

## *The Pomochuk Papers*

My name is **Dr. Yannick Pomochuk**, and this is my journal and personal notes on the **Chernarussian region of South Zagoria**.

Firstly, allow me to tell you a bit about myself: As the letters next to my name suggest, I am a professor of the Chernarus State University. I specialise in Anthropology and Cultural History, and have a great fascination with Epidemiology.

You can therefore surely imagine my interest in studying the many aspects that now affect South Zagoria. As a Chernarussian myself, and after living through the initial outbreak, I have made a personal vow to study the new reality of life here, hopefully help others by doing so, and find **someone important** I left behind.

Despite the many challenges involved in entering South Zagoria, I managed to make it past the exclusion zone perimeter in one piece (wish I could say the same for my boots. Those guard dogs have quite a bite...)

I have dedicated a significant amount of time to research the history of South Zagoria, the recent civil war, and of course the outbreak of the infection. I have interacted with the many groups and characters who now inhabit the region (with some of them being quite a bit more unsavoury than others) in order to gain insight into all aspects of life here.

It is rather refreshing to be back in the real world, doing fieldwork, and writing these journals documenting my experiences. I sincerely hope that my research will be of use to you, whether you're a wide-eyed newcomer, or a hardened survivor.

Over time, I will update my journals with relevant information about this special little corner of the world we call South Zagoria. Good luck out there, survivor!

— *Dr. Yannick Pomochuk*

## Journal Entry #1: A Brief History of Chernarus

Chernarus — our beautiful, stubborn little nation.

This land has been inhabited for thousands of years, though in my professional opinion, it is questionable whether humans have ever truly tamed it. The forests grow back faster than we can cut them, the hills swallow roads and houses alike, and every time we think we have achieved stability, some new catastrophe (or politician) arrives to remind us who's really in charge.

In the early Middle Ages, castles were built across South Zagoria — Devil's Castle, Krona Castle, Zolotar Castle — each a stone sentinel against invasion from the north. These fortresses were, for the most part, quite effective, though I suspect the builders did not anticipate their descendants would eventually use them as picnic spots and scenic selfie backdrops.

During the Second World War, Chernarus aligned itself with the Soviet Union, which allowed Soviet military installations to sprout up across the countryside (Vybor Airfield being one such relic – though I suspect very little air traffic passes through these days for obvious reasons.)

After the war, Chernarus was absorbed into the USSR proper. For decades, our culture was gradually pressed into a more... standardised shape, let us say. Russian became the language of power, and our own Chernarussian language and customs were quietly shuffled to the back of the cupboard like a forgotten jar of Babushka's pickles.

Then came 1991 — the collapse of the Soviet Union — and with it, **our independence**. What followed was a somewhat chaotic, yet welcome renaissance. The Chernarussian language returned to schools, traditional holidays reappeared on calendars, and the people rediscovered their heritage from before our northern neighbour had crushed it like a large bear.

Unfortunately, our infrastructure never quite caught up with our enthusiasm. By the early 2000s, roads remained cracked, farm machinery remained stubbornly Soviet, and entire villages remained one strong breeze away from total collapse. The government attempted modernisation projects — farming initiatives, new hydroelectric dams, a ski resort in the north — but with mixed success.

Tourism did grow, however, mostly in the form of hikers and eccentric Westerners who thought sleeping in the woods surrounded by wolves and castle ruins was somehow “character-building.” (I once gave a guided tour of Devil's Castle. They asked me if it was haunted. Had to tell them yes, of course. Truly the highlight of my career.)

In short: we were — and still are — a land in transition. A place where modernity and tradition are locked in a permanent arm-wrestling match, occasionally pausing only to glare at one another over a glass of kvass.

— Dr. Yannick Pomochuk

## Journal Entry #2: The Chernarussian Civil War

If you wish to understand South Zagoria — its burned-out villages, its abandoned checkpoints, its local people who are no strangers to distant gunshots — you must understand the Chernarussian Civil War.

In the late 2000s, our country tore itself apart. On one side stood the **CDF** — the Chernarussian Defence Force — backed by NATO with the promise of a modern, Western-aligned future. On the other side, the **Chedaki**, or “*Movement of the Red Star*”, who sought to return us to the so-called comforting embrace of Moscow.

And in between? Well, in between stood everyone else — local militias, opportunists, anarchists, and more than a few people who just wanted everyone to shut up so they could plant their crops in peace.

The fighting was brutal. Villages were shelled, forests were burned, and entire families vanished between one day and the next. I was in Severograd during one of the shellings — a local library was reduced to rubble in an afternoon. I managed to save a single book. (It was about medieval metallurgy. Not particularly useful, though I did use it to swat a rat once.)

After years of guerilla warfare, the CDF finally prevailed. The Chedaki were crushed, driven into hiding or across the border. Victory was declared, and international aid poured in to help rebuild. UN troops were stationed across the region, “peacekeeping” at checkpoints and airfields — though, if you ask the locals, the peace was thin as cigarette paper.

Did it work? For a time, perhaps. The shooting stopped, which was certainly an improvement. But scars run deep here — burned-out homes still stand, names of the missing are still carved into church doors, and the old political grudges have simply gone quiet rather than disappear.

The war left South Zagoria weakened, vulnerable. And when the infection came... Well, a land that was still recovering from one disaster was in no shape to handle another.

If there is a lesson to be learned, it is perhaps this: For every calamity Chernarus survives, another, often worse, catastrophe is never far behind.

— Dr. Yannick Pomochuk

### Journal Entry #3: The Outbreak

If the civil war was a wound, then the outbreak was the infection that set in afterward — quite literally.

No one agrees exactly where it began. Some say Pavlovo Military Base. Others say the shipwreck at Rify. A few swear it was a secret Russian bioweapon, or a NATO medical experiment gone wrong. I once met a survivor near Gorka who insisted it was divine punishment and tried to bless me with a very sharp stick. (I politely declined.)

What we do know is this: It spread faster than anyone could stop it. One day there were rumours of fever outbreaks. Then reports of strange, unprovoked attacks. By the end of the week, cities were choking with traffic as everyone tried to leave at once. Military checkpoints were set up in the streets, guarded by soldiers who shouted at you to stay calm while their hands shook on their rifles.

I was visiting a close colleague in Novaya Petrovka, **Professor Nadychuk**, when the first quarantine efforts collapsed. It started with a single gunshot, followed by a scream, followed by several dozen gunshots. People scattered, abandoned their cars, trampled one another, and I spent the night hiding under a stairwell after being separated from Nadychuk. By morning, the soldiers were gone — and I was on my own. I managed to make my way to the west, to the non-infected regions of Chernarus. On that day, I swore to return, to document all that I possibly could, and hopefully find Nadychuk.

The international community did try, for a time. More aid convoys came, soldiers were flown in, and the news were full of promises that the situation was “under control”. But South Zagoria has never been high on the list of places the world cares about, and once the infection was declared incurable, the decision was made: **Quarantine**. Total exclusion.

The region was sealed off. An international task force was stationed to keep us in — yes, in — and to shoot anything that tried to cross the perimeter. Then came the PO-X gas strikes. They call them “decontamination operations”, though they do about as much as throwing a wet towel on a house fire. The gas kills everything, infected or not, and leaves behind a bitter stench that lingers for several days.

Occasional airdrops supply the remaining population of the exclusion zone with a basic supply of food, tools, weapons, and medical supplies; they do little but maintain the pseudo-economy which has developed here. At times, I feel like we are ants receiving the world’s breadcrumbs.

And yet, people keep coming. Smugglers, scavengers, dreamers, lunatics. Some are seeking riches. Some are seeking adventure. Some are simply running from the world beyond the wire.

Now, South Zagoria is no longer a region, so much as an idea. It is a crucible. A place where the rules of the old world no longer apply, where survival is measured one meal, one bullet, one pair of boots at a time. (Speaking of which, mine gave out near Vybor last week. I am now accepting donations.)

If you are reading this, know that you are walking through history — dangerous, bloodstained history, yes — but history nonetheless. And if you live long enough, perhaps you will help write the next chapter.

— Dr. Yannick Pomochuk

## Journal Entry #4: The Infected

The infected. South Zagoria's most tragic — and most consistent — residents.

Contrary to popular superstition, they are not the risen dead, nor are they the result of witchcraft (though one particularly intoxicated survivor once swore to me that a pagan ritual in the woods near Myshkino had summoned them — I suspect the home-brewed vodka had more to do with his story than any actual evidence.)

What they *are*, however, is horrifyingly efficient. The infection's prion-like mechanism essentially unravels the higher brain functions, leaving only the most basic instincts: **Wander, rage, repeat.** Within days, victims lose the ability to speak, reason, or operate simple tools — even doors. (I once observed an infected unsuccessfully attempt to enter a shed I was resting in. The situation somewhat lost its comedic value once the infected managed to tumble through the window...)

An estimated 80% of those infected perish during the fever stage. The unlucky remainder, roughly 15 – 18%, survive as what you might call “zombies,” though I personally dislike the term. They are not cinematic monsters but **very sick human beings** who are, unfortunately, trying very hard to beat you to a pulp.

They hunt primarily by sight and sound. Their sense of smell appears dulled, though I enjoy bathing too much to test this theory further. If they spot you, they will run, scream, and — if I may speak from experience — chase you considerably farther than seems reasonable for something that is technically brain-damaged.

Infected often vary in strength and endurance depending on their professions before the outbreak: Soldiers and police seem unnervingly strong, while the elderly are — how shall I put this — more easily encouraged to take a nap. Nonetheless, treat all with caution.

Their slowed metabolism allows them to survive for weeks, perhaps months, without sustenance, which is frankly unfair. Exposure to the elements seems to trouble them very little — I have seen them shuffling in blizzards without so much as a shiver. Firearms, blades, blunt force, and, of course, PO-X gas are all effective at dispatching them. But do take care with the remains; they are still highly infectious.

An observational note: They rarely finish off an unconscious person. I once played dead for nearly fifteen minutes after being knocked into a ditch, only to look up and find the infected milling around me like bored cattle. Upon being seen moving about, I was immediately punched in the head again. (For the record, I do not recommend this as a survival strategy. My ears are still ringing.)

In summary: avoid if possible, engage only when necessary, and for goodness' sake, do not try to study them up close unless you have an excellent pair of boots and a very solid tree nearby.

— Dr. Yannick Pomochuk

## Journal Entry #5: Survivors

In case you should have forgotten — this is **you**.

If you're reading this, congratulations: You are one of the few survivors still roaming South Zagoria. Whether this is due to natural immunity to the infection, sheer willpower, unbelievable luck, or the thickest plot armour known to man, I cannot say.

The infection, as far as my observations have gone, spares around 2 – 5% of those who encounter it. The rest... well, let's just say they don't typically sit down to write memoirs. So, rejoice! You are now officially a "**survivor**" — though I warn you, that title may be revoked at any time by bullet, claw, starvation, or your own questionable decisions (such as being here in the first place.)

Survivors come in every variety imaginable — farmers, soldiers, dreamers, lunatics, and even poets! (yes, I actually met one... Even more brain-dead than the infected.) Some arrive here with nothing but the clothes on their back and a profound misunderstanding of how difficult it is to light a fire in the rain. Others are seasoned survivalists who seem personally offended by the very idea of sleeping in an actual bed.

Your reasons for being here may be noble, practical, or utterly ridiculous (I once met a survivor who said he'd come to build an army of loyal infected through "the power of friendship") Whatever your reasons may be, remember this: **South Zagoria does not care**. It will test you, shape you, and sometimes try to swallow you whole.

There are unspoken rules, however. Certain places are neutral — the trader compounds, for example, where even the most barbaric raider will (usually) restrain himself from shooting you in the back. Think of them as watering holes, where we may all briefly pretend we are at least somewhat civilised, before returning to the business of trying to outlive one another.

If you take nothing else from my writing, take this: **You will need others**. Yes, yes, I know — you might be the lone wolf type, the grim hero, the last of your kind. Trust me, I've met dozens like you. They usually end up very hungry, very cold, and eventually very dead.

Find allies, share stories, establish yourself in this world. Your reputation may be your saving grace, or your one-way ticket to a very long dirt-nap.

And should you ever cross my path — perhaps at Kumyrna Traders, or crouched behind a bush, conducting my research — do stop to say hello. I am always looking for new stories. And, if possible, a new pair of boots, please.

— *Dr. Yannick Pomochuk*

## Journal Entry #6: Trader Zones

The trader zones — those rarest of miracles; places in South Zagoria where no one is actively trying to kill you (usually...)

I have always found it fascinating that, even in the wake of total societal collapse, humans will still find a way to create **markets**. Everything is available here — from canned foods to heavy machine guns — provided you have enough Rubles (be absolutely certain they're *Chernarussian* Rubles! You only make that mistake once...)

The compounds themselves vary:

- **Klen Traders** can be found high on Klen Mountain, among the ruins of Klen castle. I cannot help but admire the symbolism — civilisation clinging stubbornly to the bones of its own history. It should be quite picturesque at sunset, if you have the boots for it. I'm still working on that...
- **Kumyrna Traders** occupy the ruins of Kumyrna village, devastated during the civil war. I once asked the head trader there if he found the location ironic. He told me to buy something or leave. (I bought beans. They were very expensive beans.)
- **Green Mountain Traders** are located at the iconic military radio tower, a place rumoured to be haunted. Personally, I don't believe in ghosts, but the last time I camped nearby, my radio turned itself on and started broadcasting static in the middle of the night. I no longer camp near Green Mountain for unrelated reasons...
- **The Svetloyarsk Boat Trader** is a different matter entirely — no walls, no protection, just a man with his boats, and a no-nonsense attitude. He has stories for days about his time in the Chernarussian Navy, and any attempt to out-drink him is as futile as trying to get a discount on one of his dinghies.

What unites all these places is an **unspoken agreement**: No fighting, no stealing, and no scaring off the clientele. Break any of these rules and the punishment will be swift, brutal, and — in my professional opinion — quite educational! I once witnessed a bandit try to steal a survivor's newly purchased radio receiver. By the time the other survivors were done with him, the radio receiver was the only thing left unbroken.

If you are clever, patient, and loaded with Rubles, you can find nearly anything at these markets — weapons, tools, food, even new friends, though that is a VERY relative term around these parts... They are the beating heart of the Zone, the only reason our little pseudo-economy hasn't collapsed entirely into cannibalism and rock-throwing contests.

So yes, visit the traders. Sell your wares, spend your Rubles, buy your (very expensive) beans. And should you find yourself leaning against the wall of a trader compound, sipping weak coffee while bartering for a few bullets, take a moment to appreciate this strange little pocket of civilisation. It may be the closest thing to peace you'll find here.

— Dr. Yannick Pomochuk

## **Journal Entry #7: Factions**

South Zagoria is a place where society has collapsed — but society is a stubborn thing. It always finds a way to crawl back, dust itself off, and start arguing with itself again.

What follows is my humble attempt to describe some of the **major groups and factions** that roam the South Zagoria Exclusion Zone at present. Please do not take this as an exhaustive list — new groups appear as quickly as they vanish, sometimes leaving behind little more than torn flags, bullet casings, and very outdated recruitment flyers.

### **Militias & Military Factions:**

### **Scientific Factions:**

### **Non-aligned & Neutral Factions:**

### **Cults & Religious Factions:**

### **Rogue & Bandit Factions:**

South Zagoria is a crucible, yes, but it is also a stage. Everyone here plays a part, whether as a soldier, a rebel, a zealot, a farmer, or a fool. Choose your role carefully — the world has a way of typecasting those who aren't paying attention.

— *Dr. Yannick Pomochuk*