

CHECHNYA VIOLENCE SPREADS TO
RUSSIA**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 20, 1995

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, in the New Testament, the book of Galatians, we read that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." How true that is today, and how true it is not only of individuals, but also of societies and governments.

In response to the secession attempt by the region of Chechnya, the Russian Government has used massive and indiscriminate force to regain control of the region. At one point, at least half of the population of Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, a city of about 400,000, had been killed or driven from their homes. Entire families have been wiped out. Neighborhoods and livelihoods have been annihilated. Thousands of refugees have been displaced throughout Chechnya, and into neighboring Ingushetia and Dagestan.

According to a spokesperson from the respected international relief organization, Doctors Without Borders, Russian military assaults against villages south and southeast of

Grozny were accompanied by massive abuses against the civilian population. During the attacks against these villages, the number of women and children killed or seriously wounded was over 50 percent of the total casualties. The shelling of the town of Samashki, for instance, has been compared to the bombing of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War.

And now the killing has come to Russia. According to press reports, about 100 people died when Chechen guerrillas stormed the southern Russian city of Budennovsk last Wednesday and took about 2,000 hostages at a local hospital. Dozens more were killed or wounded Saturday when Russian troops tried to free the hostages by storming the hospital.

Ironically, this action takes place when the head of the Mission of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Grozny reports that Russia is trying to reduce civilian casualties in Chechnya and has tightened up discipline in Russian military ranks to avoid the brutality that took place earlier. Moreover, I note also that an official representative of Chechen political leader General Dudaev, speaking in The Hague, has condemned the Chechen raid on Budennovsk and the taking of hostages.

Thankfully, the fury in Budennovsk has been settled without further bloodshed. But, Mr.

Speaker, the legacy of violence and hatred cannot be easily extinguished. I am informed that the leader of the Chechen guerrilla force that attacked Budennovsk lost most of his family to the Russian onslaught in Chechnya. How many other desperate and vengeful persons has the Chechen War begotten?

In a recent message concerning the Budennovsk tragedy, Dr. Elena Bonner writes:

The policy of physical destruction of the Chechen people together with attempts to deprive them of any dignity has in a natural way led to the tragedy in Budennovsk. Under [these] circumstances, any solution by means of force will only result in new victims and will become a stimulus for further spreading of the bloodshed over greater territory of Russia.

I am certain that all my colleagues in the Congress join me in urging all concerned to end the cycle of violence in Chechnya and Russia. And once again, as Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, I urge the Russian government and the Chechen opposition to work with the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe toward a permanent cease-fire and a just settlement of the conflict.