

РУСЛАН ГАББАСОВ



ЗАПИСКИ БАШКИРСКОГО  
НАЦИОНАЛИСТА.

КҮК БҮРЕ

Ruslan Gabbasov

# Notes Bashkir nation alist

Cook Bure

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Gabbasov Ruslan.

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# Prologue. Fight for freedom

The Bashkir national movement, in my opinion, originated many years ago - when the Russians, violating all previously signed treaties, began to seize the territories of the Bashkir clans, infringe on the rights of the local population, impose exorbitant taxes on them and forcibly convert Muslim Bashkirs to the Christian faith. It was then that the first attempts to separate from the Russian s and create their own state began.

It is officially believed that the first big war between the Bashkorts and the Russians took place in 1662–1664 under the leadership of Sarah Mergen, Araslanbek Bakkin, Aznagul Uruskulov and other Bashkir leaders. That is, a lmost a century after the entry of the first Bashkir tribes into the Moscow stat e.

But was this entry voluntary?

Russian historians and shezhere (genealogies, chronicles) of Bashkir cla ns tell us that it is voluntary. But we must take into account that all the shezh eres of such Bashkir clans as Yurmaty, Tabyn, Kypsak, Min, Tamyan, Burzy an and others known today were recorded in the 19th century from the words of oral storytellers. How much truth there is and how much fiction is unknow n. For example, two lists of shezhere of the Yurmat family from the 19th – e arly 20th centuries have been preserved. One was published in the magazine "Bashkort Aimagy" in 1927 by S. G. Mryasov; the second is included in the c ollection of R. G. Kuzeев "Bashkir shezhere". We must also take into accoun t that in the 19th century all documents (and the shezhere of the clan is, of co urse, a document) were written down by mullahs.

Who are the mullahs of the 19th century? These are the conductors of t sarist policy, who received a salary and were completely dependent on the tsar ist power.

In 1788, by decree of the German Sophia Augusta Frederica of Anhalt-Zerbst, known as Empress Catherine II,

power after the murder of her husband, the legitimate Russian Emperor Peter III, the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly (OMDS) was established . It was created at the request of the Ufa governor Osip Igelstrom as a state institution for "testing" persons of clergy rank and selecting "reliable" ones among them. The first mufti of the OMDS Tatar Mukhamedzhan Khusainov (Huseinov) was completely loyal to the state and pursued a policy of bringing Muslim peoples, primarily the Tatars and Bashkirs, into obedience to the imperial power. It was he who appointed proven and trustworthy mullahs, mainly Tatars, in Bashkir mosques. Using religion, they convinced parishioners that power was given by Allah, that it could not be resisted, that one could not grumble about one's fate, that one could not rebel.

We can say that since then the Bashkir uprisings have ceased. And today, many Russian mullahs are under the hood of the security officers and "under subscription" continue to promote Moscow's policies to the Muslim masses.

However, earlier, when there was no state spiritual control over Muslims, the Bashkirs had their own spiritual leaders, who themselves repeatedly started wars and, through their sermons and appeals, raised uprisings. Such leaders include Seit Yagafarov, Batyrsha, Kinzya Araslanov, Salavat Yulaev and others.

So should we trust the records of the faithful mullahs who copied the Bashkir shezheres? And who will guarantee that this or that mullah, on instructions from above, did not write down the necessary words that the Bashkirs voluntarily became part of the Muscovite kingdom?

I believe that this was not joining as vassals, but a union of equal peoples under certain conditions. This is what was enshrined in the contracts.

I don't think that the Bashkir leaders of those times were stupid people. They were wise leaders and understood perfectly well that the Russians, who had just destroyed the Kazan and Astrakhan khanates before their eyes, were not white and fluffy bunnies, but cruel and treacherous conquerors who had no faith. But the Bashkirs needed a respite to restore their strength and replenish their ranks after several years of famine and loss of livestock. Don't forget that

after the Nogai Horde migrated from the southern Bashkir lands, part of the Bashkirs also left along with the Nogais, which weakened us quite significantly

Having concluded an equal treaty, the Bashkirs were able to calmly develop on their lands for a whole century. They grew in number several times, became quite prosperous, developed their crafts, blacksmithing, traded with their neighbors and, most importantly, during this century they were able to finally form from disparate tribes into a single people - the Bashkorts.

Accordingly, the arrogant claims of the Russians to the rights and lands of the Bashkirs caused fierce resistance on the part of the latter.

War of 1662–1664 ended with the victory of the Bashkirs and the satisfaction of all their demands, as well as the confirmation of previous treaties.

Next war 1681–1684 led by Seit Yagafarov, Kuchuk Yulaev and other leaders began due to an attempt at forced Christianization. During this war, according to the authoritative Bashkir historian and linguist Akram Beyesh, a clear understanding developed among the Bashkirs that it was time to finally break with the Moscow state and live independently. Attempts began to recreate their khanate, which was lost after the Mongol invasion. The search for khans from the Bashkirs themselves began. The major Bashkir feudal lord and religious figure Seit Yagafarov was declared Safar Khan. After a three-year war with Moscow and defeat in the main battle with Russian troops, traces of the Bashkir Safar Khan are lost. But defeat in battle is not yet defeat in war. Still, in the end, this war, like the previous one, ended in victory for the Bashkorts. Moscow abandoned the idea of Christianizing the Bashkirs. The Moscow tsars confirmed past treaties with the Bashkirs and temporarily retreated.

War of 1704–1711 between the Bashkirs and the Russians generally made Bashkort Ile a practically independent country for 30 years.

It began with the fact that the insolent Russian conquerors again imagined themselves to be the masters of the Bashkir land. The new Tsar of the Moscow Kingdom, Peter I, was in dire need of finance, and it was decided to again approach the Bashkir lands. Past 40 years

ago the war between the Russians and the Bashkorts was forgotten. Arriving tax collectors A. Zhikharev and M. Dokhov gathered the Bashkir elders at the foot of Ufa (today it is the Ufa city beach of the Agidel River) and announced that the decree would introduce 72 new taxes, including on mosques, mullahs and on everyone coming to a house of worship. The decree also stated that mosques should be built only on the model of Christian churches, cemeteries should be established next to mosques, and marriages and deaths of parishioners should be recorded by mullahs only in the presence of a Russian priest. All this was perceived as a direct step towards a future full-scale forced baptism. The Bashkirs did not listen to the Russian tax collectors for long and simply beat them up.

I will add that among these taxes there were also absolutely absurd ones. For example, a tax on eye color. Bashkirs had to pay two altyns (6 kopecks) for black and brown eyes, seven altyns (21 kopecks) for gray eyes, 10 altyns (30 kopecks) for green eyes, and 13 altyns (39 kopecks) for blue eyes.

Also, one of the reasons for the war was that the Ufa district was reassigned to the Kazan region, and this was perceived by the Bashkirs as a violation of the Treaty.

After beating the tax collectors, Colonel Alexander Sergeev, who arrived in Ufa to intimidate the Bashkirs, gathered the Bashkir elders, mullahs and akhons and demanded from them 20,000 horses and 4,000 soldiers for the Russian army. The Bashkirs refused. At that time, Peter I was fighting the Northern War with the Swedes. Then Sergeev cunningly invited the Bashkir leaders to a feast, where he gave them execution in the form of forced drinking with alcohol, followed by beating and torture.

Naturally, after the news of the bullying spread throughout Bashkort Ile, the Bashkirs rose up for another war.

This time they got down to business thoroughly. Almost all monasteries and Russian villages on the territory of Bashkort Ile were destroyed and burned. There are practically no Russian settlements left on Bashkir soil. Moscow requested negotiations. The Bashkirs sent a delegation of eight people to Moscow for negotiations, led by the authoritative Bashkort Dyumay Ishkeev. But the war party

The Russians took over, and Dumay Ishkeev and other Bashkir delegates were arrested. Subsequently, Dumay Ishkeev was executed.

Naturally, after such treachery, there could be no talk of any negotiations, and the Bashkirs took up arms with renewed vigor.

They elected the next Bashkir khan at the All-Bashkir yiyin<sup>1</sup>. He became Khazi Khan from the Yurmata clan.

Khazi Khan did not plan to limit himself to the liberation of only Bashkir territory; this time they decided to attack Kazan and free the Kazan people from the Russian yoke. To do this, it was necessary to enlist the support of the Turkish Sultan and the Crimean Khan. Murat Sultan was sent as ambassador. On the way back, he had to go to the Caucasus and raise an uprising there. Having met with the Crimean Khan and the Turkish Sultan, the Bashkirs did not receive support, which in the future affected the fact that Bashkort Ile never gained complete independence.

Having defeated significant Russian forces (1.3 thousand soldiers: Kholov's regiment, Ryddar's regiment and Aristov's regiment) under the Yurak-tau mountain, sacred to the Bashkirs, the Bashkir army moved towards Kazan.

Leaving small Bashkir detachments to block large fortresses on the territory of Bashkort Ile, the main Bashkort troops (30–40 thousand soldiers) led by Kusum-batyr (Kusyum Tyulekeev), Aldar-batyr (Aldar Isyangildin), Mokov Urazaev, Ismail-mulla, Yakup Kulmetov, Kurazman-batyr (Kurazman Urazov) crossed the Kama River and invaded the territory of the Kazan region.

So that you understand the scale of that Bashkir-Russian war, just evaluate the scale of the Bashkort invasion into the territory of the Kazan region. Detachments of Bashkirs besieged such today's cities of Tatarstan as Menzeli nsk, Elabuga, Zainsk, Novosheshminsk. The large village of Shuran (today Laishevsky district of the Republic of Tatarstan) was captured and burned. Kusum-batyr's troops captured and destroyed the Ilbakhtin monastery, the villages of Omary and Mamadysh (today the city of Mamadysh in the Republic of Tatarstan). The detachments of Ismail-Mullah captured the village of Chistoe Pole (present-day Chistopol in the Republic of Tatarstan). Detachments of Bashkirs under the leadership of Kusum-batyr and Aldar-batyr captured the village Chepchugi (today the village of Chepchugi, Vysokogorsk district of the Republic

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<sup>1</sup> Йыйын — народное собрание.

Tatarstan) and came to a distance of 30 km from Kazan. Some detachments of Bashkirs have already begun to cross to the right side of the Idel (Volga) River.

The village of Savrushi, Kazan Territory, served as the headquarters of the Bashkir army. Detachments of Kazan Tatars, Maris, and Chuvashs went over to the side of the Bashkirs. But this was not enough. The Bashkorts were expecting an uprising of the entire Kazan region. The plans of the Bashkir Khan Khazi were to restore the independence of the Kazan Khanate. And in this they counted primarily on the Kazan Tatars themselves.

Moskov Urazaev's troops moved to Vyatskie Uyezd (today's Kirov Region), where they captured and ravaged the village of Vyatskie Polyany (today the city of Vyatskie Polyany, Kirov Region), besieged the village of Urzhum (today the city of Urzhum, Kirov Region), and burned the Spassky-Chepochk in Monastery. They captured the settlements of Uzga, Selty (today the regional center of the Seltinsky district of the Republic of Udmurtia), Pudga (the village of Bolshaya Pudga, Mozhginsky district of the Republic of Udmurtia).

The detachments of Kurazman-Batyr (about 1,700 people) defeated the dragoon regiment of Colonel Sheremetev sent against the Bashkirs.

Kalmyks in the number of 10 thousand under the leadership of Ayuki Khan came to the aid of the royal troops.

After several battles with the troops of Prince Khovansky and the Kalmyk Khan Ayuki, without waiting for a real uprising of the Tatars, the Bashkorts retreated to their lands and consolidated there.

Tsar Peter I, shocked by the power of the Bashkirs, was forced to leave them alone. For 30 years, Bashkort Ile, as before, became a practically independent state, sealed by an agreement with Moscow. Only this time, Bashkort Ile was practically cleared of the Russian population.

These three listed uprisings ended in victories for the Bashkirs, when Moscow was forced to constantly confirm the terms of the agreement with the Bashkorts, which it had signed up for in the middle of the 16th century.

However, although they defended their rights with force and blood, the Bashkirs did not develop success. They did not seek complete independence and the creation of their own state headed by the Bashkir Khan.

This mistake led to the fact that Moscow prepared very carefully for the next offensive on Bashkort Ile in 1735. As a result of the Orenburg expedition and the subsequent Bashkir-Russian war of 1735–1740, Bashkort Ile lost its relative independence and turned into an ordinary province.

The Bashkirs lost this war, and the Russians, as winners, no longer stood on ceremony with the losers.

Bashkort Ile was surrounded by a network of fortifications in the south and southeast - the so-called Orenburg fortress line. A network of Chelyabinsk fortresses was built in the east. The Bashkirs were cut off from the Kazakhs, their closest related people. By making Bashkort Ile an internal province, the authorities tried to ensure that the Bashkirs forgot about their independence.

A ban was introduced on holding yiyyns, the Aziev Mosque, which was a place of worship for the Bashkirs, where the most important decisions concerning the life of the entire Bashkir people were made, was burned and destroyed.

A ban was imposed on blacksmithing. The Bashkirs were forbidden to make any weapons. The non-Bashkir population was subject to a strict ban on the sale of firearms and other types of weapons to the Bashkirs.

During this war, according to official government sources, more than 60 thousand Bashkirs died in battles, were subsequently executed, exiled to hard labor and distributed as serfs. More than 800 Bashkir villages were burned, tens of thousands of heads of livestock were stolen. Many Bashkirs, fleeing repression, fled to the Kazakhs and Karakalpaks, which led over time to inevitable assimilation into these peoples.

So that you understand the scale of the disaster, according to the American historian Donnelly, at that time approximately 100 thousand Bashkirs lived in Bashkort Ile.

Among Bashkir historians, the repressions during 1735–1740 are considered the first genocide of the Bashkir people.

It must certainly be added that, making another attempt to become independent, the Bashkirs this time pushed the khan out of their midst. They became the Bashkort from the Yurmata clan Mindigul Yunaev, who was named

Khan Karahakal. After defeat in the war, the tsarist punishers were unable to capture him, and he disappeared into the Kazakh steppes.

The Bashkir uprising (no longer a war) of 1755–1756 was not as widespread as the previous Bashkir-Russian wars.

This was another response to increasing enslavement, increased taxes, and the massive theft of Bashkir lands.

The Bashkirs were prohibited from extracting salt, obliging them to buy it in state-owned stores at a high price. By Decree of the Senate of March 16, 1754, yasak was replaced by the purchase of salt from the treasury, which led to an increase in tax by 5–6 times.

A strict rule was also introduced: the Bashkorts did not have the right to keep firearms, and if they were found in someone's possession, the horses were taken away from the owner in favor of the informer. Forges were closed in all villages; not a single Bashkir had the right to leave his village without special permission.

That is, the Bashkirs were slowly and surely lowered from a warrior people into the class of disenfranchised peasants. The mistakes of past wars with the Russians, the refusal of support from Turkey and the Crimean Khanate, the reluctance of the Tatar population to rise en masse with the Bashkirs to fight for their freedom, and also the fact that the main goal - the independence of Bashkort Ile - was never achieved played a role in this.

This already belated uprising was prepared by the Mishar mullah Gabdulla Galiev "Batyrsya". In the spring of 1755, he addressed the Muslims of the region with an extensive appeal "Takhrizname", in which he called on all Muslims to gazavat.

The uprising was planned for early summer. Messengers were sent out, weapons were prepared. But it started earlier.

In the Burzyan region, the Bashkirs, enraged by the insolent behavior of the head of the mining party Bragin (beating Bashkirs, raping girls), killed him. This is how the uprising began. Batyrsya was forced to join the rebels.

Although Batyrsya's appeal was addressed to all Muslims of the Urals and Volga region, again, like 20 years ago, mainly only Bashkirs rose up. Unfortunately, the Tatars once again did not rise en masse and support the rebels.

Since by that time Bashkort Ile was already surrounded by a network of fortresses, the uprising was suppressed quite quickly. From all sides, 25 thousand soldiers, dragoons, and Cossacks were sent to the rebel Bashkirs.

On September 26, 1755, Elizabeth II addressed a manifesto to the Tatars of the Middle Volga region. For participating in the campaign against the rebels, the Tatars were promised to be allowed to take away the property of the Bashkirs captured by them in battles, and to keep the prisoners. The forced Christianization of the Tatars was also somewhat weakened, in particular, Ak sak Karatun (Luka Konashevich), who carried out Christianization in the Kazan province and sanctioned the destruction of mosques, was recalled.

At the call of the Russian Empress, part of the Kazan Tatars took part in the suppression of the Bashkir uprising. According to P.I. Keppen, the number of Tatars who participated in the suppression of the uprising was about 5,000 people.

As a result, the Misharas themselves captured and handed over Batyrsh a to the tsarist authorities. This was done by Mishar foreman of the Osinskay a road Suleiman Divaev.

The Bashkirs again managed to clear their land a little of the Russians, destroy several factories, burn dozens of Russian villages, destroy several Russian detachments of dragoons, but they did not have enough strength for more.

Remembering the repressions of the last war, Bashkirs and their families began to leave en masse for the Kazakhs. Some Kazakh families accepted and sheltered the Bashkirs, while others, succumbing to the words of Governor Nepliyev, began to seize their property, wives, and take away livestock. Because of this behavior of Russian officials, Bashkir-Kazakh relations worsened.

Thus, the empire pitted related peoples (Tatars, Bashkirs, Kazakhs) who were under colonial oppression against each other.

Has anything changed nowadays?

No. The Kremlin still arranges provocations and weaves intrigues among the Bashkirs and Tatars, and our peoples are led by them.

Although the tsarist government made some concessions, namely, confirmed the existing agreement with the Bashkorts, the repressions were still brutal and massive.

The Bashkirs learned their lesson and realized that in conditions when they were tightly incorporated into the Russian statehood, and the lands were surrounded by fortresses, it was impossible to rise alone against the empire.

In 1773, when Emelyan Pugachev declared himself to be the miraculously saved Emperor Peter III, the Bashkirs did not immediately join the uprising. They watched carefully and waited. And only after Pugachev's troops laid siege to Orenburg, which they hated, and the foreman of the Bushman-Kipchak volost, Kinzya Arslanov, who was authoritative among the Bashkir people and who drafted an appeal to the Bashkirs, appeared at his headquarters, they began to en masse go over to Pugachev's side.

There is no point in describing the entire course of this civil war that had begun; we can only say that the Bashkirs once again seized the opportunity to disconnect from the hated Russia and create their own state. Yes, they now understood that they no longer had the strength to cope with the tsarist troops alone, but they could try to do this together with the Russians and other peoples of the Russian Empire. It is clear that thoughts of separation from Russia hovered not so much in the minds of the ordinary Bashkir people, but rather firmly settled in the minds of their elite - elders, tarkhan<sup>2</sup>, mullahs. They all knew perfectly well that Pugachev was an impostor. Many of them often visited Moscow and St. Petersburg and saw Peter III himself in person. The Bashkir leaders understood that Pugachev was a false king, but they did not follow him, they followed their freedom and the freedom of Bashkort Ille.

In the Ufa province alone, out of more than 125 elders, 77 Bashkir and 37 Mishar elders took part in the uprising. 12 foremen refused to support Pugachev - 9 Bashkir and 3 Mishar.

Among the Bashkir leaders in the Pugachev army there were 1 field marshal general, 1 general, 1 brigadier, 2 chief colonels, 49 colonels and lieutenant colonels, 9 atamans, 32 marching foremen, 13 esauls, 22 centurions.

Of the 47 Bashkir colonels and generals in Pugachev's army, 41 were representatives of Bashkir feudal lords.

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<sup>2</sup> Тарханы — высшее сословие военно-родовой аристократии.

Show me today at least one current or former head of the region of the Republic of Bashkortostan, minister, businessman who would openly oppose the Kremlin? There are no such people.

The modern Bashkir elite, in any confrontation, either sits quietly, waiting to see how it all ends, or actively helps suppress Bashkir protests.

And finally, I want to tell you why among all the Bashkir feudal lords it was Salavat Yulaev who stood out and remained in the memory. After all, there were more famous and major Bashkir military leaders, such as the chief of staff Kinzya Arslanov, the former deputy of the Legislative Commission Bargul Yunaev, who led the siege of Ufa Kaskyn Samarov, who did not lose a single battle Karanai Muratov and many other authoritative Bashkorts.

After Pugachev was defeated, and the war outside Bashkort Ile subsided, the rebel Bashkirs continued to firmly hold Bashkir territories in their hands.

Catherine II was angry and cruel, but smart. She understood that the Bashkirs, having been smeared in the war against the imperial power and remembering the terrible repressions after past wars, would fight to the end. Therefore, she turned to the Bashkir elders with a proposal for pardon, promising everyone who confessed full forgiveness, preservation of their fortune and all former privileges.

After consulting, the elders decided to accept Catherine II's offer and confessed. And indeed, they were all forgiven. According to legend, Karanai Muratov even received an audience with Catherine II.

The only ones who refused to confess were Kinzya Arslanov, who managed to hide in the Kazakh steppes, and Salavat Yulaev.

Salavat and his detachment resisted for quite a long time, hiding in the Karatau mountains. Catherine II addressed him personally, through Major General Pavel Potemkin, promising forgiveness if he surrendered. But Salavat Yulaev again refused. In the end, he was caught. In addition to the detachment of Lieutenant Leskovsky, Mishar foremen Muksin and Zyamgur Abdusalyamov took part in the detention.

Salavat Yulaev and his father Yulai Aznalin were not executed, they were punished more cruelly, they were beaten with whips, their nostrils were torn out, they were branded with the letters "Z" (villain), "B" (rebel), "T" (traitor) and sent to eternal hard labor in the distant fortress of Rogervik on the Baltic Sea.

So the young hero Salavat Yulaev accepted punishment for all the rebel Bashkorts, which remained in the memory of the people. The tsarist government tried its best to consign his name to oblivion. Not only his ancestral village of Tekeyevo was burned, but also the next seven villages where Salavat Yulaev's relatives lived. It was forbidden to mention his name, it was forbidden to call children by his name. But the memory of the Bashkir people is stronger and stronger than the prohibitions of the colonialists.

Today Salavat Yulaev is a national hero of the Bashkir people. There is no more popular name among Bashkirs than Salavat, and it's impossible to count how many different objects are named in his honor.

However, the dream of the Bashkir people to gain independence was again postponed for many, many years.

The next stage of the Bashkir national movement came 140 years later, in 1917, when the Russian Empire collapsed, and a unique opportunity opened up for the Bashkirs to gain their statehood.

A team of Bashkir passionate intellectuals led by their leader Akhmet-Zaki Validi took advantage of this opportunity.

Realizing that the time has come when it is necessary to act immediately, while events allow, the team of Bashkir nationalists is finally realizing the long-standing dream of the Bashkir people - forming their own statehood. Albeit a truncated one, albeit within the Federal Democratic Republic, but still its own autonomous republic within delineated borders.

Having quickly organized themselves, they held three All-Bashkir kurultais with delegates from all Bashkorts, formed a republic, formed a Government, created a police force, governing bodies, as well as their own Bashkir army. The support of the Bashkir government by the local population was enormous. The Bashkirs helped with money, gave shelter, food; there were a lot of people who wanted to volunteer for the Bashkir army. And exactly

the presence of military force forced the Bashkir government to be taken into account.

They respect, fear and always talk to those who have power. If the Bashkirs were weak, they would have been dispersed, like the government of Ide I-Ural, whose army was larger than the Bashkir army, but could not fight back.

The Bashkorts were able not only to fight back, but also to restore complete order on the territory of their republic.

Initially, they did not want to get involved in the outbreak of a civil war between the Reds and Whites, but, being in the epicenter of all these turbulent political and military events, they were eventually forced to take one of the sides. This small fact speaks about how our soldiers fought. When the Bashkir regiments as part of the white troops liberated the city of Yekaterinburg, the city residents presented the Bashkirs with a banner they had made themselves as a sign of gratitude.

Could we then become a separate independent state?

More likely no than yes. Both the white forces and the reds considered the territory of the already collapsed Russian Empire as their own and, even recognizing the national republics, saw them only as built into a united Russia. Many peoples had no experience in state building and were content with truncated autonomy within the Soviets.

We must also admit that the Bolsheviks had a strong idea of building communism. She influenced the minds of huge masses of people who believed this idea and followed it.

Only Poland, Finland and the Baltic republics were able to become completely independent. But nevertheless, the process of gaining their own statehood among the peoples of Russia was laid. The peoples who remained with in the Soviet Union, using the example of those countries that were able to achieve independence, saw that it was possible to live in their own state. Yes, they tried, but they couldn't for one reason or another. So far we haven't been able to.

In those stormy and bloody events, they had to more than pay for their republic with the lives of thousands of Bashkirs. Subsequently, when Soviet power strengthened, almost everyone who built the First Bashkir Republic was repressed. Zaki Validi was forced to flee abroad. Largely thanks to him

In "Memoirs" we know how the Bashkir Republic was born, and how much it's founding fathers had to endure.

The signing of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bashkurdistan and the Government of the central Soviet government on March 20, 1919 was a necessary measure for the sake of preserving Bashkir statehood. Zaki Validi knew that this agreement would be violated in the same way as the agreements between the Bashkir tribes and Moscow were violated in the middle of the 16th century.

Which is exactly what happened a year later. After the adoption on May 19, 1920 of the decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR "On the relations of the Autonomous Soviet Bashkir Republic to the Russian Soviet Republic" in the Resolution "On the state structure of the Autonomous Soviet Bashkir Republic", our republic was practically deprived of the political and economic rights guaranteed by the Agreement. When Zaki Validi expressed his indignation at this meanness to Lenin's face, he cynically replied that the previously signed Agreement was not worth even the scrap of paper on which it was written.

So Moscow deceived once again.

In 1991, a window of opportunity opened again for the Bashkirs. For many union republics, one might say, freedom simply fell into their hands. And if, for example, the Baltic countries really fought for their freedom for many years and were the first to declare their independence, then many other republics did nothing special for the sake of their freedom. Therefore, subsequently, their own local princelings quickly took it away from them.

Do you think the people of Turkmenistan are more free today than during the USSR?

Bashkortostan, this time too, rose one more step higher than 74 years ago, slightly touched the open door called "independence", but did not dare to step into it.

The national upsurge in the republics was strong, but Moscow was weak. We could have tried, but we didn't. They were scared. Moscow, realizing that it is very weak at the moment, resorted to yet another trick. Russian President Boris Yeltsin, having visited all the key republics and regions and promising "so much

sovereignty, as much as you can swallow," initiated the signing of the Federal Treaty.

The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria refused to sign the Federative Treaty and went to the end, right up to the war for its independence.

Tatarstan also refused to sign, but as soon as it negotiated some preferences for itself, it immediately signed.

Bashkortostan, represented by its president Murtaza Rakhimov, signed immediately. But if Bashkortostan and Tatarstan had not signed an agreement with Moscow, supported Ichkeria and also declared their independence, then I doubt that Moscow would have had the strength to wage a war with three national republics at once. Tatars, Bashkirs and Chechens are the three largest Muslim peoples of Russia, who in total numbered about 7–9 million people. And it is not a fact that the Kremlin would dare to start a war with them. And the world community, especially the Muslim world, would follow the fate of these republics more closely. Even if it were not possible to achieve independence, then at least a Confederation could be created instead of the Federation. It was only necessary to show firmness and readiness to go to the end.

Having bitter experience of signing such agreements, the Bashkir national movement was against the agreement with Moscow. When the first president of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Murtaza Rakhimov, returned from Moscow with a signed agreement in 1992, the Bashkir intelligentsia greeted him with posters sharply condemning this step. For example, the chairman of the Bashkir People's Center "Ural" (BNC "Ural"), Marat Kulsharipov, stood with a poster against signing the agreement. Bashkir youth from the Union of Bashkir Youth (UBM) generally threw snowballs at the President, shouting "Shame!"

In 1994, another Treaty was signed, which Rakhimov's team presented as a triumph of Bashkir policy. But in fact, this was the final enslavement of the Republic of Bashkortostan.

As one of the participants in the signing of the 1994 Treaty told me (he himself was the youngest member of the delegation at that time), the Bashkir delegation was delighted and enthusiastic

accepted that document. Why, it was not just a Federative Agreement, like all other regions, it was a separate bilateral Agreement "On the delimitation of subjects of jurisdiction and mutual delegation of powers between government bodies of the Russian Federation and government bodies of the Republic of Bashkortostan." Only the Republic of Tatarstan had such an agreement.

When this youngest member of the delegation told his senior comrades that there was no need to be so happy, since Moscow would soon deceive the Bashkirs again, they attacked him, shouting "You don't understand anything! You're still young!"

Ten years later, Moscow once again deceived the Bashkirs and refused to renew the Treaty with Bashkortostan. This was the third time in history that Moscow unilaterally violated its own agreement with the Bashkirs.

Did Murtaza Rakhimov understand in 2010 how wrong he was when he, once a popularly elected President, was removed from the post of President of Bashkortostan by one decision of the Moscow rulers? I think yes. He subsequently regretted his 1992 and 1994 decisions several times.

Will there still be a chance to gain the long-awaited independence?

I am sure that such a chance will be in the very near future, and we, aware of experience and understanding past mistakes, will never miss it.

For there is nothing more valuable and higher than freedom and independence for your people, for your Motherland. The dream of any people is to become the master of their own land, to decide for themselves how to govern their state, to make political and economic decisions themselves. And if this people is enslaved, then it is obliged to constantly fight, it is obliged to use every chance to throw off the shackles of slavery. If a people stops fighting for their freedom, they disappear.

The Bashkirs never gave up trying to become independent, and they are not giving up such attempts now. They will not give up these attempts until they become free, and the Republic of Bashkortostan becomes an independent state.

You just have to go to the end.

## Part one. "Kuk bure"

### 1. My acquaintance with the Bash kir national movement

I learned about the Bashkir human rights movement "Kuk Bure" in 2009 in a colony where I was serving a sentence for exceeding self-defense, although I was convicted of premeditated murder.

At that time, I subscribed to several magazines and newspapers, mostly Bashkir, but there was also one federal "Rossiyskaya Gazeta", where on the last page there was a weekly tab about news in the Volga Federal District.

It was there that I first saw a photo of Azat Salmanov. The photo was impressive. A pumped-up guy with a bare torso stood at full height, and a blue bandage with a wolf's head stood out on his bicep.



After reading the article, the message of which was that Murtaza Rakhimov was using Bashkir nationalists to terrorize Moscow, I realized that I wanted to join this organization.

The puzzle finally came together in my head, and I realized that this was exactly what I had been painfully searching for in my life all the time.

I am a Bashkir nationalist and have always been one.

Even during my childhood and youth, when I was an ordinary Mankurt and did not understand all the charm of being a Bashkort, I was still a Bashkir nationalist. And although I did not speak the Bashkir language, I was acutely aware of any attacks on everything Bashkir.

I was always outraged if they insulted my nationality or laughed at the Bashkir culture or language. Hearing this, I started to fight. He didn't always win fights, but he always fought.

At the same time, my two best childhood friends were Russian by nationality. Bashkir nationalism is not the opposition of peoples to each other, not the elevation of the Bashkirs over others, but the defense of one's people not to the detriment of others.

Already at school, I re-read all the historical books about the Bashkirs that were in our rural library.

After reading the article in Rossiyskaya Gazeta, I promised myself that sooner or later I would join the Kuk Bure organization.

I was released in March 2011. At first, while I was living at home, I immersed myself in the Internet. I read everything related to the Bashkir National Movement (BND) of recent times.

The Union of Bashkir Youth (SBM), the Bashkir People's Center "Ural" (BNC "Ural"), Airat Dilmukhametov, Artur Idelbaev - all of them were the highest figures of the modern BND.

And, of course, "Kuk bure".

By the time I was just entering the interesting life of a Bashkir nationalist, political life in the republic was changing dramatically. Less than a year had passed since Moscow removed the first president of Bashkortostan from office, and in his place was installed the seemingly quiet, but, as it turned out, very insidious Rustem Khamitov. The cleansing of the old elite was in full swing in the republic. Rakimov's men were fired from all posts and Khamitov's men were appointed.

The Bashkir national movement was dealt blow after blow. Airat Dilmukhametov was imprisoned in April 2011

first term in a penal colony. He served it in the Republic of Khakassia.

Artur Idelbaev also received his first suspended sentence at the beginning of 2011, and a second criminal case was immediately opened against him. BSC "Ural" at that time consisted of only one person - chairman Rif Isyanov. All that remains of the once powerful national organization, which in the early 90s was able to win sovereignty for the republic, is only the name.

The Union of Bashkir Youth was still a strong organization at that time, but very quickly lost its position. The head of the SBM was my fellow countryman from the city of Ishimbay, Florid Bagaev. Florid himself was quite a charismatic figure, a good speaker and a smart guy. I liked him, although Kuk Bure was at enmity with him.

The hunger strike in defense of their leader Artur Idelbaev was powerful, and if I had been in Ufa at that time, I might have joined the SBM, and not the Kuk Bura.

But the SBM hunger strike was in March, and I moved to Ufa only in May.

During the first months I got used to life in Ufa. I continuously read everything that was on the Internet about "Kuk Bura" and "SBM" and looked through their websites. I also read about Airat Dilmukhametov. Then he seemed to me the ideal of a Bashkir nationalist. But Airat was sitting, and "Kuk Bura" and the "Union of Bashkir Youth" were there, nearby.

I still liked the Kuk Bure ideology more. This was such a brutal team of Bashkir athletes who did not hide, but on the contrary, showed everyone that they were nationalists. They fiercely criticized not only the Bashkir government, but also the federal one.

By that time, SBM had already become more moderate in its statements. A second criminal case was opened against their leader Artur Idelbaev, and he himself was under house arrest. After the loud hunger strike, the SBM quieted down a little.

Rakhimov's Bashkir elite gradually became part of Khamitov's team. Anyone who did not want to bow to Khamitov, like Rail Sarbaev, for example, left the political arena of the republic.

The SBM itself did not particularly criticize the new government, apparently afraid of making things worse for Artur Idelbaev. Between two Bashkir

There was fierce rivalry between organizations. Considering that "Kuk Bure" was closer to my spirit, I decided that I would go to them.

I started looking for contacts on how to get to Kuk Bure. All this was complicated by the fact that I did not know any of the people active at that time in the Bashkir national movement. I didn't know where to go, where I could meet someone from Kuk Bure.

While browsing their official website, I came across an advertisement for one promotion from a year ago. The phone numbers of the people responsible for the action were posted under the announcement. One of the phones belonged to Ural Baybulatov, who at the time of the action held the position of one of the deputy chairmen of the organization. I called the number:

— Hello, kaumyhyfыз<sup>3</sup>. Is this Ural Baybulatov? — haumyhyfыз. Yes. — My name is Ruslan Gabbasov. I would like to join your

Organization "Kuk Bure". Is this possible? - I asked. "I haven't been a member there for a long time," the voice on the other end answered me. — Can you tell me how I can find someone from the organization? "I don't know," the voice responded.

Failure did not dampen my ardor; I continued to search.

## 2. "Kuk bure"

The Kuk Bure organization was founded in 2007 by three people: Azat Salmanov, Yuldash Yusupov and Timur Mukhtarov. At first it was a historical club of the same name, then it grew into an organization.

All three founders had a humanities education, were historians by profession, and were representatives of urban Bashkir youth.

Azat Salmanov graduated from the Academy of Arts with a degree in composition, but later chose the path not of a musician, but of a historian. Yuldash Yusupov was a professional historian, having graduated from the history department of the Bashkir State University

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<sup>3</sup> Здравствуйте (башк. язық).

(BSU). Timur Mukhtarov, a graduate of the Faculty of Law of BSU, subsequently also chose the path of a historian and worked at the Institute of History, Language and Literature of the Ufa Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Azat Salmanov also worked there.

Timur Mukhtarov and Yuldash Yusupov, although they started out as friends and colleagues, later became ideological opponents due to different views on the development of the Bashkir language.

On the official website of "Kuk Bure" the following was written about the organization: ""Kuk Bure" is a Bashkir youth nationalist organization. Translated from Bashkir, "Kuk bure" means "heavenly wolf". Officially, the organization does not profess the idea of the Republic of Bashkortostan secession from the Russian Federation, however, members of the organization, including publicly, note that the Bashkir nation has the right to self-determination."

Officially, the organization was called the Bashkir Human Rights Movement (BHR) "Kuk Bure," but the website indicated that it was the Bashkir Public Movement "Kuk Bure." This was done so that in the event of any provocative or simply dangerous publications for which they could be held accountable, they could always deny that this site does not belong to the organization. This is what Azat Salmanov did with success in the future.

The goals and objectives of the organization stated: the goal of "Kuk Bure" is to consolidate the civic position of the Bashkir patriotic forces in defending the interests of the Bashkir people. At the same time, "Kuk Bure" considers it an important task to stop the wave of Bashkir-phobic sentiments in society. The organization believes that Bashkirophobia is one of the varieties of xenophobia, which, according to Kuk Bure, is still not prosecuted by law.

The symbol of the organization is a wolf's head against the background of the sun. The wolf in the mythology of the Turkic peoples symbolizes centuries-old folk memory, wisdom, courage, sacrifice and loyalty to one's homeland. The wolf's head is associated with the origin of the Bashkirs from the ancient Turkic-Mongolian tribes, united under the ethnonym "Bashkort" - that is, "Bashkirs", and the sun - with the Iranian-speaking population who lived in the Urals before the arrival of the Turkic-Mongols.



The ideological platform of the organization is liberal nationalism. "Kuk Bure" renounces ideologies that are aimed at suppressing individual freedom, or deny the importance of the category "nation", or do not recognize the Bashkir people as a nation. Bashkir liberal nationalism is incompatible with socialism, communism, fascism and religious fundamentalism.

The Kuk Bure ideology is based on 10 main theses, which are believed to have been formed by Yuldash Yusupov<sup>4</sup>:

- 1. Башкирский народ – сформированная нация. Башкиры как нация имеют равные права с другими нациями, в том числе и право на самоопределение.*
- 2. Основой национального самосознания башкир всегда являлось осознание своего этноса как самобытного свободного народа Южного Урала, полноправного наследника земли своих предков. 3. Главным принципом башкирского либерального национализма есть сохранение и развитие башкирского народа: защита суверенитета Республики Башкортостан, рост численности населения, укрепление физического и духовного здоровья нации, сохранение языка, культуры и самобытности, обеспечение прав и возможностей каждого башкира к самореализации. Обязанностью каждого башкира является реализация прав своей нации в той мере, в которой требуется принцип сохранения и развития башкирского народа.*

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<sup>4</sup> Текст взят с сайта организации, поэтому тут сохранен язык оригинала — примечание редактора.

4. Современная Республика Башкортостан является формой реализации права башкирской нации на самоопределение. 5. Башкиры, отстаивая права на земле своих предков, посредством защиты суверенитета Республики Башкортостан, никоим образом не ущемляют права других народов, проживающих в республике. Блага от экономического суверенитета будут распределяться одинаково между всеми жителями Республики Башкортостан.
6. Необходимо создание корпоративных групп, основанных на представителях башкирского народа. Не допускать использования национальной идеи отдельными башкирами для реализации их узкоэгоистических интересов и осуществления деятельности в ущерб интересам башкирской общины.
7. Башкиры должны придавать приоритет всему башкирскому, в то же время они не должны направлять все свои усилия против других народов. Следует соблюдать золотое правило: «Чего не желаешь своему народу, того не желай и другому народу».
8. Легитимность руководства Республики Башкортостан заключается в его способности защищать развитие культурной и общественной жизни башкирского народа.
9. Федерализм является основой взаимодействия башкирского народа с Центром. Нарушение принципа федерализма центральной властью влечет утрату ее легитимности перед башкирским народом.
10. Поддержка демократических принципов, заложенных в Конституцию РФ и РБ. При этом недопустимо абсолютизировать либеральную демократию. Власть большинства всегда должна учитывать интересы меньшинств, в том числе и национальных. Поэтому необходима разработка правовых механизмов, обеспечивающих участие этнических меньшинств в формировании изъяна<sup>5</sup>, включая квотирование на всех уровнях Российской Федерации.

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<sup>5</sup> Здесь, по-видимому, имеется в виду, что голоса национальных меньшинств тонут в массе голосов русского большинства, и это нужно исправлять через квотирование на всех уровнях власти — примечание автора.

### 3. History of the founding of "Kuk Bure"

According to the official data of the organization itself, the Bashkir public movement "Kuk Bure" (first name) was created in February 2007. The organization was unofficially led by three leaders: Azat Salmanov, Timur Mukhtarov and Yuldash Yusupov.

Timur Mukhtarov was elected the first official chairman of the organization in September 2007. Subsequently, the organization created an institute of co-chairmanship, and Azat Salmanov was elected as the second co-chairman.

Yuldash Yusupov, who was the main ideologist of the organization, eventually retired, left the organization and completely immersed himself in scientific activity. It is even surprising that he later became a pro-government official who not only supported the Kremlin's imperial policy, but also carried it out himself towards the Bashkirs. This is how metamorphoses happen to people.

Timur Mukhtarov also soon officially resigned from the post of co-chairman and founded his own organization "Tugan Tel", where he was the chairman. For a short time, Ramil Rakhmatov was the co-chairman of Kuk Bure, but after a scandal at the Days of Bashkir Youth in the Burzyansky district, he left the organization. Azat was left alone and remade the organization completely for himself.

As one acquaintance who studied with Azat Salmanov at the Ufa School of Arts told me, Azat borrowed the entire ideology of "Kuk Bure" from his classmate, a Russian skinhead named Maxim. Maxim was a member of the Bashkir branch of RNE<sup>6</sup>. At that time, Azat was not very interested in Bashkir nationalism, but gradually, communicating with Maxim, he began to adopt the ideas of RNU. From him he borrowed a subculture, such as armbands, black clothing, short hair, compulsory attendance at the gym, etc. The greeting of the Kuk Bure members was also borrowed from Russian nationalists. When two people met each other, they greeted each other by clasping their palms around each other's forearm. Among Bashkir nationalists this was called the "wolf's paw".

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<sup>6</sup> РНЕ – Русское национальное единство, российская фашистская неонацистская ирредентистская военизированная организация.

While Azat was studying at the art school, he absorbed nationalist ideology from Maxim. Later, already at the Academy of Arts, he used it in the formation of the Bashkir nationalist ideology and disseminated it among the Bashkirs, of whom there were plenty in the Academy. Subsequently, he used all this in "Kuk Bura".

Azat himself told me about the emergence of "Kuk Bure" like this:

"Once I went to a Bashkir disco, which was organized by SBM in one of the clubs in Ufa. When the disco was coming to an end, several Caucasians entered the club. They brazenly turned off the Bashkir music, forced the DJ to turn on the Lezginka and started dancing. They behaved arrogantly and defiantly, pestered Bashkir girls, bullied guys. None of the SBM guys present stopped this, everyone was silent. That's when I decided that this couldn't go on any longer. The Bashkirs need a new strong, authoritative organization that will really defend their people on their own land. This is how the idea to create "Kuk Bure" was born.

After Azat Salmanov met Bashkir athletes in the gyms of the Academy of Arts, BSU and BSPU (Bashkir State Pedagogical University), he attracted them to the ideology of Bashkir nationalism. This is how the first core of "Kuk Bure" appeared: Azat Salmanov, Ilgiz Sabirov (Boxer), Azamat (Maloy), Ilgiz Faizullin (Jock), Ramzil Bainazarov (Rama). They quickly became friends and began to spend a lot of time together.

The core of Kuk Bure, imbued with Bashkir nationalist ideology, began to expand its influence in Ufa. Since the organization consisted of young people, authority, first of all, had to be gained among young people. And where there are young people, there is energy, drive, fights, shooters, showdowns.

As Ramzil Bainazarov said, there was practically not a day when they did not go to the showdown in Ufa. Rumors quickly began to spread among the Bashkir youth of the capital that there was a certain group consisting of Bashkir athletes, and that every Bashkir could find protection from it. Gradually, more and more Bashkirs joined the organization. Many were impressed by the fact that they had to go to showdowns, shootouts, and resolve some issues.

The members of Kuk Bure themselves helped spread rumors about themselves as some kind of closed Bashkir organization, something like the lads , only without criminal overtones. It is almost impossible to join this authoritative organization, everything is very strict, you have to go through many different types of checks and tests.

The first baptism of fire of "Kuk Bure" took place on December 2, 2007 , when the shooter was filled with Chechens on the helipad behind the State Circus. But, as usually happens, when basic precautions are not followed, and a large number of people know about the shooter, rumors inevitably reach law enforcement agencies.

As a result, all the Bashkirs were detained at this point. The Chechens either didn't make it, or knew that there would be arrests, but they weren't at this meeting.

More than 150 people were detained, almost all of them were Bashkirs by nationality. As the participants in those events themselves say, all four floors of the police department building were filled with detained Bashkir guys who stood in rows along the walls.

Everyone was released that same night, except Azat Salmanov. He was given five days of arrest.

All republican media wrote about this showdown, which brought great fame to "Kuk Bure".

Having established himself among the Bashkir youth, Azat began to enter the political field of the republic.

#### 4. "Kuk bure" in politics

The BPD "Kuk Bure" held its first political action on April 12, 2008 in defense of the Ufa-2 settlement.

It was "Kuk Bure", having studied Federal Law No. 54 "On Public Events", that was the first to begin holding protests in the form of pickets, where everyone gave speeches. Before this, everyone thought that this could only be done at rallies.

Subsequently, the Bashkir organization began to hold political actions more often, expanding the theme of protests - defense

contractual relations, return of the Constitution of the Republic of Bashkortostan of 1993, protection of the Bashkir language, etc.

Speaking at public rallies, Kuk Bure activists gradually developed their oratory skills: they confidently behaved in public and boldly gave interviews to various media. Gradually, the regime of Murtaza Rakhimov began to be criticized. By 2010, "Kuk Bure" was already a well-known Bashkir organization, but its fame extended more to urban Bashkirs, mainly Ufa.

The first political actions in defense of Bashkir interests brought "Kuk Bure" popularity among Bashkirs, especially among Ufa students.

In August 2009, the Deputy Prosecutor of the Republic of Bashkortostan V. M. Loginov issued the first warning to the chairman of Kuk Bure, Azat Salmanov, "about the inadmissibility of extremist activity." In 2010, such a warning was issued to the deputy chairman of the Kuk Bure BPD, Ramzil Ba inazarov. The federal government began to respond to anti-government statements by Bashkir nationalists.

It must be understood that during the reign of Murtaza Rakhimov, of the Bashkir national organizations, only "Kuk Bure" was uncontrollable by the Bashkir authorities. The World Kurultai of Bashkirs has always been a pro-government organization; the Union of Bashkir Youth in the 2000s closely interacted with Rakhimov's government and was in the orbit of its influence.

Simultaneously with the development of the national movement in the republic, there has always been a growth of Bashkir Muslim organizations. At the time I am describing, such an organization as the "Shura of Muslims of Bashkortostan" was popular among the Muslims of Bashkortostan. It was founded by two famous Bashkir Muslim and national figures Ishmurat Khaibullin and Fanzil Akhmetshin.

Fanzil Akhmetshin, a native of the early SBM, eventually became the chairman of the Youth Kurultai of the VKB and deputy chairman of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs.

A lot of Bashkir youth initially joined the national movement, and then went from there to Islam.

Gradually, Azat Salmanov built the structure of the organization, made it a rule to hold weekly "Kuk Bure" meetings, and collected monthly membership fees.

"Kuk Bure" badges appeared, which were issued only upon official entry into the organization. Anyone who joined the Kuk Bure organization took a certain oath. Alcohol was prohibited in the organization; Azat himself did not drink and had a very negative attitude towards those Bashkirs who drank alcohol. He constantly repeated: "A drunken Bashkir is a weak Bashkir."

## 5. Conflict at the Youth Kurultai and the internal structure of "Kuk Bure"

In the summer of 2010, during the III World Kurultai of Bashkirs, the Youth World Kurultai of Bashkirs was held at the same time, where Bashkir youth from different regions of Russia and the world gathered. All Bashkir youth organizations were invited, regardless of their relationship to the authorities, including members of the BPD "Kuk Bure". The total number of delegates was more than 700 people.

Azat Salmanov, as the chairman of a fairly large Bashkir public organization, was supposed to sit on the presidium of the Youth Kurultai of the VKB. But the organizers of the Kurultai changed everything the night before the start of the meeting, and the next day, when the congress began, Azat Salmanov was not on the list of the presidium of the Youth Kurultai.

A scandal arose. More than 30 members of "Kuk Bure", who were delegates of the Youth Kurultai, refused to participate in this congress and demonstratively left the hall. On their way out, they threw the folders that they had been given as delegates of the Youth Kurultai onto the presidium table, as a result of which a huge stack of folders formed on the table.



It became clear that the Bashkir authorities avoided the Bashkir nationalists from "Kuk Bure" and tried their best to ignore or exclude them from the political life of the republic.

But "Kuk Bure" was in no way dependent on the Bashkir authorities and was completely autonomous in its actions.

While developing the organization, Azat Salmanov made the management completely authoritarian. He was the sole leader and did not tolerate competition.

However, along with authoritarianism, he also tried to demonstrate elements of democracy. The organization created the Kuk Bure Council, which included its most authoritative members. But, as a rule, when making decisions, he always pushed only his own, criticizing those who dared to argue with him. If the Council was against it, it took a break for several days. During this time, I met with each member of the Council, convinced him during a personal conversation, and at the next meeting of the Council, Azat's decision was already made by the majority. It seems like democracy was present in decision-making, and you can't undermine it. If someone did not agree with his authoritarian method of management, and even gained weight in the organization, Azat gradually squeezed them out.

Azat Salmanov became the sole leader of the organization of Bashkir nationalists. Everyone obeyed him unquestioningly.

At one of the meetings of the Executive Committee of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs, during the speech of the Chairman of the WKB, Azamat Galin, exclaimed:

"Why are we listening to this balabol?!" Azat Salmanov ordered his guys to drag Galin off the stage. Four strong guys from "Kuk Bure" climbed onto the podium, took Galin by the arms and legs, carried him out of the hall and threw him like a rag onto the floor. None of those present in the hall even tried to defend the chairman of the VKB.

In 2010, Azat Salmanov quarreled with one of the members of Kuk Bure, Azamat Khasanov, who was very authoritative among Bashkir youth and especially among Muslims. He left the organization, and with him many young people who gravitated toward Islam left.

Azamat was a charismatic personality and a brilliant leader. He was never afraid to speak out openly against the security officers and even threatened them. Often during showdowns, he himself negotiated, they listened to him and respected him. The Chekists, on the contrary, hated him. Subsequently, Azamat Khasanov disappeared. According to eyewitnesses, a black GAZelle drove up to him on the street, they threw him inside and took him away. No one has seen him since then. Aksakal Sagit Ismagilov once said that he once asked a high-ranking police officer he knew about the fate of Azamat Khasanov, who answered him that there was no need to ask about him anymore, he was no longer there.

In the same 2010, after disagreements with Azat Salmanov, such bright personalities as Ural Baybulatov, Salavat Aisuakov, Azamat Yuldybaev and many others left Kuk Bure.

Where bright and energetic personalities are squeezed out, stagnation usually begins.

## 6. Removal of Murtaza Rakhimov

Everyone understood perfectly well that Moscow would sooner or later "leave" Murtaza Rakhimov. Trying to play his last trump card, Rakhimov held the III World Kurultai of the Bashkirs, where harsh statements were made from the podium against the Kremlin. So he hoped that, by showing the discontent and rebellious spirit of the Bashkorts, he could force Moscow, if not to leave him as president, then at least to install his successor, Rail Sarbaev, in his place.

The Chairman of the All-Russian Design Bureau, Azamat Galin, in the spirit of Nikita Khrushchev, threatened damned Moscow from the rostrum of the congress. He said that "perhaps the future president of the republic will be a Varangian" and boldly stated that "his appointment could undermine the population's trust in the federal authorities."

"Its purpose is to systematically ignore the opinion of the people, and this will offend the people who are disgusted by the very thought of the Varangians. This could lead to a serious conflict and loss of legitimacy of the government," Azamat Galin said in his speech.

Many similar menacing speeches were made by other speaking delegates. All of them, of course, spoke on the case, but certainly with the consent of the Bashkir "White House". Before this, such speeches were prohibited from being made from open stands.

In response to the III World Kurultai of the Bashkirs and his loud statements, Moscow on July 15 summoned Murtaza Rakhimov to the Kremlin and, putting pressure on him, forced him to resign. In his place, the Baltachev Tatar Rustem Khamitov, who had repainted himself as Bashkirs, was appointed.

There is a version that Khamitov was recommended by Radiy Khabirov, who then worked in the Kremlin as deputy head of the Russian Presidential Administration for Domestic Policy. So Khabirov took revenge on Rakhimov for his expulsion from Bashkortostan.

Already several months before Rakhimov's dismissal, Ufa was crowded with various types of federal intelligence officers, analysts, and conflict experts. They studied the internal political situation in the republic, the mood of the people and elites. For example, the now famous former FSB colonel Strelkov-Girkin was personally present at the congress of the III World Kurultai of Bashkirs, observing what was happening and drawing appropriate conclusions.

The analysis for the republic on the eve of the resignation of Murtaza Rakhimov was something like this: "You can safely remove Rakhimov, the Bashkir elites may be indignant, but they will not go into open confrontation with the Center."

That's how it was, and it's easy to explain. During the reign of Murtaza Rakhimov, the Bashkir elite was fed and at the same time intimidated. Murtaza Rakhimov harshly suppressed any bold initiatives, any objections and protests

stopped. All brave independent authoritative leaders were either imprisoned or expelled from the republic.

For the calm removal of Rakhimov, the Kremlin needed the only important condition - Rakhimov himself had to voluntarily resign and order his tame Bashkir parliament, the State Assembly - Kurultai, as well as the rest of the republican elite not to be indignant and accept the Varangian Khamitov.

Which is exactly what happened. In Moscow, where the Bashkir president flew to for negotiations, an approach was found to Rakhimov. They promised not to touch his son Ural Rakhimov, not to stir up the murky business of the sale of Bashneft, they promised to leave in his Ural charitable foundation the money accumulated after the sale of the Bashkir fuel and energy complex, and an honorary pension with all the privileges.

Rakhimov naively believed everything and agreed. He himself appealed to the Bashkir deputies to accept Rustem Khamitov and agree to his presidency.

Naturally, a few years later Moscow deceived Rakhimov. That's what it always did. A criminal case was opened against Ural Rakhimov, almost all the money was taken from the Ural fund, and Rakhimov himself was pushed away by Khamitov from all levers of power and sent into political oblivion.

But still, Moscow played it safe during the days of Babai's removal<sup>7</sup>. In the Trans-Urals, where the monoethnic Bashkir population lived, two motorized rifle regiments were introduced in case of Bashkir unrest. In the capital of Bashkortostan itself, the city of Ufa, the Alpha special unit was stationed, which was based in the Dynamo sports complex. The same "Alpha" went to detain the chairman of the Youth Kurultai of the Bashkirs, Fanzil Akhmetshin.

As he himself says, FSB officers first conducted a search in his mother's village, then took him to Ufa and searched his apartment there. During the search, one of the security officers saw a video disc of Salavat Khamidullin's film "Revival of the Republic" and with the words "Your republic is over!" contemptuously threw the disk on the floor.

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<sup>7</sup> Бабай («дедушка») — так называли в народе президента Республики Башкортостан Муртазу Рахимова.



No one came out to protest against Rakhimov's removal. The Bashkir elite fled and hid. Chairman of the VKB Azamat Galin, who a month ago threatened Moscow not to allow the Moscow "Varangian," fled to his native Burzyansky district and took refuge there somewhere in the mountains. I turned off my phone and didn't contact him for several weeks.

Only a few brave souls from the Bashkir intelligentsia came to the empty building of the VKB. They offered to write a protest against Khamitov's appointment, but Rakhimov's officials dissuaded him from doing so.

Several people from the Bashkir public demanded action from the World Kurultai of Bashkirs. As a result, they decided to submit a notice for the rally. Naturally, they were refused. The leadership of the VKB immediately took advantage of this refusal, declaring that since they refused, we would not break the law.

When I wrote above that no one came out to protest, I meant the Bashkir elite, which previously idolized Rakhimov. However, there were elders from the Aktamyr organization and young Bashkir guys who nevertheless came out to protest. And it was not Rakhimov's SBM, which, in theory, should have been in the forefront, but just the guys from "Kuk Bure".

The BPD "Kuk Bure" has always been accused of often criticizing Rakhimov, but they were the youth who came out to protest against the lawlessness of Moscow.

In total, about 20 people approached the building of the State Assembly - Kurultai, where the inauguration of Rustem Khamitov was taking place that day, and stood with single pickets against the appointment of the "Varangian" and the illegal removal of Rakhimov. Among them was the public and national figure Ilsur Irnazarov, well-known today and respected by many residents of the republic. He, being a wheelchair user, came from the Baymaksky district to express his protest to Moscow. Organizing a protest in those days was a courageous act, since the air in the republic was electrified, and any spark could cause real popular unrest. Realizing this, the Moscow authorities could suppress any protests very harshly, even to the point of physical elimination. The guys from Kuk Bure also understood this, but they came out anyway. True, Azat Salmanov himself did not come out. As direct participants in that protest later told me, Azat Salmanov himself was not among the protesters, but sat in the car and watched from the sidelines. He explained his absence by saying that if arrests suddenly began, it would be better for the leader to remain free so that the organization itself would be preserved. I leave it to the reader to judge how reasonable this is.

## 7. "Kuk bure" and SBM

The two most popular Bashkir youth organizations at that time, the Union of Bashkir Youth and Kuk Bure, had a very difficult relationship. This is understandable; both fought for influence on Bashkir youth.

Naturally, at first SBM did not value Kuk Bure at all, believing that they were not competitors for them. But when you underestimate your opponent, it always results in defeat.

First of all, it is necessary to explain what kind of organization the SBM was at the end of the 2000s. The once powerful and formidable force of passion

By the end of Rakhimov's reign, Bashkir youth turned into a manual organization obedient to the Bashkir authorities.

The "Union of Bashkir Youth" was born in 1990 and was, one might say, the youth wing of the Bashkir People's Center "Ural". The founder of the organization is usually considered to be its first chairman, Chelyabinsk Bashkir Rinat Baimov. But that's not true. The first organizer and ideological inspirer was Danir Gainullin. It was he who, in those years of national upsurge, united students of the Bashkir State University and created the first rudiments of the organization. Baimov arrived a little later. But the main leaders of the SBM have always been considered Rinat Baimov (graduate of the Academy of Arts), Artur Idelbaev (BSU, Faculty of History) and Airat Dilmukhametov (BSU, Faculty of History). Later, only Artur Idelbaev remained the leader of the SBM, although he was never officially the chairman of the organization, preferring to lead from the shadows.

The organization was a force to be reckoned with in the 90s. She not only held her famous Bashkir cultural events "Days of Bashkir Youth", "Ural Mono", "Kylyukai"<sup>8</sup>, but also organized protests of thousands, staged hunger strikes on Salavat Yulaev Square, seized the Ufa television center, tore down Russian flags, burned Russian passports and organized military training camps "Bozkurt" for Bashkirs. This Bashkir nationalist organization was feared and respected.

Because she didn't depend on anyone.



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8 kylyukay – Bashkir beauty (Bashk language).

But this was exactly the case until they adopted the doctrine of "Permanent entry into power" at one of their meetings. This is what ruined them. They naively believed that, having entered into power, they would be able, using the levers of this power, to help the Bashkir people and influence the adoption of necessary and useful decisions. Alas, the authorities crushed them, giving positions in various spheres to its most active and charismatic members. So the organization completely lost its independence.

Its first chairman from 1990–1995. Rinat Baimov became a businessman and at first was included in any cabinet of ministers of the government of Bashkortostan. But having a quarrelsome, scandalous and mercantile character, he gradually lost his influence, which he acquired at the expense of the Bashkir youth. Afterwards he was appointed to the position of director of the Bashkortostan film studio, director of the Congress Hall and something else, but everywhere he was seen in some kind of fraudulent affairs, and he had to be fired from everywhere. As a businessman, he also ultimately did not succeed.

The second leader, Artur Idelbaev, was also at first a fairly successful businessman; he financed many SBM events with his own money, and then moved to the government of the Republic of Bashkortostan, where he was deputy head of the press department. In this position, he also saw the dismissal of Murtaza Rakhimov.

All the other most active members were also given different positions: some as the director of the Bashkortostan State Philharmonic Society, some as the head of the "Support of Russia", some former members of the SBM today are deputies of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, deputies of the State Assembly - Kurultai of the Republic of Bashkortostan, ministers in the government of the Republic of Bashkortostan, heads of administrative districts and municipalities. However, this did not bring any benefit to the Bashkir national movement. All of them, as soon as they received positions, immediately forgot about their duty to the Bashkir people. Moreover, some of them, having gained power, themselves began to persecute Bashkir nationalists.

The young SBM that replaced them wanted action, protest. Young energy was in full swing, but the "seniors", who in the organization firmly took the reins of government into their own hands, did not let them

even step aside without their supervision. As a result, the once formidable political organization was left to conduct cultural events, coordinating all its actions with the authorities.

And then "Kuk Bure" appeared, where they openly said what they thought about the authorities and criticized the current state of affairs. But the government actually had something to criticize for. And most importantly, they criticized not only the Moscow authorities, which was not so dangerous then, but also Rakhimov himself. The Bashkirs liked it. Many by that time were tired of Rakhimov, they saw that there was political stagnation in the republic, and they wanted change.

Protest youth gravitated to Kuk Bure, while the calmer and non-conflict youth went to SBM.

In 2009, a scandal occurred at the Days of Bashkir Youth in the Burzya nsky district. Members of "Kuk Bure" went to this event, which was held by the Bashkir Youth Union for many years.

Ramil Rakhmatov, who in the future would become a famous journalist of the republic, at that time served as co-chairman of Kuk Bure. Rakhmatov, unexpectedly for everyone, appeared on stage and, without coordinating this with either the leadership of Kuk Bure or the SBM as the organizers of the event, gave a speech where he rather harshly criticized the policy of the Russian authorities towards the Bashkir people, proposing to annex the Chelyabinsk region to Bashkortostan and dissolve the State Duma. The management of Kuk Bure and SBM immediately disowned this statement, declaring that they had nothing to do with it. A criminal case was opened against Rakhmatov for extremism, but it somehow quickly came to naught. As they say, this statement by Rakhmatov was organized by people from the White House apparatus, and Rakhmatov himself received a house in the village of Shamonino near Ufa as payment for this speech. Let me remind you that at that time the republic was led by Murtaza Rakhimov, and there were constant provocations from Moscow against him. Radiy Khabirov was considered the main beneficiary and organizer of such provocations.

After a scandal at the Days of Bashkir Youth, Ramil Rakhmatov left Kuk Bure, and since then there has been only one chairman in the organization.

Azat Salmanov, criticizing Rakhimov, naturally criticized everyone who supported him, including the SBM for their opportunistic position, for betraying, as he believed, Bashkir interests. Salmanov himself also went to SBM for a short time, but became disillusioned and quickly left.

Conflicts began between the two organizations not only on the Internet at an ideological level, but even led to real fights.

One day, one of the leaders of the SBM, Danir Gainullin, said something offensive about "Kuk Bura". The guys, without thinking twice, went to his house by car to "bring some sense" to the SBM veteran. But Danir turned out to be not a timid person, he grabbed a bayonet shovel and immediately said that if anyone came up to him, he would get hit on the head with the tip of this shovel. That time it didn't come to a fight.

In 2010, the confrontation between SBM and Kuk Bure reached its peak. On the evening of June 23, a conflict occurred between the deputy chairman of the Bashkir Youth Union, Florid Bagaev, and the chairman of Kuk Bure, Azat Salmanov. The two leaders got into a fight, and it even came to the point of opening a criminal case against Azat Salmanov. But everything was resolved, and both parties agreed to a settlement in court.

At the end of 2010, Azamat Galin, as a Rakhimov cadre, was removed from the post of chairman of the VKB, and Ilgiz Sultanmuratov was installed in his place. However, his candidacy aroused acute rejection among the Bashkir public, and especially among Bashkir nationalists. It got to the point that a meeting of the WKB Executive Committee was scheduled for February 26, at which the members of the WKB were supposed to vote either for Sultanmuratov to remain as chairman or for the appointment of another. Members of the VKB, dissatisfied with Sultanmuratov, nominated the Bashkir elder, academician Niyaz Mazhitov. Both Bashkir nationalist organizations - SBM and Kuk Bure - also campaigned for him. For this purpose, Airat Dilmukhametov even reconciled with the SBM, although in recent years he sharply criticized the SBM for turning into a pro-Rakhimov organization. But in the end, the security officers did not allow this to be done, and a few days before the start of the meeting of the Executive Committee, they arrested Artur Idelbaev and Fanzil Akhmetshin. Airat Dilmukhametov managed to escape and was declared

wanted FSB officers went to the houses of members of the VKB Executive Committee, threatening all those who would vote against Sultanmuratov with problems.

As a result, the majority of the intimidated members of the VKB Executive Committee voted for Sultanmuratov, and he remained chairman for a short time.

## 8. My first meeting

Tired of looking for contacts with Kuk Bure, I decided to contact the chairman of the organization, Azat Salmanov. At that time he was very active on the VKontakte social network. I added him as a friend and wrote to him in a personal message that I like the Kuk Bure organization and its activities, and that I would like to join their organization. Oddly enough, he answered. I was invited to a meeting this coming Monday. On this day it was my birthday, I turned 32 years old. I could not have dreamed of a better gift for my birthday.

At the appointed hour, I arrived at the appointed place - at the Batyr cafe on the street. Zaki Validi, 5. Arslan Salmanov, the younger brother of Azat Salmanov, met me and took me down to the Agidel River, which flowed nearby. Of course, I was surprised that the meeting was not taking place in the off ice, but somewhere on the river bank. I even began to have doubts about our meeting, but when I went out to Agidel, I saw Azat and several other guys swimming in the river.

Noticing me, they invited me to swim with them, but I refused, explaining that today was my birthday and I wouldn't be long.

Azat started asking me questions, and I decided not to hide anything from the guys and tell everything about myself honestly and openly. I said that I was in a maximum security colony for self-defense, that it was there that I learned from the newspaper about "Kuk Bura", that I was interested in history, politics and wanted to join them in order to do something useful for the Bashkir people. It was clear that my story impressed them, they treated me well. I somehow immediately found a common language with Azat. We had a lot in common: we were both well-read, well versed in history,

nationalists to the core. In addition, we were the same age - he is only one month older than me.

A little later, two more guys came - Ramzil Baynazarov and Rifat Bikk ulov. What immediately caught my eye was that they were very similar to each other, like brothers - the same height, the same build, and even similar faces.

After talking with the guys and promising to come to the next meeting, I went home.

I was happy that I had finally achieved my goal and joined the very organization that I had dreamed of for so long.

## 9. Fail Alsynov

In this chapter I want to talk about a person who has done a lot for the Bashkir national movement and is undoubtedly one of its leaders - this is my friend Fail Alsynov.

Fail comes from the village of Yuldybaevo, Zilair district. This is a very large Bashkir village, which stands at the crossroads between directions to the city of Sibay and the regional centers of Akyar and Zilair. Fail always proudly told us that he was from the Tungaur clan, and that the best kuraists in Bashkortostan were from the Zilair region. It's true, you can't argue with that.

The Alsynov family had four children, three sons: Farit, Fail, Idel and daughter Elvira. Fail was the second oldest. Fail's father Fattah Agai worked for many years as a caretaker, first at school, and then at the Yuldybaevsky school. And after graduating, he became a mullah in the village. Rashida Apai's mother worked as a hospital nurse all her life. It was a simple, hard-working, friendly family.

Fail began his national activities, like me, in "Kuk Bura", however, he came there much earlier than me, at the beginning of 2008. We can say that he was there almost from the very beginning. At the end of 2010, Fail Alsynov was elected first deputy chairman of Kuk Bure. He remained that way until he left the organization. His excellent Bashkir speech and oratorical abilities made him an excellent speaker at rallies, events,

presenter at various events. Speaking at rallies in the Bashkir language, as a speaker he gained fame among the Bashkir public.

Fail has always been a practitioner and an excellent organizer. If he took responsibility for something, he developed frantic activity, connected all his numerous connections, completed what he started, and his events were always successful.

Airat Dilmukhametov wrote that in their SBM the organizer and practitioner was Artur Idelbaev, while in ours it was Fail Alsynov. His soul always wanted breadth and scale of action. After 2009, when the Union of Bashkir Youth organized its last Days of Bashkir Youth (DBM) in the Burzyansky district, no one else held this largest youth event. I remember how Fail several times suggested that Azat hold a DBM on behalf of "Kuk Bure", but Azat constantly found excuses. Fail was confident that he would be able to successfully organize and conduct such an event. In the future, he brought this to life, but not with Kuk Bure.

At the beginning of 2011, Fail got a job as a specialist in the apparatus of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs. At the beginning of 2014, he was fired from there along with the Bashkir elder Valiakhmet Badretdinov by order from the White House. The reason for the dismissal was fair criticism of the head of the republic, Rustem Khamitov, and the chairman of the VKB, Rumil Azna baev.

I remember that shameful day when members of the VKB Executive Committee voted to remove the most decent Bashkirs from their apparatus, guided by instructions from above.

During his time working in the apparatus of the World Kurultai, Bashkir Fail did a lot of useful things for Kuk Bure, and for the entire Bashkir people. With Fail's help, we constantly held various cultural events. Before Fail, another member of our organization, Ramzil Baynazarov, worked there, in the Kurultai apparatus.

Fail and Ramzil were friends since childhood, from the same village of Yuldybaevo, they even sat at the same desk, as they were classmates. Then both, at different times, moved to Ufa. Fail married a girl, Galiya, who also went to the Kuk Bure protests. That's where they met. When I first came to the meeting, I

Fail's wedding celebrations were just taking place, and I didn't find him at the meeting. We met him later, when he arrived from his native village.

I remember him telling me that at first he was distrustful of my appearance in the organization.

- At first it seemed to me that you wouldn't last long. Too energetic, lively, you go everywhere, you offer something," he told me.

Typically, such people did not stay long in the organization and quickly burned out. Maximum six months to a year.

"But I was wrong," he admitted later.

Fail and I not only became friends, but in the future we created the most powerful national organization of its time.

## 10. The beginning of my social and political activities in the organization

I immediately became involved in the work of the organization. Everything was interesting to me, I wanted to act. I remember the first time I went as part of "Kuk Bure" to Toratau, there was an event to protect the shihan<sup>9</sup>.

Now people are asking how it happened that the defense of the Kushtau shihan in 2020 was a success, and so many people came out in favor of preserving it? I believe that, first of all, the victory in the defense of Kushtau became real only because many years before that another shihan, Toratau, was defeated. The population of Bashkortostan gradually learned about the problem of shihans from various actions, rallies, and events held by social activists, including Kuk Bure. Thanks to such actions, everyone was dedicated to this topic.

Therefore, when Kushtau happened, everyone was ready and charged. But I'll tell you about this another time.

When we arrived at Toratau, we left the cars away from the crowds of people, pulled out and unfurled the Kuk Bure flags. I was holding one of the flags. The police, who were present at the event, immediately came to us. There were two policemen: one was a major,

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<sup>9</sup> Шихан — известняковая гора в Башкирском Предуралье.

and second lieutenant. They demanded that the flags be removed because this was not a political event. I was a little confused and did not know what to answer them, since this was my first time encountering the police in the political and legal field. Azat got into an argument with them, explaining that their organization is not prohibited, which means the flags are not either, and we have the right to carry them anywhere. Our unofficial lawyer for the organization (albeit without a legal background), Albert Baybuldin, with the words: "Why are you talking to them?!", snatched the flag from my hands and went to the crowd, holding the banner high. The police did not develop the scandal, and we stood with the flags of our organization throughout the entire event.

I tried to grasp everything on the fly: how to talk to the police, how to react in the future in similar situations. At the meetings we discussed the socio-political agenda in the republic, Russia and the world. Azat was a good ideologist. I delved more and more into the situation in Bashkortostan.

When there were pickets, I tried to speak in front of people. In our organization, Azat Salmanov (he spoke in Russian), Fail Alsynov and Ramzil Bahnazarov were considered the best speakers. The latter both spoke excellently and performed in the Bashkir language.

When I bought myself a laptop, I started trying to write my first articles for the Kuk Bure website. It seemed to work out well.

The official Kuk Bure group on the VKontakte social network was closed; in general, the organization itself was a little closed and introverted. I suggested opening the group to everyone, just strictly monitoring various kinds of provocateurs and immediately removing them from the group if they were flooding, trolling or writing provocative comments. From a group of just over three thousand subscribers, we immediately doubled in size. At that time, the largest Bashkir group on VKontakte was SBM - more than 15 thousand subscribers.

I remember that not many people came to my first meetings, which were held strictly on Mondays, maybe 10 people at most. I developed an online activity, sending messages to everyone who was interested in our organization and who left comments in support of our activities.

Around the same time, at the end of 2011 - beginning of 2012, several active guys came to our organization at once: Dinar Gizzatulin, Fidan Kubagushев, Radik Enikeev, Ural Ishmuratov.

Fidan Kubagushev was just walking about his business one day and saw our picket in defense of the Constitution of the Republic of Bashkortostan, which we held near the Neftyanik cultural center. Without hesitation, he joined us, standing in one row, and since then he has remained in the organization. Then he and I rented a room together in Chernikovka.

Fidan Kubagushev was from the famous tucum<sup>10</sup> of the Kubagushevs, famous for its artists. At that time, Fidan himself had only recently served under a contract in the armed forces of the Russian Federation and returned to the republic. He had a higher legal education, of which he was very proud. Fidan was a hot-tempered young man, impulsive and often flared up over any minor occasion. At the same time, he was a radical nationalist who rooted for the Bashkir people with all his heart. He and I often argued on various topics, but it never came to the point of a fight or a major quarrel. They always knew how to stop in time and find a common language.

An interesting incident happened to him, which clearly characterizes him. He was accepted into one company as chief legal adviser. The head of this company was a Bashkir. At that time, Fidan was already actively involved in the life of "Kuk Bure" and was very proud of it. At every opportunity, he tried to show his involvement in this organization. One day, his boss sent him to one of the companies to hand over a legal contract for signing. Having arrived, he prepared to immediately go into the manager's office. The secretary stopped him, saying that there was a meeting going on and he needed to wait. Fidan tried to explain that he was in a hurry and was not going to wait, but the secretary was adamant. Then Fidan opened the door with his foot with the words: "I'll still be on my land waiting for them to let me in!" He entered the office under the amazed gazes of both the secretary and the people in the office. Naturally, there was a big scandal. The indignant management of the company called Fidan Kubagushev's superiors, and he was immediately fired.

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<sup>10</sup> Тукум – фамильный род.

Azat and I often argued at meetings on various political topics. Sometimes it dragged on for several hours. Fail Alsynov was constantly angry because of this.

I envied those who wore the "Kuk Bure" badges with white envy. Badges could only be worn by those who were officially accepted into the organization as a member.

One day after a meeting I was told to stay late.

We went out into the street, all the members of the organization surrounded me, and Azat, squinting his eyes slyly, said that they had decided to accept me into the organization, but for this I had to pass a test, hinting that I would now have to fight with several people at once. I cringed internally and said I was ready. But then everyone laughed and said that it was a joke. After this, Fail asked me to repeat the words of the oath after him when joining the Kuk Bure. I repeated everything and at the end I proclaimed three times: "Ant itəm!", "Ant itəm!", "Ant itəm!"<sup>11</sup>. I was given a badge, and everyone began to congratulate me on becoming a member of the organization. I was immensely happy!

## 11. Deputy Chairman and sports in "Kuk Bura"

At the end of 2011, I was elected deputy chairman of Kuk Bure. At that time, the chairman was Azat Salmanov, the first deputy was Fail Alsynov, and two deputy chairmen were Ilgiz Faizullin (Kachok) and me. Arslan Salmanov, the younger brother of Azat Salmanov, was responsible for the organization's cash desk.

Our meetings were held in one of the offices of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs. It seems that we criticized the VKB, but at the same time, Fail Alsynov was able to reach an agreement through Fanzil Akhmetshin, who at that time was the chairman of the Bashkir Youth Kurultai and worked in the apparatus of the VKB, to hold our meetings on the premises of the Kurultai.

The Muslim organization "Shura of Muslims of Bashkortostan" gathered there. Our meetings took place on the same day; it's just that Muslims had their meetings earlier. It was interesting to watch from

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<sup>11</sup> "Ант итəм!" – клянусь! (башк. язық).

sides as their meeting ended, and bearded guys left the room, and pumped-up Bashkir nationalists came in instead.

More and more people came to the organization. The meetings attracted 30–40 people. When I first joined Kuk Bure, there was only one girl in the organization, Nailya, she was friends with Arslan Salmanov. But gradually, as a result of our constant agitation, other girls began to come to the meetings.

Azat Salmanov has always paid a lot of attention to sports in the organization. Before joining Kuk Bure, I also did amateur bodybuilding for several years. The organization was able to find finance to purchase sports equipment; we purchased barbells, weights, dumbbells, a horizontal bar and other sports equipment. We opened a gym in a closed kindergarten on Rossiyskaya Street, where we went to work out.

I suggested making a video about the life of Kuk Bure to further motivate others to join our organization. Wrote the script for the video. The film turned out to be successful. In the first part of the video, guys dressed in black jackets gather on the street, greet each other with a "wolf paw" and walk in a friendly crowd. The second part was filmed in that gym, which was located in the kindergarten. It showed how we play sports, how fit and pumped up Bashkirs go to the gym. Another part showed how our meetings go in the office

As I wrote, one of the integral parts of the life of "Kuk Bure" was participation in various kinds of showdowns and shootouts that occurred constantly. During the day there were politics and rallies, in the evening they resolved issues based on street concepts.

One day such an incident happened.

Nailya, Arslan Salmanov's girlfriend, lived in the student dormitory No. 5 of the BSPU on Kommunisticheskaya Street, and one day she was offended by a security guard there. Arslan wanted to deal with this guard and punish him for this act unworthy of a man.

As it turned out later, this security guard was part of a group of athletes from the Nizhny Novgorod microdistrict. Their chief was a certain Kostya, a short guy, very pumped up and quite

confident young man. That evening when Nailya was offended, this Kostya was also there.

We approached the hostel; there were about five or six of us. They called that security guard outside and told him to call Kostya here too. There were two of us, which means we must answer together.

Among us there was one healthy Orenburg Bashkir, Fail. He kept suggesting to Azat that the crowd beat up this guard right now and kept trying to hit him first. I said this is wrong. Arslan, as Naili's boyfriend, must punish the offender himself. Arslan hit the guard in the face several times, he screamed, grabbed his face, began to apologize and ask not to touch him anymore. It was clear that he was scared and did not want to fight back even as a man.

A few minutes later, three black tinted foreign Audi cars drove up to the hostel. From each car, 4-5 guys came out with an athletic build, with short hair, dressed in black leather jackets. They lined up in one row and walked towards us. As they approached, they hugged us in a semicircle. The thought flashed through my head that if a fight broke out now, the forces would clearly not be on our side. Standing in the center, Kostya brazenly asked: "Who wanted to see me here?"

"We wanted to," Azat answered him loudly and confidently, "are you offending the girl?"

Azat himself undertook to lead the shooter and confronted Kostya about Naili. They began to discuss things in a raised voice, and the situation became tense. Kostya saw that his guard was beaten, began to be indignant and ask who beat him. Arslan said that he hit him, and no one else touched him. The only thing that saved us was that in this situation we were 100% right. Afterwards, when it was all over, Azat said that they did the right thing, that they listened to me and did not beat that guard with the crowd.

While Azat was talking with Kostya, we kept calling the rest of our "wives".

In our organization, all the guys were divided into groups of 5 people who lived close to each other. Each group had its own elder. One of these five must have owned a car. Thus, it was a kind of mobile brigade. There was no need to call all five, we only called the main one

"brigade", he already called his own, and they very quickly went to the place. In total there were about 7–8 such brigades. Two or three of the most senior and responsible people in the organization called only their "foremen", thus everyone was notified in a matter of minutes and immediately went to the gathering place.

Within 15–20 minutes our first "brigades" began to arrive.

We breathed a sigh of relief and felt more confident, now it was the Nizhny Novgorod team's turn to exert themselves. No matter how many came to their aid after that, our "wolves" became more and more numerous. Kostya's tone also changed. Although he was still angry, he already realized that he would not get through this showdown. Because the hostel manager threatened to call the police, we all moved to the Congress Hall on Validi Street. Literally 1–1.5 hours later, about 500 people gathered on our side alone, and we loomed over the "Nizhny Novgorod" like a menacing mass. As a result, Kostya asked Naila for forgiveness for his behavior, saying that he was drunk then and did not understand what he was doing. The apology was accepted and they parted ways.

In "Kuk Bura" we had a kind of Bashkir special forces, with whom, when he came to the shooting, we knew that no enemy was scary, and we felt very confident. These were martial arts fighters of the level of dischargers and masters of sports: Dinislam, Nurik, Ilgiz Kachok, Ilgiz Boxer, huge and pumped up warriors Zufar Bolshoi and Kvadrat. When they saw them, the enemy immediately felt the desire to go to war.

We all also went in for sports and had an athletic build, which caught the eye of any person. When our opponents saw such an impressive force at shootouts and showdowns, the arrogance immediately disappeared from any of them.

There were many such showdowns during my years in Kuk Bur, and I don't remember that we ever lost to anyone. Many Bashkirs turned to us for help. We refused only to those who, while drunk, were the first to run into conflict.

A multi-day conflict between the Bashkirs and the Tajiks in the "tents" at the Friendship Monument caused a lot of noise in Ufa.

At that time, on the embankment of the Agidel River near the Friendship Monument, tents were opened every summer, where Ufa residents rested in the evenings. Loud music played all night, barbecue, beer and vodka, girls of easy virtue, all this attracted young people from all over the city. The owners of the tents were mainly people from the Caucasus or Central Asia. All night and until the morning, idle people walked there and, naturally, there were many Caucasians, Tajiks and Uzbeks who behaved very cheekily. In general, it was a hotbed of crime and criminality, where drugs were sold, where it was openly possible to pick up a prostitute, and many other criminal things happened. The local police fed from these tents, taking tribute from the owners of entertainment venues.

Azat Salmanov, taking advantage of the fact that there was a conflict there between a Bashkir and one of the Tajiks, gathered Bashkirs from "Kuk Bure" there. There was a big fight, which was broken up by the police. The next day the Bashkirs came there again. There was a fight again. It even came down to shooting from traumatic pistols.

The Bashkirs went to the "tents" for several weeks, instigating fights. All this caused a great stir in the city, even local media wrote about it.

Taking part in such shootouts, I understood that sooner or later such activities could put an end to the Kuk Bure organization itself. I told Azat that he personally and other members of the organization who speak publicly at various events and political actions should not participate in this kind of showdown. Sooner or later, you will either be framed, or you will do something yourself, for which the police will later hold you accountable.

## 12. We participate in elections

The year 2011 ended with loud protests against massive fraud in the State Duma elections, which shocked the whole of Russia. Ufa did not stand aside. A rally was held near the City Council on December 10, where about four people gathered

thousand people. There I realized how great it is to be in the same crowd with those who, like you, are outraged by the arrogance and deceit of those in power.

On February 4, a march of the general Bashkir opposition "For Fair Elections" took place, where all the political forces that were represented in the republic marched in one column. It was interesting to observe how various political parties, Russian nationalists, the Ufa Tatar Public Center (TOC), the BPD "Kuk Bure", Antifa (anti-fascists), "Left Front" and others walked in one procession.

On March 4, 2012, the presidential elections of the Russian Federation were to take place after the very reshuffle when Dmitry Medvedev handed over the presidency to Vladimir Putin. Elections to the Ufa City Council were scheduled for the same day. Ufa oligarch Albert Mukhamedyarov also prepared very hard for these elections. You can call him a Bashkir media tycoon. He created a large media holding in the Republic of Bashkortostan, consisting of the radio stations "Europe Plus Ufa", "Retro FM", "Politseiskaya Volna", "Relax FM", the TV channel "REN TV Ufa", the newspapers "Eurasia", "Reklamnaya Gazeta" and other media. In 2012, he opened the BashMedia news agency.

Albert Mukhamedyarov, with the help of his patron in Moscow, Radiy Khabirov, created the political party "Russian Party of People's Government". From this party, not only he himself was nominated, but also nominated ten more of his trusted representatives as candidates for deputies of the City Council. In order for the elections to be successful, he planned to send an army of observers to all polling stations in Ufa. As it turned out later, it was Radiy Khabirov who controlled this entire political process from Moscow, thus fighting with Rustem Khamitov.

At that time, many associated all the protest events in the republic with the name of Radiy Khabirov; there were even rumors that "Kuk Bure" was also founded under his patronage. Once, working out together in the gym with Azat Salmanov, I asked him: if Radiy Khabirov becomes president of Bashkortostan, will it be good for the republic? He told me that he didn't know whether it would be good or bad for the republic, but for Kuk Bure it would definitely be good.

Having learned that Mukhamedyarov was recruiting observers, I suggested that we all participate as such at the meeting. At the same time, I wanted to train our guys as observers, which could be useful in the future. My proposal was supported.

The observers were trained in the Sipailovo microdistrict, where Mukhamedyarov's Bashmedia office was located. When we first came to the training of observers, we saw that it was conducted by the ex-chairman of the VKB Azamat Galin, former SBM officer Dinar Zainullin and Mukhamedyarov's assistant named Timur.

I have already written about Azamat Galina. If we talk about Dinar Zainullin, then among the Bashkirs they did not like him for his cunning and seeing only his own personal gain in everything. For a long time he was on the Council of the Bashkir regional branch of the A Just Russia party, but he was expelled from there after one loud scandal.

One day he came to the home of his friend from the SBM, its former chairman Rinat Baimov. In Rinat Baimov's house they drank a lot of vodka and had a lot of heart-to-heart conversations. Dinar Zainullin, after the second bottle, began to say a lot of things that, of course, he would not say to anyone sober. As it turned out later, the entire conversation was recorded on a hidden camera that was installed in Baimov's house and leaked to the Internet. For example, he told how he negotiated with the Khamit administration and the leaders of the regional party "United Russia" on holding elections and distributing percentages of votes so that both "United Russia" and "A Just Russia" would benefit. But what was most infuriating from what he saw and heard in the video was that he, himself a resident of the Ishimbay district and more than once openly speaking out in defense of the Toratau shikhan, said that he was ready to sell the shikhan to the owners of BSK Soda for 5 kg of gold. After the uproar, Dinar Zainullin was quickly removed from A Just Russia.

About Rinat Baimov, everyone understood that it is better not to contact or communicate with him, since he records on camera and leaks information. It was after this scandal that Rinat Baimov abruptly switched to opposition to the Bashkir National Movement and no longer hid the fact that he was working for law enforcement agencies and the Khamit government. After this he repeatedly arranged

provocations against Bashkir organizations and Bashkir social activists, which erased all his past merits.

At Mukhamedyarov's election headquarters, I was hired as coordinator of observers for the Sovetsky district of Ufa. I myself recruited observers, prepared the necessary package of documents for them and distributed them to polling stations. In total, there were 24 PECs under my jurisdiction.

On election day we were ready. In total, more than 40 people from Kuk Bure participated as observers. We were well prepared as observers and in the future, when we participated in other election campaigns, this helped us a lot.

Of all the political parties that participated in this election campaign, Albert Mukhamedyarov paid the observers the most - 2.5 thousand rubles per person. Therefore, there were many people who wanted to become observers.

Two days before the elections, all Mukhamedyarov's candidates were unexpectedly withdrawn from the election race for some minor reason. Except for candidate Lyubov Belysheva. But we all still participated in the elections as observers.

On election day, March 4, as the curator of the precinct election commissions of the Sovetsky district, I was given a car with a driver, a lawyer, a camera operator and a journalist. We spent the whole day driving around polling stations, recording violations and filming it all on camera. There were, of course, many violations. By the end of the election day, almost all of our observers were removed, and where they were not removed, they did not want to hand over the vote counting protocols. It was after these elections that I finally realized what kind of country we live in, how votes are stolen from us, how elections are rigged. It was a shock for me, and I became even more convinced that this regime must either go away or be demolished.

By the way, Lyubov Belysheva nevertheless became a deputy in those elections to the City Council.

## **13. К нам приехал татарский «Азатлык»**

Often communicating on the Internet in various chats, I tried to establish connections with various national movements and individual activists not only in our republic, but also beyond its borders. Through correspondence on social networks, I met the chairman of the Azatlyk Tatar Youth Union, Nail Nabiullin in.

The date was approaching June 22, when, during the summer solstice, the Bashkir human rights movement "Kuk Bure" held its annual yiyn.

At the next meeting, I proposed inviting the Tatar "Azatlyk" to our yiyn. The initiative was supported.

Yiyyin was scheduled for Sunday, June 24. I contacted Nail Nabiullin via the Internet and invited him to the event on behalf of the organization. He accepted the invitation.

This was not the first attempt by Kuk Bure to interact with Tatar organizations.

Thus, on December 28, 2008, a memorandum of intent was signed in Moscow to create a Union (association) of public associations "Confederation of Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia." On the part of the BOD (at that time the organization was called the Bashkir Social Movement) "Kuk Bure", the document was signed by co-chairs Azat Salmanov and Ramil Rakhmatov, on the part of the Vatan party - by the chairman of the People's Democratic Party "Vatan" Mukhamyat Minachev. The memorandum was published on the Kuk Bure website in two languages, Bashkir and Russian. But things did not progress beyond the signing of the memorandum.

This time there was hope for closer cooperation.

We began to prepare for yiyn. It was agreed with Nail that upon the arrival of their delegation in Ufa, the day would begin with the laying of flowers to the national hero of the Bashkir people, Salavat Yulaev.

At nine o'clock in the morning, on the square named after Salavat Yulaev, we met the chairman of the Azatlyk STM Nail Nabiulin, his deputy Tatar poet Fanil Gilyazov and the chairman of the Ufa branch of the Azatlyk STM Almaz Khabibullin. All our guys from the organization were wearing blue T-shirts with the inscription "Kuk bure".

While we were waiting for Azat Salmanov, guests from Kazan told us that they had long dreamed of trying Bashkir kumiss. We showed where you can buy it. The guests bought bottled kumiss, which was sold in a Bashkir yurt store located on the square.

From the contorted faces of the Kazan guests who took a sip of kumiss from a bottle, I realized that they had apparently never drunk kumiss before. I thought with a grin about what their faces would look like if they tried real Bashkir koumiss, and not this surrogate that was sold under the guise of koumiss in stores in Ufa. This one was made on a powder basis and was sold as Bashkir kumiss all year round, although the real one could only be tasted in the summer, when milk mares were driven to the meadows. Powdered koumiss tasted sweetish and was significantly different from the real thing. But even this kumiss made the guests grimace, and they never finished it. It was clear that the drink of the nomads - kumis - was not common among the Kazan Tatars, and was not in demand.

By this time, Azat had already arrived, and we all went together to the monument to Salavat Yulaev. Our guys from "Kuk Bure" with the organization's flags stood in a semicircle every two meters, thereby highlighting the location of the action. I remember this picture: when idle passers-by on the square saw guys in blue T-shirts with Kuk Bure flags going up to the monument, everyone immediately hurried to leave this place. Apparently, something menacing and incomprehensible to them came from our guys, and they were afraid of it.

We calmly laid flowers on the Bashkir warrior, read a joint dua<sup>12</sup>, and then took several collective photographs for memory. I remember that the guests read the dua, since no one among us knew how to do it. Islam was not very welcome in our organization, and Azat himself had a negative attitude towards it.

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<sup>12</sup> Дуа — личная мольба мусульманина на родном языке, обращение к Аллаху.



After the laying, we went to the place where the yiyyn was held, on the banks of the Karaideli near Ufa. After leaving the asphalt road, on the way to yiyin we had to drive along a country road through the forest. As we approached the venue, we saw that there were two large piles of earth lying on the road, making passage impossible. It was clear that someone in a truck arrived before us and dumped this earth, blocking our path. Such petty dirty tricks on the part of either the Bashkir authorities or police officers only caused a smile. Using the means at hand, we quickly scattered the ground and drove to the site of the yiyin.

In total, a little more than 50 people gathered at the yiyin. While the women were preparing pilaf, we discussed current issues of all-Russian politics, relations between our two republics and our peoples.

As a result of the yiyyn, we adopted a joint statement, which indicated that from now on national organizations will jointly fight for the rights of our peoples, defend, including through joint actions, the state languages of the republics, and fight for the preservation of federalism and democracy.

The union of two nationalist Turkic organizations - Bashkortostan and Tatarstan - caused a lot of noise in certain circles. Many federal media wrote about this. Our

opponents, especially Russian nationalists, described in the darkest terms all the possible consequences for Russia and its integrity from such a union.

We were pleased with the successful event, which attracted so much attention from the media and the public.

## 14. Trip to Kazan on Khater konə

After an alliance was concluded with the Tatar nationalists from Azatlyk, and they came to us in Ufa for yiyyn, in response they invited us to Kazan for Khater konə<sup>13</sup>.

Khater konə is the day of the battle for Kazan, when it fell from the hands of the troops of Ivan IV. This happened on October 12, 1552. Since 1989, the Tatars have celebrated the Day of Remembrance and Sorrow every year, remembering the fall of the Kazan Khanate. Every year on this day, the Tatar public gathered in the main square of Kazan and marched in a procession with flags and slogans along the streets of their capital. In 2012, they decided to hold the rally on October 13, which was Saturday.

Early in the morning, at 4 o'clock in the morning, we left Ufa in Fail's car. At the meeting it was decided that five people would go: Azat Salmanov, Fail Alsynov, Arslan Salmanov, Zufar Vakhitov and me.

It had been raining lightly since the morning. The distance from Ufa to Kazan is 520 km; on a good road it is a six-hour drive. Everyone was in high spirits.

Already in the Republic of Tatarstan, near Naberezhnye Chelny, we were unexpectedly stopped at a checkpoint by traffic police officers with machine guns. Everyone was taken out of the car, forced to open the trunk, the car was completely inspected, and then taken into the KPM building for identity verification. We thought that they had already waited for us here in advance and now, under the pretext of checking our documents, they stopped us in order to detain us and prevent us from traveling to Kazan. Azat Salmanov had one bad habit at that time: he indulged in nasvay<sup>14</sup>. We often scolded him for this and told him to give it up. When we

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<sup>13</sup> Хәтер көнө — День памяти и скорби.

<sup>14</sup> Насвай — некурительное табачное изделие.

stood in the checkpoint, afraid that they would find a bag of nasvay on him, Azat quietly threw it on the floor. One of the traffic police officers, seeing the bag on the floor, asked whose it was. We unanimously began to deny, saying that it was not ours. I then thought that that's it, now we will be accepted here. Because a bag of green nasvay substance can very easily be mistaken for marijuana or another narcotic substance, and this is already an article. And if they decided to detain us under any pretext, then there would be no need to look for a better reason. It is enough to take the bag for examination, and only then it would show the result the police need. Further, in the results of the examination, the substance in the bag would appear not as nasvay, but as the drug marijuana or any other prohibited substance. But, oddly enough, the traffic police officers didn't tell us anything and after checking us through the database, they let us all go. We scolded Azat the rest of the way to Kazan for his habit of using nasvay, and that by doing so he almost set us all up.

We arrived in Kazan at the start of the rally. We left the car in the parking lot, took the flags of "Kuk Bure" and the First Bashkir Republic (Validov flag) and went to the gathering place.

I remember that we made an impression on the Tatars then. Five guys in black leather jackets, all of athletic build, with "Kuk bure" bandages on their sleeves, it all looked very brutal.

Since the 90s, Bashkir nationalists have not participated in Khater konə in Kazan. In the 90s, members of the Union of Bashkir Youth, led by Artur I delbaev, traveled to Kazan several times, and now 20 years later the Bashkirs came again.

We were greeted joyfully, everyone wanted to meet us and communicate. Representatives of Chuvash and Mari nationalists also came to the rally. The rally began. After several speakers spoke, the organizers of the rally unexpectedly invited us to the microphone. And suddenly it turned out that no one was ready to go, everyone was shy. I went, although I had no speech prepared. Approaching the microphone, I began to speak and almost congratulated the Tatars on the solemn event, but stopped short in time, remembering that this was not a day of celebration, but a day of sorrow. I said that we Bashkirs mourn together with the Tatar people and remember this date. People from the crowd started shouting at me to speak in Bashkir.

At that time, I still spoke my native language very poorly, and in order to somehow get out of this awkward situation, I began chanting "Azatlyk!"<sup>15</sup>. The entire crowd took up the slogan and chanted with me.

When the rally ended, we all lined up in one column. We were asked to stand in the front row with the Kuk Bure flags. In total, according to independent media estimates, more than five thousand people took part in the action that day. The column marched along Bauman Street, chanting chants and slogans "Azatlyk!", "La illahu il Allah!"<sup>16</sup>, "Allahu Akbar!"<sup>17</sup>, "Tatarlar berləshəyek - tatarcha soyłəshəyek!"<sup>18</sup>, "Tatarlar berləshəyek — ber telə soyłəshəyek!"<sup>19</sup>, "Tatarlar berləshəyek — il əchən kərəsheel!"<sup>20</sup>.



In the future, we took these slogans from the Tatars, changed "Tatars" to "Bashkort" and successfully applied them in our actions.

All this time the heavy rain did not stop pouring. I remember that we were completely wet, right down to our underwear. After the end of the promotion

<sup>15</sup> Азатлык – свобода (башк., тат. языки).

<sup>16</sup> Ля иллаху ил Аллах – нет Бога кроме Аллаха (араб. языком).

<sup>17</sup> Аллаху акбар – Аллах велич (араб. языком).

<sup>18</sup> «Татарлар берләшәйек – татарса сөйләшәйек» – «Татары, объединяемся – на татарском будем разговаривать» (тат. языком).

<sup>19</sup> «Татарлар берләшәйек – бер телдә сөйләшәйек» – «Татары, объединяемся – на одном языке будем разговаривать» (тат. языком).

<sup>20</sup> «Татарлар берләшәйек – ил əчəн кəрəшeeк» – «Татары, объединяемся – за страну будем бороться» (тат. языком).

we were invited to the office of private label "Azatlyk" to drink tea. Many representatives of the Tatar national movement gathered there, such as Zinnur Agliullin, Ramai Yuldash, Fauzia Bayramova and many others. Everyone was interested in talking to us, asking about the Kuk Bure organization, and talking about our national movements. At that time, our organization was known to many Tatar leaders. In general, at that time there was not such a strong disagreement between the Bashkir national movement and the Tatar national movement; we communicated calmly, made joint plans, and understood that our common enemy was only in Moscow. Ten years later, Kremlin politician s have successfully quarreled our peoples through various provocations.

After drinking tea and refreshments and agreeing to continue cooperation between the Bashkir and Tatar national movements, we left for Ufa.

Everyone returned impressed by what they saw, by the scale of the event, and by the massive scale of the Tatar national movement.

We decided that we had a lot to learn from the Tatars, and decided to adopt a lot of what we saw for ourselves.

## 15. Disagreement with private label "Azatlyk"

Having cemented the alliance with visits to each other, our organizations held joint actions several times simultaneously in Ufa and Kazan. We carried out actions in defense of national languages, in defense of federal relations, and against the spread of alcohol in our Muslim republics. These were rallies and pickets with slogans and banners on relevant topics. The federal media wrote with concern about the union of Bashkir and Tatar nationalists.

A little later, Chuvash nationalists from the Chavash Bozkurt organization began to join our actions. This began to worry the security officers even more. It was noticeable that they really did not like the unification of Turkic national movements in the very center of Russia.

But unexpectedly, at the end of April 2013, the Azatlyk STM issued a statement about their organization's concern for the fate of the Tatars of Bashkortostan. The statement spoke about the oppression of the Tatar people by the Bashkirs and the beginning of preparations for a referendum on the separation of the northwestern regions of the Republic of Bashkortostan with their subsequent annexation to Tatarstan. The statement appeared on April 19 in the official group of STM "Azatlyk" on social networks and on the page of the organization's chairman, Nail Nabiullin.

*«Татары – единая и неделимая нация! Мы, Союз татарской молодежи «Азатлык», заявляем, что права 2-миллионного татарского народа в РБ для нас первичны. Мы заявляем, что отныне РБ входит в сферу интересов СТМ «Азатлык», мы собираемся активизировать деятельность нашей организации в РБ. Основную деятельность мы видим в постоянной защите прав и законных интересов татар в РБ, распространении сведений о нарушениях прав, а также в культурно-просветительской деятельности татар в РБ. Мы хотим подчеркнуть, что непризнание прав татарского населения, как минимум башкирскими национальными организациями, делает будущее башкирского этноса, как и будущее самой республики как территориальной автономии башкирского народа (особенно вследствие принятия новой концепции национальной политики в РФ), все более призрачным.*

*Мы, Союз татарской молодежи «Азатлык», не намерены мириться более с третьесортным положением татарского населения в РБ. Башкирские национальные организации, одурманенные мифами «татаризации башкир» и о том, что все татары в РБ якобы и есть башкиры, сами себя загнали в тупик. И этим самым поставили себя в тяжелейшее геополитическое положение. Башкирские национальные организации должны признать равные права татар, иначе все это плохо отразится на будущем РБ. При ликвидации РБ татары не будут защищать статус республики, и в этом будут виноваты башкирские шовинистические организации в первую очередь! Без татар защитить статус РБ вы не сможете», - the statement said.*

This statement caused a stormy reaction from both the Bashkir and Tatar publics. BPD "Kuk Bure" immediately prepared a response, condemning a similar statement by Nail Nabiullin, which undermines

established friendship between the Bashkirs and Tatars. The statement was also condemned by their own Tatar national organizations. Thus, the Council of Elders - Shura of Aksakals of the Republic of Tatarstan, the Tatar Public Center of the city of Naberezhnye Chelny, the Tatar Patriotic Front "Altyn Urda" stated that they strongly condemn this statement by Nail Nabiullin. Azerbaijani, Kazakh, Turkmen and Chuvash nationalists also condemned this statement. Their statements were posted in official groups on social networks. We re-posted all these statements on the wall of the Kuk Bure group on the VKontakte social network.

Then we learned from our Tatar friends that, it turns out, in this way Nail Nabiullin was able to avoid conscription into the army. The fact is that a month before this, Nabiullin began to be dragged to the military registration and enlistment office, trying to hand him a summons to the army and thereby neutralize his national activities. Naturally, he did not want to join the army. Then, apparently, they had a conversation with him, where they suggested breaking off relations with the Bashkir "wolves" by issuing such a provocative statement. Since the statement came out, they probably managed to convince him.

Thus, the fears of one person were able to destroy the strengthened relations between the national organizations of the two republics, which stood like a bone in the throat of the FSB officers. It was vitally important for Moscow to prevent the unification of the Bashkir and Tatar national movements.

This was also discussed in Dugin's national doctrine "Fundamentals of Geopolitics":

"...For this reason, Tatar-Bashkir ties cannot in any way contribute to geopolitical stability in this sector of the "inner East" of Russia, and the Center must do everything possible to integrate Bashkaria into the southern Ural regions populated by Russians and tear it away from its orientation towards Kazakhstan. At the same time, it makes sense to emphasize the uniqueness of purely Bashkir culture, its uniqueness, its differences from other Turkic-Islamic forms. Strengthening geopolitical ties between Tatarstan and Bashkaria is extremely dangerous for Russia, since the southern administrative border of Bashkaria lies not far from Northern Kazakhstan, which (in the most unfortunate development of the geopolitical situation) could theoretically become a springboard for Turkic-Islamic separatism."

I don't know whether consciously or unconsciously, but Nail Nabiullin very successfully played into the hands of the Kremlin with this statement.

Since then, relations with the Union of Tatar Youth "Azatlyk" and personally with Nail Nabiullin have never improved among the Bashkirs.

In 2017, when we had already created our organization "Bashkort", we traveled to Kazakhstan at the invitation of Kazakh nationalists. They told us interesting details about how Nail Nabiullin proposed that the Kazakhs act in relation to the Bashkir people. But more about this in the second part of the book, where we will talk about the Bashkir public organization "Bashkort".

## 16. "Kuk bure" is growing in popularity

Actively participating in the social and political life of the republic, "Kuk Bure" became increasingly famous. If earlier the organization was talked about as a kind of closed nationalist structure, where it was almost impossible to get into, now "Kuk Bure" has opened its doors to everyone. Activists of the movement launched a massive campaign to attract young people into their ranks. Business cards with the symbols of the organization were printed, as well as booklets with the goals and objectives of the organization, and they were distributed at various events. In the evenings, movement activists walked around the dormitories of the Bashkir State University, the Bashkir State Pedagogical University, and the Bashkir Agrarian University, where the bulk of Bashkir students lived, to agitate and recruit new members. Collectively we attended various Bashkir concerts, films, and cultural events, where we openly wore "Kuk Bure" armbands, demonstrating the symbolism to others, advertising the organization. All the activists were very ideologically charged, they put their whole soul into the organization, and devoted a lot of their personal time to it.

Somehow at the end of April 2012, at one of the meetings, Fail suggested starting to hold Ritaims, and at the same time using this event as propaganda for our organization. Ritaim is

Bashkir youth festival, fun, where young people gather in one place, sing songs, dance, play folk games and much more.

We didn't think long about the place near Ritaim; we chose Salavat Yulayev Square, which for many years was a gathering place for the Bashkir youth of Ufa, popularly called "Piglet". We determined the date for Ritaim and agreed with the administration of the Kirovsky district of Ufa about the installation of musical equipment. We did massive advertising across all Bashkir groups on social networks. As a good organizer, Fail Alsynov took everything into his own hands. Games and performances were prepared, and money was allocated from the organization's cash desk for gifts. The presenters of the first Ritaims were Samat Karasov and Nailya Iskanderova. The effect exceeded all our expectations. Already at the first Ritaim there were more than a thousand participants, the youth had fun from the heart. The event ended after dark, and we left very inspired by such success. In our official VKontakte group there were a lot of enthusiastic responses and requests to repeat this action in the near future.

We started holding Ritaims all the time. There has never been such a thing that few people came to Ritaim, there was always a full house. Azat said with disappointment that just like singing and dancing, the Bashkirs drop all their business and run to Salavat Yulaev Square, but if they need to gather for a rally in defense of Bashkir interests, then there is no one.

We did not miss the opportunity at Ritaim to agitate Bashkir youth to join in our organization. Fail Alsynov and Ramzil Baynazarov gave fiery speeches, explaining that the fate of our people is only in our hands, and the worst thing that can happen to our people is indifference to their fate.

In 2012, "Kuk Bure" made a strong move: Azat Salmanov organized a meeting in the building of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs and invited Bashkir public figures to it, who at that time were dissatisfied with the current state of affairs in the republic. There were such public figures as professor, doctor of psychological sciences Vadim Safin, chairman of the Bashkir organization "Aktamyr" Irek Agishev, scientist Azat Berdin, scientist, chairman of the Bashkir organization "Tugan Tel"

Timur Mukhtarov and others. At the meeting, it was decided to form a Council of Elders from respected Bashkir public figures. The Council of Elders was headed by Vadim Safin, and Irek Agishev was elected secretary. Subsequently, Ramilya Saitova was the secretary of the Council of Elders.

Why do I write that this was a strong move? Because the Council of Elders was, one might say, the roof of the Kuk Bure. He took upon himself and neutralized many of the blows from the authorities that they constantly inflict ed on Kuk Bura. The name of Vadim Fatkievich Safin alone gave very serious weight to this organization.

## 17. The political situation in the republic is deteriorating - the national movement is strengthening

Life in the republic was changing before our eyes, and not for the better. The Kremlin has been constantly attacking the rights of national republics. In 2010, the President of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov proposed abandoning the official title of President of the Republic. It is clear that he did this not of his own free will, but at the request of the Kremlin. By the end of 2010, the State Duma adopted a law stating that the country should have only one, and not several, presidents. The presidents of the national republics, one after another, began to renounce their status. The information environment of Bashkortostan was constantly bombarded with news that our republic was about to lose its president.

The online publication "ProUfu" and the newspaper "Bonus", created under Murtaza Rakhimov, which were headed by his niece Raufa Rakhimova, developed with might and main under Khamitov. Since Khamitov was openly at odds with Murtaza Rakhimov, naturally, Babai's niece could not stay away. The entire information flow of criticism that could be collected in the republic fell on Khamitov.

And there was something to criticize him for. After the announcement of optimization, schools, kindergartens, FAPs (medical and obstetric centers), and hospitals began to close in the republic. Bashkir

the public noticed that, by a strange coincidence, most of these establishment s were closed in the Bashkir regions. This hit Bashkir schools especially hard . In the last years of his reign, Rakhimov tried to open as many schools as po ssible in the Bashkir regions, but now they were closed. People used to say th at Rakhimov was the “opener”, and Khamitov was the “closer”.

To be fair, it should be noted that in some cases the optimization was ju stified. For example, it is not at all clear why a large three-story school is nee ded in a small village when there are no more than a hundred students there. Servicing such a school cost a considerable amount of money and was extrem ely ineffective. In such cases, optimization was needed. But this is what happ ens here: subordinates, in order to show their zeal, begin to go too far. Same with optimization. Wanting to demonstrate their ability to follow orders, the y began to close everything. Naturally, this caused justified indignation amon g the people.

More and more Bashkirs were dismissed from their positions. Rakhimo v's people were cleared from all posts.

Khamitov, having arrived in the republic, stated that he was Bashkir by nationality. But everyone understood that he was most likely lying. Many re membered that back in the days of the Soviet Union, Rustem Khamitov, bein g a deputy of the Supreme Council of the Bashkir Autonomous Soviet Sociali st Republic from 1990 to 1993, wrote everywhere that he was a Tatar. He wa s also a permanent delegate to the World Congress of Tatars from Bashkortos tan, and personally shook hands with gratitude on the chairman of the Tatar P ublic Center of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Karim Yaushev, when he mad e a speech at the Congress of the Supreme Council of the Bashkortostan Rep ublic about the infringement of the Tatar people in the Bashkir Republic.

Perhaps, over time, Rustem Khamitov really realized that he was a Bas hkir and officially declared this, but somehow this coincided very successfull y with his appointment as president of Bashkortostan.

Under Khamitov, Tatars began to occupy almost all key posts in the rep ublic. The well-known Tatar oppositionist Ramil Bignov, who repeatedly cri ticized the Bashkir government and spoke out against it, became chairman of the Public Chamber of the Republic of Bashkortostan in 2013.

Under increasing pressure from Moscow, many republics have already practically surrendered their sovereign positions. Tatarstan and Bashkortostan still resisted. But as soon as Rakhimov was removed, everything went downhill. Entire articles began to be removed from the Constitution of the Republic of Bashkortostan. This was done under the pretext of bringing the Constitution of Bashkortostan into conformity with the Constitution of the Russian Federation, as the Kremlin constantly demanded. The word "sovereignty" was also removed, which greatly outraged the Bashkir public, since it was they who in the early 90s managed to achieve the sovereignty of the republic and enshrine it in the Constitution of Bashkortostan.

In 2013, a blocking stake in Soda OJSC was taken away from the republic. This scam was perfectly described by the chairman of the regional branch of the PARNAS political party, a lawyer by training, Rafik Dusaliev. In 2013, OJSC Kaustik (Sterlitamak), OJSC Bereznikovsky Soda Plant (Perm Territory) and CJSC Transneftekhim (Moscow) jointly established the open joint-stock company Bashkir Soda Company. Before this, the chemical enterprise in Sterlitamak, OJSC Soda, was liquidated, and 62% of the shares that belonged to the republic were transferred free of charge to OJSC Caustic.

As a result, after the merger, the republic had only 38% of shares in the created BSK Soda and could no longer influence the decisions of the new owners. Prime Minister Azamat Ilimbetov and head of the presidential administration Vladimir Balabanov, who signed the documents on the creation of the Soda BSK on behalf of the republic, after some time went to work there. At the same time, the management of the newly formed BSK Soda began to pursue an aggressive information policy with constant claims to one of the famous shihans of the Republic of Toratau, which, together with the Yuraktau shihan, was a natural monument of republican significance. All this excited the public of the republic. Protests began to take place. The Bashkir human rights movement "Kuk Bure" not only actively participated in them, but also organized such actions itself.

In 2012, the government of the republic signed an agreement and announced the start of construction of a wood processing plant from the Austrian

Kronospan company. The plant was planned to be built in the Ufa region, in the security zone of the Ufa water intake. Having studied the history of Kronospan as one of the dangerous chemical enterprises, the public of Ufa opposed it. The site for the construction of the enterprise was identified just a kilometer from the village of Dorogino, Ufa region, whose residents formed the backbone of the resistance. Mass protests began. Throughout 2013, the protest only grew. In Ufa, which remembered the phenol disaster of 1989, thousands of people marched against the construction of Kronospan. The Antikronospan movement was created, led by lawyer Pavel Ksenofontov. Activists set up a camp at the plant construction site.

At a meeting in our organization, we discussed whether we should join the protests against the construction of Kronospan. As a result, we decided that we would not actively interfere, but would support the protesters. Social activist Ramilya Saitova took an active part from the Bashkir National Movement.

Let me remind you that in the same year of 2013 there was an active political struggle between the oligarch Albert Mukhamedyarov and the President of the Republic Rustem Khamitov, which I wrote about in previous chapters

Pressure began on the national movement itself. At the end of March 2013, the famous Bashkir national figure Fanzil Akhmetshin, who at that time held the post of deputy chairman of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs (WKB) and chairman of the Youth Council at the WKB, was sentenced to 4.5 years in a general regime colony. His criminal case was very high-profile, and the entire Muslim community in Russia closely followed this process.

Fanzil Akhmetshin was not only a public and national figure, but also a well-known Muslim activist in Bashkortostan. At the end of 2011, Fanzil Akhmetshin and several of his associates went to Somalia on a humanitarian mission. At that time, a humanitarian catastrophe was taking place in this Muslim country; a huge number of people were practically dying from hunger. He managed to collect 60 thousand dollars in the republic and with this money organized a large-scale

charity event. Arriving in Somalia, he distributed large amounts of humanitarian aid. Upon returning to Ufa, after Akhmetshin crossed the border, went through customs control without hindrance and entered the waiting room, he was detained by FSB officers. In the open pocket of his backpack, the security officers found one and a half grams of opium, and this is taking into account that Fanzil Akhmetshin, being a devout Muslim who complied with all the rules of Islam, did not drink, did not smoke, and certainly could not take drugs.

However, this did not influence the trial in any way, and Akhmetshin was convicted. Fanzil Akhmetshin personally told me that before leaving for Somalia, he was called to the FSB and was strongly recommended not to go there. Otherwise, he will ruin his life. But Fanzil went, and it turned out to be four and a half years in prison.

I remember how we went to trials in the Ufa District Court and supported Fanzil. The verdict then caused a storm of indignation not only in Bashkortostan, but throughout Russia.

It should be added that at that time another famous Bashkir political figure, one of the leaders of the Bashkir national movement, Airat Dilmukhametov, was already in prison. He and the famous blogger Robert Zagreev were convicted in 2011 of calling for extremist and terrorist activities using the media and justifying extremism. Airat was sentenced to six years in a penal colony, and Zagreev to three and a half. By that time, this was already Dilmukhametov's third political conviction; in 2006 and 2008, he had already been sentenced to a suspended sentence.

In 2012, the Bashkir authorities promoted Bashkir Rumil Aznabayev to the post of chairman of the World Kurultai. Based on the events in the 90s, when the formation of the sovereignty of Bashkortostan was underway, they spoke positively about him. But he quickly disappointed the Bashkir public. Obedient approval and execution of all anti-Bashkir decisions, persecution of undesirable Bashkirs who openly opposed all this turned public indignation against him.

With the deterioration of the situation in the republic, the Bashkir national movement raised its head higher. The indignation of the Bashkir public was heard more and more loudly.

It was noticeable that the national self-awareness of the Bashkirs was a wakening. It was then that such famous Bashkir songs as "Burelər"<sup>21</sup>, "Һau my bashkort"<sup>22</sup> by rapper Insan, "Min bashkort"<sup>23</sup> by Albina Shamsutdinova appeared. These songs and many others called on the Bashkirs to pay attention to the plight of their people, raise their heads and loudly declare their rights, and blamed Moscow for its colonial policy.

Our Kuk Bure movement was especially open with criticism. This attracted the sympathy of the Bashkir people to our side. Powerful critical articles were published on our official website "Kuk Bure". By that time, I was already actively writing articles under the pseudonym "Yashen", and they often received positive reviews.

All these events: protests against the construction of the Kronospan plant, fraud with Soda OJSC, attacks on Toratau, the active political struggle of Albert Mukhamedyarov, pressure on the Bashkir National Movement - all this made 2013 very rich in political events in the republic.

## 18. Force methods "Kuk bure"

The Bashkir human rights movement "Kuk Bure" continued simultaneously with its socio-political activities and other activities, but in the street environment. At that time, "Kuk Bure" among Bashkir youth already had a reputation as an authoritative, strong organization that defended Bashkirs in various situations. Many knew that if suddenly you were unfairly offended, you could find protection in the "Kuk Bure". And many applied.

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<sup>21</sup> Буреләр – волки (башк. язық).

<sup>22</sup> һаумы башкорт – здравствуй, башкир (башк. язық).

<sup>23</sup> Мин башкорт – я башкир (башк. язық).

A guy named Ilnur once came to our meeting. He was a student at one of the universities in Ufa and, like many students, lived in a dorm.

One evening, he and his sister, who was also a student, went to a Bashkir disco in one of the clubs in Ufa. During a disco, she was accosted by a guy named Khabib. That evening he came with his Caucasian friends to a Bashkir disco. All of them were far from sober. This Khabib began to pester Ilnur's sister, trying to invite her to dance, but she refused.

In response to this, Khabib was rude to the girl and insulted her. Naturally, his brother stood up for his sister. They went outside to talk. Ilnur was not a timid person; he also practiced martial arts in the gym. He was confident in his abilities. He invited Khabib to enter into a fair men's fight, but, as often happens, the fight did not take place, and he was simply beaten by the crowd.

Ilnur came to us at one of the Kuk Bure meetings and told us everything.

We had a clear rule in our organization: if during a conflict involving a Bashkir the Bashkir himself was drunk, then he was refused help. "Kuk Bura" was against Bashkirs drinking alcohol, and we tried to convey our position to everyone. And, as a rule, very often the Bashkirs themselves, after getting drunk, started scandals and ran into trouble, and then, having received money for it, went to seek our help.

This time everything was different. Ilnur himself was a very good guy, he didn't drink alcohol, and besides, according to his convictions, he was a Bashkir nationalist. Of course, it was impossible to forgive the insult towards the Bashkir girl.

We made inquiries about this Khabib. It turned out that he was half Dagestan, half Bashkir. But he considered himself a Dagestani and tried to imitate them in everything.

At that time, Caucasian youth had a unique fashion that was unique to them. They wore tracksuits with tight tights, wore bright sneakers, and grew thick hair. When a group of guys with such external signs walked, one could understand that they were Caucasians.

Khabib dressed exactly the same and constantly hung out with Caucasians. He loved to visit Bashkir discos, and many of the organizers of such discos knew Khabib.

But the organizers knew us too. We decided to catch him at such discos, at the same time spreading a rumor among the organizers of Bashkir discos that Kuk Bure had sentenced Khabib, and they were looking for him.

Sometimes the whole Kuk Bure staff went to Bashkir discos to relax among the Bashkirs, to show off our strengths, and perhaps to attract someone to our organization. But among us there were also those who were regulars at Bashkir discos. We gave them the task of tracking Khabib, and as soon as he appears, immediately let us know.

A couple of weeks later they called us and said that Khabib and several Caucasians had come to one of the Bashkir discos at the Tinkoff club. We immediately called our leaders in the "teams" so that they could go to the site.

Arriving at the club, we started looking for Khabib, but by that time, apparently, he had already been warned, and he ran away right in front of us, jumping into the car.

Khabib realized that no one was going to joke with him and they were seriously looking for him. He lay low and didn't show up at discos for several months and didn't answer calls. We, having decided to definitely punish Khabib, continued to wait for him to appear.

And one day he appeared. By that time, several months had already passed since that incident. They called us and said that Khabib had come to the Bashkir disco at the Gazeta club. This club was located on October Avenue. Having arrived there, our fighters from "Kuk Bure" began to look for him. Seeing that they were looking for him, Khabib started to run. They caught up with him on the street and, having explained to him who we were and why we were punishing him, they started beating him right there. When they beat him, Khabib suddenly spoke in the Bashkir language and began shouting that he was one of them, a Bashkir, that he had realized everything and would not do this again.

In such cases, we have always demonstrated our toughness to those who suddenly forgot whose republic it is and who is really the boss in it.

Azat Salmanov himself was especially uncompromising.

Once my friend Murtaza Bilalov told me a story that happened to him. He came to the organization in "Kuk Bura" even before his military service. At that time, he was actively involved in wrestling and combat sambo.

He and a couple of other people once stood with Azat Salmanov on the street during the day. Suddenly Azat received a call and was asked to come and help sort out the conflict. Everyone quickly gathered and arrived in one of the courtyards of the Sipailovo microdistrict, where a crowd of young people stood.

It turned out that one of the guys insulted the Bashkirs in public, saying that all Bashkirs are cowards, and that "he had them all." There were two Bashkirs standing there who were outraged by this, a conflict arose, and the Bashkirs called Azat Salmanov.

When he and Murtaza arrived at the site of the conflict, they saw that they were in a clear minority. The Bashkir, together with Azat Salmanov who arrived and the two who were there initially, turned out to be only six people. On the other side there were clearly more than ten people.

Approaching the crowd, Azat listened carefully to what happened. Although there was a clear superiority in strength on the part of the opponents, Azat confidently and loudly declared to all those present: "There is nothing to understand here, we must punish this freak!", and pointed to the man who insulted the Bashkirs. Murtaza was surprised by Azat's confidence and courage. Not only him, everyone there was surprised.

Then Azat suggested that the guy who insulted the Bashkirs should choose, either the Bashkirs would punish him right here all together, or he could go out to fight one of us. Being stunned by such confident rhetoric from Azat, none of the opponents could object.

The guy who insulted the Bashkirs chose a duel. Azat, pointing to Murtaza, said that he would fight on their side. Murtaza at first doubted the advisability of the fight, trying to avoid it. Then Azat told him: either he will now go face to face with the one who insulted the Bashkirs, or they themselves will punish him here in front of everyone.

There was nothing to be done, Murtaza went out to fight and won quite easily.

It was from such isolated cases that the fame of "Kuk Bura" was created as an organization that does not offend the Bashkirs.

## 19. Tragic incident near Chishmy

At the beginning of the summer of 2013, a tragic incident occurred, of which I was an unwitting witness. With this story I want to show everyone that the truth is stronger than the feeling of belonging to one's people.

I won't name names, I think that many will know what and who we are talking about, it was a high-profile case.

One late evening my cousin called me and asked me to take him and his girlfriend to his village Urta Khəzhət (Srednekhazyatovo) in the Chishminsk y district. This is one of the villages of the Dema Bashkirs, who from ancient times settled along the banks of the Dim (Dema) River.

The time was already late, but I did not refuse my brother and drove out in my VAZ-2111 car. When I took my brother and his girlfriend to the village, it was already twelve o'clock in the morning. I did not stay to drink tea and immediately went back. I was returning along the road through the village of Irek, which led out to the M5 federal highway. By then night had already fallen. It should be noted right away that it was one of those nights when they say "it's dark, you could poke your eyes out." It was just complete darkness. Having passed the village of Irek, I continued along a deserted asphalt road at a speed of approximately 70–80 km per hour. On the right side of the road there was a forest plantation, and on the left there was a long ravine.

In the rearview mirror, I noticed how a car was gradually catching up with me. I continued to move along the road, when suddenly I saw in the light of my headlights that a single motorcycle was moving towards me in its lane at a fairly decent speed. There were two people on the motorcycle, one at the wheel and the other at the back. But that's not what caught my eye, but the fact that the motorcycle was driving with absolutely no light. The headlights were turned off or did not work, and the motorcycle, it turns out, was driving almost blind. I thought to myself that the guys were clearly risky.

A motorcycle roared past me. Just a few seconds later I heard squealing brakes, a loud bang and a bang. IN

I saw a flash of light in the interior mirror of my car. I realized that something terrible had happened and immediately began to stop. Leaving the car at the hazard lights, I got out of the car and walked back down the road. After walking a few tens of meters, I saw a motorcycle tank lying on the road, and a few meters later lay the mangled motorcycle itself.

I realized that an accident had occurred. And then I remembered the car, the headlights of which I saw in the rearview mirror. A picture of the accident began to emerge in my head. The car that was catching up with me began to overtake my car and crashed into a motorcycle that was driving in its own lane. Since the motorcycle was driving without headlights, the driver of the car simply could not react in time, and they crashed into each other.

At this time, other cars passing by began to stop, and their drivers also began to approach the scene of the accident. Further along the road we saw one of the two motorcyclists lying on the asphalt. He was alive. We told him not to move, called an ambulance and the traffic police. Then we went to search further and in the ravine we found a car that had hit a motorcycle. The car was smashed to pieces and could not be repaired, but the driver was alive and was able to get out of the car on his own. This was a guy about 22–25 years old. There was blood all over his face, and he obviously didn't understand what had happened at first. Then the people who found the second motorcyclist in a ravine among the grass screamed. He showed no signs of life.

The ambulance arrived, almost immediately followed by the traffic police crew. Even though it was night, several dozen people gathered on this remote and deserted road. One of the medical service employees examined the guy lying in the ravine and loudly said that he was dead, the second one, who was still alive, was immediately loaded into an ambulance and she, blaring a siren, sped off into the night.

I remember that when the guy in the car realized what had happened and realized that there were people killed in the accident, he panicked. And when his brother arrived at the scene of the accident, I witnessed a conversation between them. The brother, having listened to how everything happened and learned that one of the motorcyclists had died, with sincere alarm in his voice said something like the following words: "Oh, bushy ones! Sinə bit Alla Tərələ kushkan yəseyeu yərərgə, nishləb sin rulga ultyrasyn?! Yanyrak kyna sinen beLEN

accident bully, khazer tagy la!"<sup>24</sup>. It turns out, as I later found out, this guy had recently had an accident and, having restored the car, only drove it for about a month. And here is another accident, but this time with a fatal outcome. The boy began to make excuses that it was not his fault at all, that the young people on a motorcycle were riding without lights, and he simply did not see them. The guy looked very depressed.

He himself was a Tatar pop artist and singer. He traveled around the republic, gave concerts, and was a presenter at weddings, anniversaries, and celebrations. He was returning home from just one such event.

Investigators from the Chishminsky district arrived. One of them, named Sultanov, took my testimony. I remembered his last name because he later handled the accident case and interrogated me several times. I decided to tell how it all happened, without hiding anything, because I already realized that the guy driving the car was facing a prison sentence, since there were people killed in the accident. But I also understood that he was not particularly to blame for this accident.

As it turned out, I was the only witness who saw that the motorcycle was driving without a light a few seconds before the collision. I told the investigator everything, left my information and finally went home. I arrived late at night and could not sleep for a long time, impressed by everything I saw.

After some time, the same investigator Sultanov called me and asked me to come for questioning in a criminal case that had been opened regarding a car accident. He personally picked me up in Ufa and took me by car to Chishmy. I immediately noticed that he was too polite with me, which immediately alarmed me. I already had experience communicating with these characters in uniform, and I understood that they are never just polite to people. All this indicated that he needed something from me. In the investigator's office, I once again told everything that happened that night. Here investigator Sultanov said that the second guy, who was taken away alive from the accident, ended up in

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<sup>24</sup> «Эх, кустым! Синө бит Алла Тәғәлә күшкан йәйеу йөрөгә, нишләб син рульга ултырасын?! Янырак кына синен белән авария булды, хәзер тагы ла!» – «Эх братишк! Тебе же Аллах ясно дал понять, что надо ходить пешком, зачем ты за руль садишься?! Недавно только авария с тобой была, и вот опять!» (тат. язык).

died in hospital a few days later from his injuries. One of the dead guys had a close relative who worked in the prosecutor's office and held a high position there. This relative insisted that the driver of the car should be punished because two people died in the accident. The only obstacle that prevented this was my testimony that the motorcycle was driving without a light. In this case, it turned out that the dead guys were themselves to blame. Investigator Sultano told me that he knows that I am one of the leaders of Kuk Bure, that this organization protects the rights of Bashkirs, and the dead are both Bashkirs, and the driver of the car is a Tatar.

The dead guys were residents of one of the Bashkir villages of the Chishminsky district, and thus the investigator wanted to play on my national feelings. They told me almost in plain text that they wanted me to change my testimony, and all I had to do was say that the headlights on the motorcycle were on at the time of the accident.

I refused, saying that I couldn't do that because it would be wrong. Yes, I feel sorry for the dead, but you can't bring them back from the other world, and here a person who is innocent may suffer.

It was obvious that the investigator was disappointed with my position. After interrogation, he did not take me back to Ufa, although he initially promised. I had to get home myself.

A few days later my phone rang. The father of one of the dead guys called me, they wanted to meet me and talk.

We met on Salavat Yulaev Square, where we sat down on one of the benches and talked. He was a pleasant-looking man of about 60 years old, with a stamp of deep sorrow on his face. He spoke in a very quiet voice.

He asked me to tell me what happened that ill-fated night and asked if the headlight on the motorcycle really wasn't on. It was clear that he really wanted to hear from me something completely different, the opposite of what actually happened. I told how it all happened and explained that I couldn't lie to anyone or myself. The father of the deceased guy did not try to convince me, argue or insist. He said he understood me.

About another month passed, and I was again summoned to the Chishminsky district police department to testify. After repeated testimony, investigator Sultanov said that the head of the Chishminsky District Department of Internal Affairs himself wanted to talk to me. I was taken to the second floor to the chief's office. A tall man, if I'm not mistaken, with the rank of lieutenant colonel, at first began to talk to me very politely. He tried to explain that two young men had died, and the culprit should be punished to the fullest extent of the law for this. He said that the two dead guys were great guys, but the driver of the car that hit them was a scoundrel and a scumbag. He ended this whole speech by inviting me to change my testimony and say that the headlight was on at the time of the accident. I refused and, like others, tried to explain why I was refusing, but then the head of the police department simply exploded with anger. He started shouting at me that I was a former criminal and no one would believe me, that he knew about me as a Bashkir nationalist and if something happened they could easily open a criminal case against me. I replied that if he continues to shout at me in the same spirit, I will tell all this to the republican media. Without listening any further, I left the office. It was clear that the only defense of that artist was my testimony as a living witness. And that if I only change my testimony or refuse it, he will not avoid prison.

This guy's lawyer named Kamil met me. We talked to him, he turned out to be an intelligent, competent young man. He explained that the investigator is trying to falsify the criminal case and make his client guilty. The entire defense rests on my testimony as a living witness to those events. He asked not to change the testimony under any circumstances, otherwise that guy, the driver of the car, would certainly be imprisoned. I promised that I would not retract my original testimony under any circumstances.

Six months later, a trial took place, to which I came with lawyer Kamil and acted as a witness, confirming my initial testimony.

An expert's research was presented at the trial, which confirmed that if the headlight on the motorcycle was not on at the time of the accident, then it was impossible to avoid an accident with a car that drove into the oncoming lane to overtake.

I listened to the speeches of the lawyer, the prosecutor and the witnesses, I understood how the investigation process went, and I was shocked.

It turns out that during the investigation of the case there were several attempts to substitute facts by the prosecution in order to prove the guilt of the car driver. For example, initially an independent examination showed that the light bulb was not working at the time of the accident and was burnt out.

The prosecution provided its expertise, which was done later. This examination showed that the light bulb was working at the time of the accident, which means it was burning. In response, the defendant's lawyer presented evidence that the light bulb on the motorcycle had been replaced. The prosecution countered that it was impossible to replace it, since the impound lot was state-owned and carefully guarded. In response to this, the lawyer showed photographs in one of the groups on the VKontakte social network.

It turns out that friends of the dead guys created a memory group on VKontakte. In this group there were photographs where friends of the victims were photographed in front of the same mangled motorcycle. The photos were taken from the parking lot where the motorcycle was stored. Thus, the lawyer proved that any person could enter this impound lot, which means they could easily change the light bulb on the headlight.

Further, a certain guy acted as witnesses, who said that that night he, too, was riding a motorcycle from Ufa to Chishmy and, when he was filling up with gasoline at a gas station, he saw this particular motorcycle drive past him shortly before the accident, and at that moment the headlight on this motorcycle was on.

The lawyer asked the witness which road he was driving from Ufa to Chishmy, to which he replied that he was driving along the M5 highway (Moscow - Chelyabinsk). Then the lawyer said that he went to the checkpoint located on this highway, past which all cars moving towards Chishmov pass. At this checkpoint, video recording of all passing vehicles is stored throughout the year. It turned out that this witness's motorcycle did not pass along this highway that night. This indicated that the witness was lying.

It was clear that the lawyer was very well prepared for the case and knew his job very well.

After listening to all the evidence, the judge ruled that the young man was innocent.

After this, the relatives of the dead guys filed an appeal, the case was returned for reinvestigation, but in the end, the driver of the car was still acquitted.

So I had to witness a very unpleasant case, where my conscience was higher than unity by blood. It couldn't be any other way, because we will all be responsible for our actions. If not in this life, then definitely in the next.

## 20. First Bashkir march

Feeling that we now have quite a serious force, and also being impressed by the scale of the march of Tatar nationalists at "Khater konθ" in Kazan, we came to the decision to hold our own Bashkir nationalist march on October 11 (Sovereignty Day of the Republic of Bashkortostan). After some discussion, they decided to give it the name "Procession of Bashkir Patriots".

We submitted an application to hold a rally and march to the mayor's office of the city of Ufa. We prepared very seriously. We ordered additional Kuk Bure flags, printed posters and banners, and did a lot of advertising on social networks. I went to the leader of the Left Front, Dmitry Chuvilin, and borrowed a megaphone (loudspeaker) from him. With the same megaphone in Kazan, the leader of the crowd walked ahead of the column.

Separately, by telephone, many famous Bashkir national figures were invited to the rally.

Of course, we would like to march along the main street of Ufa - October Avenue. But the route was agreed upon for us only along Richard Sorge Street, from the square at the Sports Palace to the Southern Bus Station. In total it is approximately 1-2 kilometers of path.

The planned rally was to take place on the square in front of the Sports Palace.

On the appointed day, about 400–500 people gathered for the rally. Many famous Bashkir national figures spoke out and condemned the actions of Moscow and its protege Rustem

Khamitov, for the obvious anti-Bashkir policy pursued in the republic.

After the resolution of the meeting was adopted, it was announced that a procession would now take place, and everyone could take part in it.

Not everyone remained; some of those present at the rally either did not consider it necessary to participate in the procession, or, apparently, got scared and left. But still quite a lot of people remained and, in total, approximately 300–350 people took part in the procession.

We set out from the Sports Palace. A leader walked ahead with a megaphone, who was supposed to shout slogans and chants. We decided that Ramzil Bainazarov would be the main ringleader, but we would change.

In front, at both ends of the column, were two people with flags. I carried one flag of the Kuk Bure organization, the Validov flag was carried by the leader of the Chishmin Bashkirs, Ilnur Kalyamov (Kalya).

Behind the flag bearers was the first column with a large banner “У ڙер емдә - ڙе ڙужша!”<sup>25</sup>. Behind him, the next column carried the banner “Kuk bure - azatlyk өson”<sup>26</sup>.

In a common column, people carried flags, banners, banners and simply posters that they had brought with them. The inscriptions and slogans on them reflected all the pain the Bashkir people experienced while in the empire.

Ramzil Bainazarov chanted chants and pre-prepared phrases loudly into a megaphone, and the entire crowd repeated after him.

Some phrases were their own, such as “U eremdә – we have worse!”, “Kuk bure – azatlyk өson!”, “Sovereignty – to Bashkortostan!”. We borrowed other slogans heard during our trip to Kazan from Tatar nationalists. The Tatars, who have been holding the “Khater konө” campaign for many years in a row, have developed clear and beautiful-sounding slogans. We only replaced the words “tatarlar” with “bashkorttar” and also began to use these phrases: “Bashkorttar berlәshәayek – bashkortsay

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<sup>25</sup> «Үз еремдә – узәм хужа» – «На своей земле – сам хозяин! » (башк. языком).

<sup>26</sup> «Кук бүре – азатлык өсөн» – «Кук бүре – за свободу!» (башк. язык).

һөயләшәйек!"<sup>27</sup>, "Bashkorttar berləshəyek – il өson kөrəshəyek!"<sup>28</sup>, "Bashkorttar berləshəyek – ber telə һөyləshəyek!"<sup>29</sup>.



In the column there were also green banners with inscriptions that remained from the actions of the Bashkir National Movement of the 90s.

There have not been such large and loud actions, when the Bashkir national movement loudly declared its national rights, since the 90s. There were all-Russian or all-republican actions, when the demands of the protesters concerned all residents of the republic, regardless of nationality. Therefore, when Ufa residents saw a huge column of Bashkir nationalists shouting that this was their land, many were dumbfounded.

Replacing Ramzil Bainazarov, either Fail Alsynov or I took the megaphone to shout slogans, so we reached the bus station, where we completed our First Bashkir March.

This was a breakthrough action from our organization that had far-reaching consequences. Everyone has written about us

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<sup>27</sup> «Башкорттар берләшәйек – башкортса һөйләшәйек!» – «Башкиры, объединяемся – на башкирском будем разговаривать!» (башк. язык).

<sup>28</sup> «Башкорттар берләшәйек – ил өсөн көрәшәйек!» – «Башкиры, объединяемся – за страну поборемся!» (башк. язык).

<sup>29</sup> «Башкорттар берләшәйек – бер телдә һөйләшәйек!» – «Башкиры, объединяемся – на одном языке будем разговаривать!» (башк. язык).

republican and many Russian media. Our march was warmly welcomed by friendly national movements from different republics of Russia. The video of the procession circulated on the Internet among all Bashkir groups, which brought a whole stream of new activists to our organization.

There was a separate reaction from the Russian nationalists of Bashkortostan. Outrageous articles covered the Internet. They wrote that the Bashkir "aul people" who had come in large numbers dared to hold their march in the Russian city of Ufa. They wrote that the dominance of the Bashkir language over Russian is already going on, and here the Bashkir Natsiks are shaking up their rights. They started talking about the fact that they now have every moral right to respond with a Russian March, which had never been held in Ufa before.

## 21. "Russian March"

Since 2005, November 4 throughout Russia has been celebrated as National Unity Day. It is dedicated to the events of 1612, when the armed forces of Prince Pozharsky and the elder Minin recaptured Moscow from the Poles. This is the official definition of this holiday.

Of course, it has not become any kind of national holiday for the people of Russia, and it is definitely not celebrated in families as a holiday of national unity. But the Russian National Movement firmly integrated this holiday into its ideology, and since 2005, processions of Russian nationalists began to be held throughout Russia under the name "Russian March".

Particularly large "Russian Marches" took place in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Naturally, the Russian nationalists of the Republic of Bashkortostan have long dreamed of holding a "Russian March" in Ufa, but under the rule of Murtaza Rakhimov no one could even mention it. Babai held the reins of power firmly in his hands.

By 2013, the situation in the republic had changed significantly. The all-powerful Rakhimov was no longer there; the weak manager Khamitov appeared in his place.

Khamitov was a liberal-minded person, as much as one could be a liberal under Putin's regime, of course. At the very least, he was calm about the presence of opposition media in the republic, as well as public organizations and national movements.

It was under Khamitov, because of his anti-Bashkir policy, that the Bashkir national movement strengthened, which, against the backdrop of all these anti-republican and anti-Bashkir actions, was replenished with new activists.

But under him, the Russian national movement also developed in Bashkortostan.

Already in the last years of Rakhimov's reign, a website called "Ufagub" (Ufa province) appeared, where anti-Bashkir articles of a chauvinistic nature were posted daily. Later, the administrators of this site, Nikolai Shvetsov, Sergei Orlov, Ildar Gabdrafikov and Igor Kuchumov, were sentenced to suspended sentences for inciting ethnic hatred.

The Ufa Journal website was also active, moderated by Svetlana Nurgaleeva (published under the nickname Ekaterina Nekrasova) and Elena Zakharova (published under the nickname "Cook"), where they denigrated the Bashkirs and everything connected with them.

The group "Russian Bashkiria" appeared on social networks, the admins of which were Russian nationalists Evgeny Belyaev and Konstantin Kuznetsov, they were also the main ideologists of the Russian national movement in Bashkortostan. The power resource of Russian nationalists was represented by the organization Russian People's Center "Patriot", led by Vitaly Lugovoi. This organization was located in the city of Kumertau.

By the way, Kuk Bure activists and Russian nationalists participated in joint actions several times. I have already mentioned the march in Ufa "For Fair Elections". Then, in one column there were different political and public organizations, and in separate columns there were Bashkir nationalists with their "Kuk Bure" flags and Russian nationalists with "Imperial flags"<sup>30</sup>.

In those days, it was still possible to conduct a more or less adequate dialogue with the Russian nationalists of Bashkortostan. Met

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<sup>30</sup> Имперка – черно-желто-белый флаг Российской империи с 11 июня (23 июня) 1858 года по 29 апреля (11 мая) 1896 года.

communicated and discussed. Only after 2014, when the Bashkorts did not allow the "Russian March" to be held once again in Ufa, did relations completely deteriorate. In addition, after Russia's annexation of Crimea, Russian nationalists from the opposition turned into Putin loyalists.

In 2012, Kuk Bure held a rally in Ufa on the topic of ethnic migration. The reason was the murder of a Ufa resident by a group of Caucasians. Vitaly Lugovoi and his like-minded people from the Patriot organization also joined the rally near the Congress Hall, and even gave a speech at it.

In 2013, the Russian national movement in Bashkortostan was stronger than ever. They were actively supported by the Bashkortostan regional branch of the LDPR (Liberal Democratic Party of Russia), led by its chairman Ivan Sukharev. In the city of Kumertau, they were able to get their man, who actively lobbied for their interests, to become a deputy of the city council.

After the Bashkir March we held, Russian nationalists received a strong incentive to hold a "Russian March" in Ufa.

The procession was approved for them, and they actively promoted their upcoming action.

Naturally, we were categorically against it. At Kuk Bure meetings on Mondays there were heated battles. Fail Alsynov, Ramzil Bainazarov and many other guys called to oppose the "Russian March" in the most radical form. I was also against the "Russian March" taking place. Azat Salmanov believed that it should not be prohibited, let them carry it out. Since in our organization the last word always remained with Azat Salmanov, it was decided to limit ourselves to only an official statement on behalf of "Kuk Bure", expressing our protest to the authorities who allowed the "Russian March" to be held in Ufa.

We were very unhappy with this decision. We can probably say that it was then that the first cracks in the future split in the organization appeared.

On November 4, the day of the “Russian March,” Fail and I decided to go to the venue, Chernikovka (Ufa microdistrict), to see everything with our own eyes. Radik Enikeev, Ilgiz Ueldanov and a guy new to the organization named Ural went with us. There we met Timur Mukhtarov on the spot.

First we went to the gathering place of the “Russian March” participants, to the square in front of the UMPO Palace. We were a little late, as Radik Enikeev reported that a “tail” was following him in a silver car. “Eshniks” love to drive silver “Priors”<sup>31</sup>.

While Radik broke away from the pursuit and reached the square, the column of Russian nationalists was already lined up and ready to start moving.

We all had Kuk Bure headbands. We defiantly put on bandages to show that we are not afraid of any threats or provocations against us from Russian nationalists. Moreover, we would even like such a provocation to be staged by the Russian nationalists themselves, and thus, perhaps, the holding of this action would be disrupted.

Seeing us, the marchers standing in the column became excited, began whispering and pointing at us.

Everyone knew that there was a fierce confrontation going on in the republic between Bashkir and Russian nationalists.

The journalists present there clicked their cameras. Some guys from the column started to shout something in our direction, but they were quickly calmed down by their older and more experienced comrades. They understood perfectly well that the outbreak of a conflict threatened to disrupt the entire action.

We also managed to take a couple of pictures, and then the column moved off to the sound of drums.

Those walking ahead were holding a large poster with the inscription “Russian March”; at the bottom of the same poster there was the inscription “Ufa Region”. Thus, the organizers wanted to show that they do not recognize the Republic of Bashkortostan and do not hide their views regarding the liquidation of the republic.

A huge poster with the inscription “Murderers of the Russian language, stop!” was placed on the side of the column.

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<sup>31</sup> Эшники – сотрудники Центра по борьбе с экстремизмом.

With this poster they said that they were not satisfied with the policy of bilingualism in Bashkortostan, and they were against the compulsory state Bashkir language in educational institutions, which, in their opinion, destroys the Russian language. The column with a megaphone was led by Konstantin Kuznetsov.

There was a huge number of police around the marchers. There, on the square, there were two Kamaz trucks with riot police. A helicopter was flying in the sky, recording everything from above.

The total number of participants in the "Russian March" was about 500 people. There were clearly more of them than us at our Bashkir march, which we held a month ago, and this hurt us.



When the column started moving, we did not accompany it, but immediately went to the Palace of Culture of Chemists, where the procession was supposed to approach and where the announced meeting was supposed to take place.

We were prepared for the fact that because of any provocation we could be taken to the police, so we immediately dressed more simply.

Finishing their journey from Mashinostroiteley Square, a column of Russian nationalists approached the Khimikov Palace of Culture, chanting the slogan "One for all and all for one!", "Vivat Russia!", "Forward Russia - you and I!" We've already been there.

When the column turned into the square, we watched silently, and on our faces you could read everything that was in our souls. We were angry at Khamitov for approving the holding of the "Russian March", we were angry at Azat Salmanov for not escalating and preventing this march, we were angry at ourselves that we could not do anything, since we were bound by the promise that we made in the organization - not to do anything against.

I remember how, some time later, Evgeniy Belyaev told me that he watched me in those minutes and saw fierce hatred in my eyes.

Then, looking at the jubilant Russian nationalists who openly dreamed of turning our republic into the Ufa province, I promised myself that this would never happen again, that the "Russian March" would not take place in Ufa again.

After the procession ended, the rally began. We approached the participants and tried to interview some of them, but the organizers of the rally complained about us to the police officers standing there and asked them to remove us.

The police took us outside the ongoing rally, but did not detain us.

We went home.

Many will probably say that you yourself held your own march of Bashkir nationalists literally a month ago, but why can't the Russians?

There are several reasons. Firstly, this is not the original Russian land, and the Russians themselves here in Bashkortostan are descendants of the colonialists, and organizing a march on Bashkir soil is tantamount to spitting in the face of the Bashkirs. In primordially Russian territories, Russian nationalists have the right to hold any marches, and no one has the right to prohibit them from doing anything.

The Bashkirs are on their own land, they are the masters here, which means they can hold their processions.

Show me at least one former Soviet republic where Russian nationalists would hold their march? You won't find them like that.

Also, you will not find them in the Caucasian republics, where Russians are in the minority. This means that the Russians, taking advantage of the fact that, as a result of colonial policy, settled the lands of indigenous peoples,

Over time, they began to prevail in numbers and began to brazenly declare their superiority to the indigenous peoples.

Secondly, what is a march? This is a solemn military procession, a march of the victors. Did the Russians conquer the Bashkirs in order to march in front of them in solemn marches?

Thirdly, we agree that the Russian people have their own ethnic problems that need to be discussed, but for this there are such forms as pickets and rallies. We don't mind if Russian nationalists hold a rally and raise all their questions there.

But we are definitely against holding the "Russian March" in the center of the capital of Bashkortostan!

## 22. Criminal case against Azat Salmanov

On the evening of December 8, 2012, the father of Azat Salmanov, the famous composer of the Republic of Bashkortostan Salavat Salmanov, was beaten by three gopniks. The drunks just stopped by late at night, and when Salavat Salmanov sent them out like a man, they started beating him. They broke his nose and hit an elderly man on the head many times.

As they say, karma did not take long to arrive. Already at night, all three thugs ended up in the hospital. Two got off more or less easily, but the third, the most impudent one, was not so lucky. Karma got to his head so much that he ended up in the hospital with a concussion and a face that resembled a balloon.

Naturally, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and especially the employees of Center "E", who had a long-standing "love" for Azat Salmanov, immediately became interested in this case. They simply could not miss the chance given to them. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has long been closely monitoring the activities of Azat Salmanov and was looking for an opportunity to rein him in.

The Eshniks interrogated the guy with the shapeless face right in the ward, and until they got what they wanted from him, they didn't leave him alone. He pointed out that the people who beat him looked like Azat and Arslan Salmanov.

On the night of December 10-11, they tried to arrest Azat right on the street, but Azat did not allow this to happen and left in a car. The chase was all over the city, on one of the streets the police blocked Salmanov's car, and he was eventually arrested. By this time, Ramilya Saitova, who was well versed in all the legal intricacies, arrived there. She accompanied Azat to the investigative department and was with him until the end.

A criminal case was opened, which dragged on for almost a year. Since there was no serious evidence that it was the Salmanov brothers who beat the victim, the case gradually moved toward closure. The victim was unable to identify the Salmanov brothers at the confrontation. During this time, they were able to agree with the victims that they would be paid for treatment and compensated for damage to their physical health.

But suddenly, at the end of October 2013, the victim's memory "cleared up" under pressure from police officers, and he identified Arslan Salmanov as the one who beat him almost a year ago.

The investigators began dragging Azat and Arslan around again.

We in the organization decided to organize a rally in support of Azat and Arslan to show that this criminal case is politically motivated. Thus, we wanted to draw public attention to the fact that Bashkir national figures are being deliberately persecuted by security forces in order to prevent the development of the Bashkir national movement.

People I knew who were well versed in such matters advised that Arslan "disappear" for a while and be out of reach.

And Arslan disappeared for a long time. The Eshniks looked everywhere, but could

Until the criminal case was closed, there was neither a rumor nor a breath about Arslan.

When the case was eventually closed, Arslan calmly appeared and continued to live in Ufa.

## 23. Attack on Fail Alsynov and new people in “Kuk Bura”

At the end of November 2013, when the first deputy chairman of Kuk Bure, Fail Alsynov, was returning home, two drunk men accosted him and began beating him because he was a Bashkir and had come to Ufa from the region. When they beat us, they simply shouted: “The Bashkiryats from the villages have come here in large numbers!” After the beating, Fail was taken to the hospital and had ear surgery.

This attack caused a huge public outcry in the Bashkir community. A corresponding statement was made on the official website of Kuk Bure. We held a single picket near the house where the people who beat Fail Alsynov lived.

Many then believed that the attack on Fail occurred because of our national and social activities.

It was a kind of revenge from Russian nationalists V.

Since, for unknown reasons, the opening of a criminal case into the beating was refused, at a meeting of the organization it was decided to organize round-the-clock security near Fail's house.

Fail then lived with his family near the Bashkir Philharmonic on Gogol Street. Many volunteers volunteered to guard Fail, including many young guys who had never participated in Kuk Bure events. Of course, we tried to attract them to our organization. This is how Arthur Musin, Gizar Musin and many other guys appeared in Kuk Bura.

The beating of Fail further aggravated Bashkir-Russian relations and, having successfully used this occasion, we were able to significantly strengthen our organization.

If earlier in some positions the Bashkir and Russian nationalists still found common ground for constructive dialogue, then after the “Russian March” held in Ufa and the subsequent beating of Fail, this was out of the question. The hostility only intensified.

Many will ask why such a formidable organization of Bashkir nationalists, which is constantly involved in various showdowns, did not punish Fail's offenders. There are several reasons for this.

The fact is that this incident caused a great public outcry, and if a few days later they found at least one of the beating men with a broken head, then, naturally, all suspicions would fall on "Kuk Bure". In addition, many assumed that the attack on Fail was carried out with the help of security officers, and they, of course, were waiting for an answer from us.

I offered to go into the house of the attackers and talk to them, filming everything on a video camera, but my offer was rejected, and Ramilya Saitova even accused me of provocateurs. We decided to limit ourselves to a single protest near the house where the attackers lived. Although I thought that we needed to act tougher.

The next year, when Russian nationalists tried to once again hold a "Russian March", and we prevented this, the enmity between the Bashkirs and Russians intensified even more. In addition, a major event occurred on the Russian-world agenda that radically changed Russia's policy. Putin annexed Crimea, and the Russian nationalists of Bashkortostan, who just yesterday went out to protest against Putin's policies, immediately turned into "Crimean nashists" and now began to actively support everything that the Russian government did.

There were Russian nationalists, but they became ordinary emperors



## 24. "Kuk bure revives the Youth Council under the Executive Committee of the VKB

At one of the meetings, Fail Alsynov proposed reviving the Youth Council (YC) under the Executive Committee of the All-Russian Commercial Bank, which ceased to function after its chairman Fanzil Akhmetshin was imprisoned.

The proposal was supported.

We set a date for the meeting, called all members of the Youth Council and invited them.

On the appointed day, the previously elected members of the MS came, the rest declared that they would no longer participate in public activities. This Youth Council was formed at the Youth Kurultai, which was held as part of the III World Kurultai of Bashkirs in 2010. It was this Youth Kurultai that left the entire composition of "Kuk Bure" with a scandal after its chairman Azat Salmanov was expelled from the presidium.

Let me remind you that the Youth Council was created during the time of Rakhimov, albeit in his last days. Therefore, it consisted mainly of the so-called "golden youth" of the Bashkir people. These are the children of the Bashkir intelligentsia, officials and members of the Bashkir Youth Union.

After Fanzil Akhmetshin was imprisoned by planting drugs on him, members of the Youth Council did absolutely nothing to protect him: neither a statement, nor a protest. They just swallowed it silently.

One should not have expected anything else from the children of officials. Later, having embraced culture, they gathered their circle, ignoring any anti-Bashkir events that shook the republic under Khamitov. They not only did not get involved in politics, but even criticized those who were involved in it.

This particular group of Youth Council members did not come to the meeting. Afraid of getting involved in politics, they announced that they would no longer participate in the work of the Youth Council.

At the new meeting, it was decided to resume the activities of the MS. Its old members, who abandoned politics, were expelled and new ones were elected. In the old composition of the Youth Council there were two members of "Kuk"

storm" - Fail Alsynov and Radik Enikeev. The procedure for expelling old members and electing new ones was carried out through voting.

Considering that it would be wrong to elect a new chairman while the current one was in prison, it was decided to elect an interim leader.

Timur Mukhtarov was elected as such chairman by a majority of votes. As a result of the meeting, we were able to appoint many members of Kuk Bure to the new composition, including me.

Considering that Timur Mukhtarov was a friend of Azat Salmanov, and in the past he himself was one of the founders and chairmen of Kuk Bure, we can say that control over the Youth Council passed to our organization.

## 25. We are offered an alliance

Our organization had such a body - the Kuk Bure Council, which included the most authoritative members of the organization: Azat Salmanov (chairman), Fail Alsynov (first deputy chairman), myself as deputy chairman, Ramzil Baynazarov (deputy chairman), Arslan Salmanov (responsible for the organization's cash desk) and Zufar Vakhitov.

One autumn day in 2013, Azat Salmanov gathered us and informed us that one of the people who had been authoritative in the Bashkir national movement had contacted him with a proposal to our organization, and that this person was offering to meet to discuss everything. Subsequently, we gave him the nickname "Nut", since during meetings in cafes he always took a plate of mixed nuts and raisins with tea.

We came to our first meeting with Orekho as a whole Council. Orek said that a well-known politician and businessman in the republic wants to cooperate with our organization. This businessman admires the scale and authority of our organization and would like to have such strength in his allies. He was not going to impose his will on us, much less put pressure on us, he suggested joining forces

to fight the World Kurultai of Bashkirs, or rather to change the chairman there.

The authority of this politician and businessman in public circles, and especially in Bashkir ones, was far from clear, and we took time to think.

It is necessary to briefly characterize what the once powerful and authoritative Bashkir organization World Kurultai of Bashkirs (WKB) had become by that time.

Created in 1995, this organization replaced the once most important Bashkir national organization, the Bashkir People's Center "Ural". This was done by Murtaza Rakhimov specifically in order to subjugate all Bashkir national forces. The World Kurultai of Bashkirs was financed from the budget of the republic, which means it was dependent on the White House. The Bashkir intelligentsia, as well as the leaders of the Bashkir national movement, who gradually moved to the VKB, at first could still openly criticize the authorities, hold heated discussions at meetings, defend their point of view, but over time, the most irreconcilable Bashkirs who had their own independent opinion were removed from there and replaced by more flexible ones. Gradually, the VKB was so emasculated that opportunists remained obedient to the Bashkir authorities in everything.

But still, when Murtaza Rakhimov was removed from the post of president of Bashkortostan, and Rustem Khamitov, who was put in his place, began to pursue an open anti-Bashkir policy, many representatives of the Bashkir national movement were dissatisfied with the events taking place. Dissatisfied voices were also heard in the World Kurultai of Bashkirs. The Bashkirs initially pinned their hopes on the newly elected chairman of the VKB, Rumil Aznabayev, in 2012, since he was one of the BND veterans, but they quickly became disillusioned with him. He was an obedient person who was completely at home with Khamitov.

As I described above, the events taking place in the republic could be called the destruction of Bashkortostan. The republican property remaining from the time of Rakhimov was openly sold to Moscow businessmen, there was pressure on the Bashkir language and culture, many of Rakhimov's personnel were fired,

repressions against Bashkir national figures. Many Bashkirs turned their attention to the World Kurultai of the Bashkirs in the hope that they would express their weighty word among the people and stand up for the Bashkirs. But the VKB was silent, and not just silent, but on the contrary, it got rid of those who criticized Khamitov and Ruml Aznabayev himself the loudest.

As a result, a clear opinion has matured among the Bashkir public that today's World Kurultai of Bashkirs does not reflect the aspirations of the Bashkir people, and its chairman Ruml Aznabaev is a puppet of Rustem Khamitov.

"Kuk Bure" took the most radical position in relation to the World Kurultai of Bashkirs and constantly criticized all its actions and inactions.

At that time, our man, the first deputy chairman of Kuk Bure, Fail Alsynov, worked as a specialist in the VKB apparatus. Therefore, as a rule, we were aware of everything that happened in the Kurultai.

"Kuk Bure" believed that it was necessary to change Aznabayev and appoint a more worthy person as chairman of the VKB. And then suddenly they make a proposal to us to create an alliance with the goal of making a coup in the World Kurultai of the Bashkirs and removing the chairman Ruml Aznabayev.

For several days we had heated debates in the Kuk Bure Council about whether we should cooperate with this person or not. As a result, we came to the decision that since our goals coincide, and besides, we are not doing anything bad towards the Bashkir people, but, on the contrary, we are acting for their benefit, then we can accept such a proposal and conclude an alliance.

This is what we informed Orek about at the next meeting in a cafe over tea and nuts.

## 26. The enemy of my enemy is my friend

As a result, our union took place. We began to bring our goals to life. We go active on the Internet, released a strong video, where we listed all the negative moments that happened in

republic in relation to the Bashkir people. The emphasis was placed on the fact that the World Kurultai of Bashkirs under the leadership of Rumil Aznabayev is silent and does nothing. At the end of the video, Bashkir youth call on the chairman of the VKB, Rumil Aznabaev, to resign. But, criticizing the current chairman of the VKB, we needed to propose another, more worthy candidate. Together with our new ally, we chose the director of Sibay BSU, Zinnur Gubaidulovich Yarmukhametov.

Since our relationship with the World Kurultai of Bashkirs had completely deteriorated, we needed new premises for meetings. At the Neftyanik cultural center they openly said that we could no longer gather there.

Our new ally offered to rent office space at his expense. We agreed. After a short search, we chose an excellent location at Lenina, 2. The building was located in the business and historical center of the city, not far from the White House and almost opposite the State Assembly - Kurultai.

The room was located on the first floor and consisted of four rooms. Furniture was brought in and tables were placed in a row in the largest room for meetings. Behind the chairman's seat, a floor banner with the organization's logo was placed on the entire wall, which immediately gave the office solidarity. The news that Kuk Bure had its own luxurious office in the city center spread quickly.

The authority of the organization grew even more; respected Bashkir figures Rashit Shakur, Valiakhmet Badretdinov, Marat Kulsharipov and others began to come to us.

Now we gathered in the office more than once a week, as before. Every day now young people gathered there, talked, and thought about future plans.

At that time I already had a family, my daughter Yasmina was born. We moved to the village of Shamonino, 20 km from Ufa, and from there I got to the city by car.

At one of the meetings, they decided to hold a picket against the leadership of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs. Our ally promised that the picket would be approved by the mayor's office.

On February 21, 2013, members of the Executive Committee of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs initiated an emergency meeting in order to

put on the agenda the issue of no confidence in the Chairman of the VKB Rumil Aznabaev.

We decided to hold a protest on the eve of the meeting of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs.

We began to prepare thoroughly. We made new posters criticizing the VKB and Aznabayev personally. We decided to show the geography of Bashkirs' dissatisfaction with the World Kurultai, for example, with the following phrases: "The Gafuriy Bashkirs say: Aznabaev, leave the Kurultai!", "Yylaiyr bashorttary Aznabaevka yshanmayar!"<sup>32</sup>, "The Sibay Bashkirs demand that Yarmukhametov be chosen instead of Aznabaev!" We prepared a large banner with the inscription "The World Kurultai of Bashkirs has become a "public gathering of officials!"

We actively launched a campaign on social networks, sending out invitations to everyone to the upcoming event. The thirst for activity seethed with us. The new activists tried especially hard. We wanted to gather at least 500 people, but for some reason Azat Salmanov insisted that too many people were not needed, and even yelled at one of our activists when he proposed to bring more than a hundred people from his district.

Recently, this strange behavior of Azat has puzzled us more and more.

Our ally promised that television would come to the protest.

In the morning, activists began to gather at the office, many guys came from the districts, and we all headed to the picket site together.

On February 20, 2013, a protest rally took place on the square in front of the Sports Palace in Ufa demanding the resignation of the Chairman of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs Rumil Aznabayev, which attracted about two hundred people.

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<sup>32</sup> «Йылайыр башкорттары Азнабаевка ышанмайзар» – «Башкиры Зилаира не верят Азнабаеву» (баш. язық).



As promised, television arrived, and a story about the action against the World Kurultai of the Bashkirs appeared that same evening on the state television of the republic BST (Bashkir Satellite Television).

All this was part of our plan to remove Rumil Aznabayev from his post. The action made a big splash in Bashkir society, but it was just the beginning. The next day we were going to arrange another “surprise” at the VKB meeting.

## 27. We are trying to open branches of Kuk бә"

In recent days, we have been telling Azat Salmanov more and more often that it is necessary to open branches in the regions.

Fail Alsynov and Ramzil Baynazarov proposed opening a branch in the Zilair district, where they had many acquaintances from active youth. I proposed to open in the Ishimbay district, where I had friends who wanted to participate in our activities.

We believed that we needed to expand our organization to include Bashkir youth from the regions of the republic, and not focus only on urban youth. We talked about this to Azat. There are many people interested in the areas

join our movement, but they could not constantly travel to Ufa.

At the beginning of 2014, our organization became very popular, and there were many people who wanted to join it. In addition to Ufa, we had another branch in the city of Sibay. It was headed by Ainur Ishkildin. I can't say that this branch was very active, but it held some promotions and events from time to time. In addition to Sibay and Ufa, the Bashkirs lived throughout Bashkortostan, and they had a great desire to actively participate in the national movement. If we do not realize their desires in our organization, then they will find how to use their potential in other organizations.

By that time, there was already some competition among the Bashkir youth movements. There were such public organizations in the republic as the Union of Bashkir Youth with its chairman Gayaz Bikbulatov, "BashLider", which was headed by two people from "Kuk Bure", Azamat Yuldybaev and Salavat Aisuakov. Outside the republic, such national organizations as the "Union of Bashkir Youth" of the Chelyabinsk Region, the "Salavat" organization in Magnitogorsk, the "Association of Moscow Students" in Moscow, and "Amnata" in the city of St. Petersburg were actively working.

In Ufa there was a group of Bashkir youth, consisting mainly of former members of the Youth Council under the Executive Committee of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs. They believed that it was necessary to be friends with the authorities of the republic and focus only on the cultural component. These were mainly the children of officials, the Bashkir intelligentsia, former leaders of various youth projects under former President Murtaza Rakhimov.

Only Kuk Bure was in strict opposition to the current government of the republic. We needed to grow and expand, since the Bashkirs' dissatisfaction with what was happening in Bashkortostan at that time only grew. It was people dissatisfied with the anti-Bashkir policy pursued in the republic who made up our electorate.

Azat told us that we don't need to go anywhere, we don't need to encourage anyone to join us. He believed that people themselves should show such a desire. "Everyone who wants to join our organization and

open a branch, we must get together in our area, form some kind of structure and, with this ready-made structure, enter our organization," Azat believed.

We objected that for this we need to push the guys, help, explain how this is done. We need to go to the regions and meet with the most active ones. Azat was adamant.

Just for our picket against Aznabayev, guys from the Ishimbay district came who wanted to open a branch of "Kuk Bure" in their area. I was going to bring them together with Azat so that he could get to know them himself. But we couldn't talk. Azat immediately after the picket left to go about his business, and the guys were forced to return to their area with nothing.

## 28. "Katlykyan"<sup>33</sup>

On February 20, a meeting of the VKB Executive Committee began in the building of the Neftyanik Palace of Culture. The authorities of the republic took unprecedented measures to protect themselves from people who were "not their own", in their opinion. Employees of a private security company were hired to guard and allow entry into the meeting room according to lists. Members of Kuk Bure were unable to attend the meeting itself, but a large group was able to go into the foyer of the building.

At the meeting of what appeared to be a public organization, officials from the White House were present and monitored the progress of the process. Several silent people with forgettable faces filmed everything. It was clear that at these were people from the special services who were watching what was happening.

It became known that the day before the start of the meeting, people from the Government apparatus came to the members of the Executive Committee of the VKB and had conversations about the inadmissibility of voting against Aznabayev. The events of three years ago were repeated, when in the same way they tried to remove Ilgiz Sultanmuratov from the post of chairman of the VKB, and in the same way, officials from the White House and security officers from the FSB went around, processing and intimidating public activists, saying who they should vote for and who they shouldn't.

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<sup>33</sup> Катлыкын – предатель (башк. язык).

After such treatment, the main candidates for the chairmanship of the VKB, Niyaz Mazhitov and Zinnur Yarmukhametov, did not come to the meeting, and many of those present were scared.

Realizing that without Mazhitov and Yarmukhametov, who showed cowardice, the battle was doomed to failure, the opposition to Aznabaev still took the fight.

The activities of the VKB and Rumil Aznabayev himself were criticized by such well-known Bashkir national figures as historian Marat Kulsharipov, writer and poet Rashit Shakur, public figure Valiakhmet Badretdinov, ex-Minister of Education of the Republic of Bashkortostan Zinnat Allayarov, historian Salavat Khamidullin, entrepreneur Irshat Assylguzhin, ex-chairman of the SBM Florid Bagaev.

Florid Bagaev also read out the decision of the updated Youth Council under the Executive Committee of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs, which at its meeting decided to express a vote of no confidence in the Chairman of the WKB Rumil Aznabaev.

As a result, the issue of no confidence in the chairman of the VKB Aznabaev was put on the agenda of the meeting.

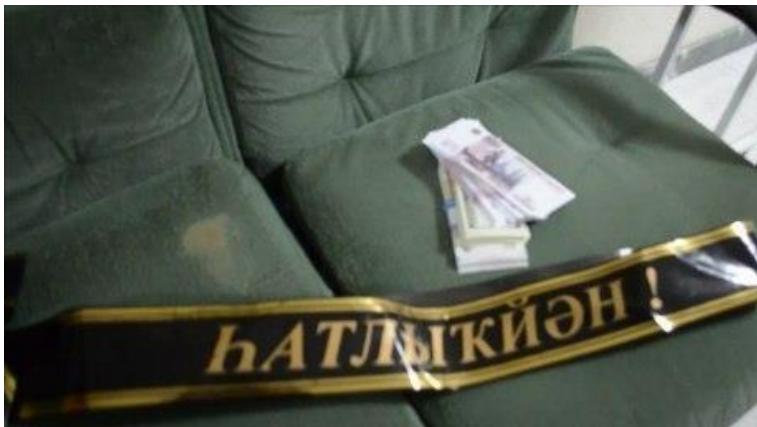
Trying to use the last chance, journalist Ramil Rakhmatov proposed holding a secret vote, hoping that in this way, in the absence of supervision, members of the VKB Executive Committee would vote according to their conscience, and not according to orders from above. But those present, by 22 votes to 20, supported an open vote, which deprived further struggle of any meaning. Some members of the WKB Executive Committee demonstratively left the meeting.

The further course of the voting was predetermined. The remaining members of the WKB Executive Committee almost unanimously voted "For" for Rumil Aznabaev to remain chairman of the World Kurultai of Bashkirs. The only one who voted against was the scientist Rim Valiakhmetov. Several people abstained.

Encouraged by the success, Rumil Aznabaev immediately asked those present to vote for the exclusion of Deputy Chairman of the VKB Valiakhmet Badretdinov and senior specialist Fail Alsynov from the apparatus of the Executive Committee of the VKB. This decision was made by a majority vote.

Thus, the Kuk Bure organization lost its person in the apparatus of the Executive Committee of the VKB.

After the end of the meeting, Rumil Aznabayev had a surprise that we had prepared for him. According to the plan, immediately after the end of the meeting, one person was to hand over three packs of fake money (two packs of rubles and one pack of dollars), and the other was to put on a ribbon with the inscription "Katlykyan".



The money was ordered to be handed over to the deputy chairman of Kuk Bure, Ramzil Bainazarov, and Arthur Musin was to wear the ribbon.

Seeing the preparations for such an action, they managed to warn Rumil Aznabaev, and he quickly walked past the assembled members of the Kuk Bure, not allowing him to put the ribbon on himself. But still the guys tried to do it, going ahead. There was a stampede with shouts, noise and uproar, and it almost came to a fight.

"Kuk Bure" outlined all this on the same day in a detailed article on a page in its official group.

The scandal turned out to be huge, affecting the entire republic.

## 29. Three deputies leave Kuk Bure

After the dismissal of Rumil Aznabayev failed, some kind of unhealthy atmosphere appeared in the organization. Became often

argue with each other and quarrel over trifles. There was nervousness at the meetings. First Deputy Chairman Fail Alsynov has recently often not found a common language with Azat Salmanov, believing that his method of management in the organization has become too authoritarian. In this, Fail was supported by Ramzil Bainazarov.

Once, after the next meeting, Azat Salmanov asked members of the Kuk Bure Council to stay, as well as one of our active members of the organization, Radik Enikeev. Then Azat stated in the presence of Radik that he suspected him of working for the security officers and wanted to raise the question of expelling him from the organization. Azat's suspicions were based on the fact that one day Radik, while working as a watchman in a kindergarten, discovered the body of a man on its territory. Most likely, it was a homeless person who died from a banal hangover. Radik, as is expected in such cases, called the police and testified about the circumstances under which he discovered the body. And here, for some reason, Azat Salmanov decided that Radik Enikeev had been recruited at that moment. It just seemed so to him, Azat.

Radik, of course, denied all this.

When at the Council meeting I said that you can't accuse a person like that without having any compelling reasons, Azat got angry with me. He generally did not like it when people contradicted him on issues of principle.

In recent months, he has repeatedly publicly hinted that it would be better if I left the organization altogether.

Azat insisted that the issue of expelling Radik from Kuk Bure be put to a vote. I voted against expulsion, Fail Alsynov abstained. Everyone else voted Yes. Radik left the badge and left the organization.

After some time, the secretary of the Aksakal Council, Ramilya Saitova, came to one of the meetings, who, in my opinion, had influence on Azat Salmanov. When the meeting came to an end, she took the floor and stated that she considered me a provocateur and a person working for the security officers. When I asked why she thought so, she replied that I was not there during the arrest of Azat Salmanov, which arouses suspicion. She also stated that once, when Fail was attacked, I offered to go into the house of Fail's offenders and talk to them, which, in her opinion, amounted to a provocation.

Well, the last thing she showed me was that I stood up for Radik Enikeev. Many at the meeting took my side, considering these assumptions frivolous, and the issue was closed.

I understood that Ramila Saitova's statement was not spontaneous; most likely, Azat Salmanov asked her to say so.

In general, Ramilya Saitova is a very emotional and shocking woman. In my opinion, she too often was guided by emotions in her actions. Subsequently, she accused me several more times of working for the FSB. Airat Dil mukhametova was also repeatedly accused of this.

A few days later, the three of us - Ramzil Baynazarov, Fail Alsynov and I - sat in the Halal cafe, which was located near our office, and discussed the events taking place in the organization. Recently, we have become closer and agreed that the organization has become completely manual under the leadership of Azat Salmanov, and that this cannot continue. The organization was not going to develop, and Azat, apparently, was satisfied with this state of affairs. Azat himself recently did not tolerate criticism of himself and reacted very harshly to it, probably realizing that discontent in the organization was growing.

Unexpectedly, during the conversation, Fail said that he had decided to leave the organization, Ramzil Baynazarov supported his friend, saying that he would also leave. It was clear that Fail and Ramzil had already discussed this option earlier. Now they have decided to open up to me. I myself had such thoughts periodically arise in my head. I understood that either the organization had reached its ceiling and did not want to grow and develop further, or Azat Salmanov was artificially holding back its development.

Something needed to change radically. There were two options: either make changes in the organization itself, or leave and create your own organization. I expressed my thoughts and supported Fail and Ramzil that something needs to be changed.

Before moving on to such a radical action as leaving the organization, we decided to go to Azat's work at the Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which was located near the State Circus, and try to talk with him. We wanted to explain our dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs.

Arriving at Azat's work, we asked him to go down to the hall. He came down and we expressed our dissatisfaction and concerns. Azat, in his characteristic manner, took all this with hostility, and the conversation did not work out. The conversation started calmly, but gradually everyone turned to elevated tones. In the end, Azat stuck to his opinion, and we stuck to ours.

After leaving the building, we clearly decided for ourselves that we would leave the organization. It was decided to do this at the meeting that day.

## 30. Last meeting

When all the members of the organization gathered and Azat came, we invited him to a separate room and there we informed him that we had decided to leave Kuk Bure. To say that Azat was shocked is to say nothing. It was clear from his face that he did not expect such a decision from us. He tried to persuade us not to do this. Fail Alsynov especially didn't want him to leave. He said: "Okay Ruslan, okay Ramzil, but you, Fail, why are you leaving?" He suggested not to rush into a decision and think it over carefully. At the very least, he asked not to do this right now, but to wait until the next meeting. Azat knew how to persuade and persuade; he was a master of this. Deep down, I even doubted the correctness of our decision. But seeing that Fail was adamant and firmly decided to leave, I also remained unconvinced.

We understood that if we decided to leave, then we had to do it. If we take a pause, then Azat could use it to try to convince each of us individually.

At the meeting, we took turns taking the floor and said that we no longer wanted to remain in the organization. They explained their decision by disagreement with the way the organization has been moving lately, and put the badges on the table. It was accepted in the organization that if a Kuk Bure member surrenders his badge, he is considered to have left the movement.

All the boys and girls present at the meeting were in shock, many began to ask us to stay, they said that the organization was not

will be able to continue to function as before. But we were adamant.

We promised that for one month we would not write anywhere on the Internet or generally spread the word that we left Kuk Bure. After this we left the meeting.

A few days later Azat called us and invited us to an extended meeting of the organization, where they wanted to discuss our action.

Fail Alsynov and Ramzil Bainazarov were told that they had strangely acquired each a Skoda Octavia car. The organization believed that these cars were bought for them by Kuk Bure's ill-wishers as payment for leaving it.

The fact is that Fail and Ramzil literally shortly before bought cars on credit, white Skodas, which, of course, immediately alerted some people. They felt that the matter was not clean here.

We arrived at the appointed day and time at the Kuk Bure office, and a lot of people gathered there. Azat gathered everyone, even those who had long left the organization or simply stopped going to meetings. They accused us of wanting to destroy the organization; they tried to put pressure on us by saying that now was not the time to leave, that so much had been done and still needed to be done. They persuaded me to stay.

A dispute arose between the participants. Some said that the organization could not cope without the three of us, others that everything would be fine. I especially remember the speech of one young member of Kuk Bure, Askar Ishberdin, who just a few months ago joined the organization, but very quickly won Azat's favor with his activity. He was really active, spoke the Bashkir language well, and could give speeches at rallies and pickets. He said at that meeting that he did not see anything wrong with old members of the organization leaving, this is normal. They are being replaced by them - young, active, thirsty youth, and the organization can only develop in the future.

We once again explained the reason for leaving and said that we did not want the organization to collapse, but we believed that it was going in the wrong direction.

Fail and Ramzil brought contracts from the bank as proof that the cars were taken on credit for many years. Azat didn't even want to look at the documents.

Responding to the accusations and persuasion to stay, we offered a solution to the problem that could suit everyone. If everyone present was really worried about the unity of the organization and believed that we were making a mistake by leaving (and we believed that it was the permanent leadership of Azat Salmanov that led the organization to a dead end), then we offer a way out of the crisis that has broken out: right now, here, at the meeting, choose one of the three of us - Fail Alsynov, Ramzil Bainazarov or me, Ruslan Gabbasov - as chairman of Kuk Bure. Then we do not leave the organization, and unity is preserved.

We gave time to think and discuss our proposal for half an hour, and we went into the next room.

Half an hour later, when we entered the common room, we were informed that our offer had been rejected.

After saying goodbye to everyone, we left the office.

It was March 18, 2014.

From that day on, we officially left the Kuk Bure organization.

### 31. "Kuk bure" is history

Our departure from Kuk Bure really caused a split. Following us, another 10 of its most active members left the organization. Basically, these were the guys who came there at our call. All of them in the future formed the backbone of the Bashkort organization.

According to the agreement with Kuk Bure, we promised not to publish any statements about leaving the organization for a month.

We waited not a month, but much longer, and only then published our joint statement.

## *Заявление к общественности.*

*Мы, заместители председателя Башкирского правозащитного движения «Кук буре» Алчинов Фаиль, Байназаров Рамзиль и Габбасов Руслан, заявляем:*

*18 марта 2014 года мы вышли из состава движения. Причиной нашего выхода являются различные взгляды на дальнейшее развитие Башкирского правозащитного движения «Кук буре».*

*По общей договоренности с остальными членами движения на общем собрании мы не стали сразу выставлять это заявление, а выждали месяц, как нас и просили.*

*На данный момент прошло уже более двух месяцев с момента нашего выхода, и мы официально заявляем, что не несем никакой ответственности за дальнейшие действия Башкирского правозащитного движения «Кук буре».*

*Первый заместитель председателя Башкирского правозащитного движения «Кук буре» – Алчинов Фаиль;*

*Заместитель председателя Башкирского правозащитного движения «Кук буре» – Байназаров Рамзиль;*

*Заместитель председателя Башкирского правозащитного движения «Кук буре» – Габбасов Руслан.*

*28.05.2014 г.*

A few days after the publication of the statement, we created the Bashkort organization, whose activities will be discussed in the second part of this book.

Azat Salmanov and the rest of the activists in the organization did not forgive us for leaving, and for a long time there were mutual reproaches and accusations in the Bashkir public space.

The Bashkir human rights movement "Kuk Bure" continued to operate for several years after our departure, but every year its activity became less and less. New people came who tried to carry out actions, organize events, but they lacked the sharpness, creativity, pressure, and toughness that previously made "Kuk Bure" so famous. Subsequently, Azat Salmanov tried to change the structure

organizations. He resigned as chairman, becoming chairman of the Kuk Bure Council. The post of chairman of the organization was taken by a girl named Zulfiya. No one understood why exactly she did. Zulfiya was not a veteran of the movement and did not have any outstanding qualities compared to its other members.

Of course, after leaving the post of chairman of Kuk Bure, Azat Salmanov did not lose power and influence on the organization. He also continued to lead Kuk Bure, he simply did it on behalf of Zulfiya.

But this did not save the organization, and it continued to slowly and steadily fade away.

On March 18, 2018, the Bashkir human rights movement "Kuk Bure" made a statement that it was suspending its political activities.

From that moment on, the Kuk Bure organization went down in history.



## 32. Afterword

We are often accused of destroying the Kuk Bure organization and making it cease to exist. However, as I already wrote, Kuk Bure continued to operate for another four years after we left. How can we talk about the destruction of an organization when it has been operating for so long, holding actions and events? I believe that the organization ceased to exist only because its most ideological and creative members left. It's not for nothing that we were called "the engines of the organization." All the major ideas and actions that brought glory to the organization came mainly from its most active and creative people. Also, thanks to our constant work to attract new members, many new activists have appeared in the organization. No wonder they left with us.

Although our relationship with Azat Salmanov has deteriorated, we must still admit that he, of course, is a historical figure in the Bashkir national movement and, if they ask me who you consider your first teacher in the national movement, I will name Azat.

Undoubtedly, he is one of the bright galaxy of Bashkir nationalists who made an undeniable contribution to the development of the Bashkir national movement. A strong spirit, bright speech, ability to persuade, intelligence and historical literacy - all this made Azat a charismatic leader who successfully led a national organization for many years. However, in my opinion, he was ruined by the desire to rule alone for as long as possible and to be the permanent leader. Many examples in history have shown that personalist rule always results in collapse for countries, parties, and organizations. There must be rotation of management personnel, elections of leadership, and turnover of power. And most importantly, there must be a team! Power is a test, and Azat Salmanov did not pass this test.

Also, I still do not understand why Azat Salmanov completely disappeared from the political and social agenda of the republic. He did not show himself in any way after the closure of the organization, did not give any comments or interviews on significant events,

of which there were so many in the republic and country. Agree, after all, if a person was a patriot of his republic for so many years, one of the prominent Bashkir nationalists, often assessed certain events from his personal accounts on social networks, gave comments to various media outlets, he could not just shut up.

In the future, I am sure, there will be research about the Bashkir national movement of the 21st century, and, of course, without mentioning the activities of "Kuk Bure", which made a tangible contribution to the fight for the rights of the Bashkir people, such research will not be complete. Then perhaps we will learn something else from the activities of this movement. I described only what I myself saw, knew and heard from the stories of its direct participants.

My life in the organization was bright, interesting and eventful, but this was only the beginning of the long journey of a Bashkir nationalist.

30.04.2023

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