

Documentary filmmaker and journalist Thomas Goltz recently published *Chechnya Diary: A War Correspondent's Story of Surviving the War in Chechnya*, which describes his experience living in the region. During a talk at the Mershon Center, Goltz read excerpts from this book, as well as showed video footage he filmed of his stay.

Goltz's work focuses on the town of Samashki, and specifically on the family of a man named Hussein, a rebel fighter who alternates between heroic home-grown fighter and exiled traitor. The focal point of the book addressed the brutal 1999 massacre in this town, which was designed to crush the resistance movement in Chechnya. Goltz's account of the Russian attack was a deeply personal one, the central conflict in a book that described his long-term relationships with the people of Samashki as he reported on the many dimensions of the conflict.

Goltz's closest Chechny guide was Hussein, a man who had been born and raised in the village. While Goltz described Hussein as a man sympathetic and active in the resistance movement, he said that he was not very nationalistic and not likely to resort to large-scale violence to support the movement. Goltz described him as the product of Samashki, which before the attacks was more concerned with the success of its potato crop than with the success of the independence movement. Even men like Hussein, while proudly Chechny and supportive of a secession from Russia, were not violently nationalistic, Goltz said.

Unfortunately, after the attacks in 1999, that changed, and it changed Hussein's life dramatically. After Goltz fled the region, he came back several years later, looking for Hussein and his family. According to Goltz, the man was thought by his neighbors to have been allied with the Russian army and was ejected from his community. Goltz caught up with him in a remote area of Eastern Russia, actively seeking a way to support the Chechny cause and awaiting a time to return to his village.