on the history of Shamil, muridism and the Russian conquest. This was also the time when “Oriental” elements entered Russian music in a major way with Mily Balakirev’s use of Caucasian folk tunes and Oriental themes after a trip to the Caucasus in 1862. The Caucasus theme became so powerful that it often transcended the boundaries of a single genre. The *Battle of the Russians with the Kabardians*—a book by N. Zriakhov published in 1843 and an anonymous two-volume book in 1854—became a *lubok* print in 1864 and a fair showbooth attraction (*balagan*) in the 1860s.<sup>58</sup> Lermontov’s Caucasian poems were set to music, including two operas based on “Demon” by B. A. Fittinghof-Schell (1867) and Anton Rubinstein (1875). At the same time, the Russian colonization of the North Caucasus proceeded slowly—the region produced no significant economic benefit in this period and we certainly do not see “the march of civilization,” railroads, and the like. But the Caucasus as a text and as a region of imperial dreams was alive and well, and giving new momentum to the notion of a Russian mission.

<sup>58</sup> N. Zriakhov, *Bitva russkikh s kabardintsami* (Moscow, 1843); *Bitva russkikh s kabardintsami ili prekrasnaia Zemira, umiraiushchaia na mogile svoego druga*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1854); A. M. Konechnyi, “Peterburgskie narodnye gulian’ia na maslenoi i paskhal’noi nedeliakh,” in *Peterburg i guberniia*, ed. N. V. Iukhneva (Leningrad, 1989), 37, 50.