

The Imposition of a Fake Political Settlement in the Northern Caucasus

The 2003 Chechen Presidential Election

Edited by

Tanya Lokshina in collaboration with Ray Thomas and Mary Mayer

THE IMPOSITION OF A FAKE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS

The 2003 Chechen Presidential Election

Edited by

Tanya Lokshina in collaboration with Ray Thomas and Mary Mayer

ibidem-Verlag
Stuttgart

Bibliografische Information Der Deutschen Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.ddb.de> abrufbar.

∞

ISBN: 978-3-8382-5436-4

© *ibidem*-Verlag
Stuttgart 2005
Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Das Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlages unzulässig und strafbar. Dies gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und elektronische Speicherformen sowie die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.

CONTENTS

English editors' introduction	
<i>Ray Thomas & Mary Mayer</i>	9
<i>Map of Chechnya and its neighbours</i>	14
<i>Chronology at a glance</i>	15
<i>Presidential election results 1997 and 2003</i>	16
<i>Dramatis personae</i>	17
<i>Abbreviations and explanations</i>	21
1 Why this book was written	
<i>Tanya Lokshina & Sergei Lukashevsky</i>	25
2 The Chechen maze: Looking for a way out	
<i>Alexander Cherkasov</i>	30
Chronicle: December 2002 to March 2003	36
3 The March 2003 referendum: What difference did it make?	
<i>Alexander Mnatsakanyan</i>	37
Chronicle: 6 June to 20 August 2003	43
4 Five candidates for the presidency: Biybulatov, Bugaev, Buraev, Kadyrov and Khanchukaev	
Biybulatov – Interview by <i>Roman Rostov</i>	50
Bugaev – Interview by <i>Ruslan Umarov</i>	53
Buraev – Searched for by <i>Tanya Lokshina</i>	56
Kadyrov – Interview by <i>Ruslan Umarov</i>	60
Kadyrov – Biography	64
Khanchukaev – Interview by <i>Ruslan Umarov</i>	67
A complaint by Biybulatov about Kadyrov	70

6	TANYA LOKSHINA WITH RAY THOMAS & MARY MAYER (EDS.)	
	A complaint by Buraev about Kadyrov	71
	Chronicle: 23 August to 6 September	73
5	In the end there can be only one: Removing major contenders	
	<i>Leonid Ruzov</i>	80
	Chronicle: 7 to 11 September	85
6	Malik Saidullaev: A reconnaissance	
	<i>Tanya Lokshina</i>	91
	Malik Mingayevich Saidullaev – Biography	96
	Appeal from the HQ of Saidullaev	97
	Chronicle: 13 September to 16 September	99
7	The moor did his deed: Intervention by Paizullaev	
	Paizullaev – Interview by <i>Ruslan Umarov</i>	104
	Paizullaev’s HQ – by <i>Tanya Lokshina</i>	106
	Chronicle: 17 to 25 September	111
	Statement by Saidullayev’s Head Of Election Campaign	118
8	The story of Saidullaev’s removal	
	<i>Tanya Lokshina</i>	122
	Chronicle: 26 to 30 September	128
9	From the life of election headquarters: Inside information	
	<i>Alexander Mnatsakanyan</i>	134
	Chronicle: 1 and 2 October	139
10	The Chair of the Election Commission before the election	
	Interview by <i>Ruslan Umarov</i>	141
	Chronicle: 3 and 4 October	147
11	Eve of the election 5 October 2003	
	<i>Tanya Lokshina</i>	150

12 Only good news on TV	
<i>Tanya Lokshina</i>	157
13 Election day	
<i>Tanya Lokshina</i>	162
Chronicle: 5 and 6 October	170
14 Reports on violations on the election day	175
Chronicle: 7 and 8 October	179
15 Did the refugees vote?	
<i>Tanya Lokshina</i>	183
<i>Usam Baisaev</i>	185
16 Book of numbers – book of the lost	
<i>Alexander Cherkasov</i>	190
17 The Chair of the Election Commission after the election	
Interview by <i>Roman Rostov</i>	211
Chronicle: 9 to 28 October 2003	212
18 Kadyrov at the United Nations	
<i>Tanya Lokshina</i>	222
19 Perfect stillness zone	
<i>Tanya Lokshina</i>	231
Chronicle: 1 to 8 December 2003	256
20 War in the Caucasus and peace in Russia	
<i>Alexander Cherkasov</i>	265
<i>Recent books on Chechnya</i>	273
<i>Online resources</i>	274
<i>Index</i>	275

ENGLISH EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

This book focuses on the election that took place in Chechnya on 5 October 2003. Akhmat Kadyrov was elected as president – receiving 83% of the votes. Seven months later he was assassinated – in an explosion at Victory in World War II day celebrations. A bomb had been buried in the concrete of the newly built stadium. Thirteen people died. The episode epitomizes the political situation in Chechnya – a show of democracy and an act of terrorism.

The preceding presidential election was held in January 1997. The election was won by Aslan Maskhadov with 59% of the votes cast. Shamil Basaev was runner-up with 24%, and Zemlikhan Yanderbiyev came third with 10%. The clear majority for Maskhadov after a quiet campaign was a surprise for many observers. There were queues at many polling stations and voting hours were extended to 10 pm. The 1997 election was monitored. According to the Norsk Untenrikspolitisk Institutt (NUPI) there were 200 observers including 72 from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The head of OSCE, Tim Guldiman, declared that the election was “democratic and legitimate”.

The outcome of the 1997 election was tragic despite initial jubilation. In 2000 Maskhadov was deposed. In 2004 the Russian Government put a bounty of \$10 million on his head. Maskhadov was assassinated by Russian government agents in March 2005. Zelimkhan Yanderbiyev, who had been Chechen vice-president or acting president from 1993 to 1997 was assassinated by Russian agents in Qatar in February 2003. The Russian government has offered a bounty of \$10 million on the head of Shamil Basaev.

The presidential election of 2003 described in this book was very different from that of 1997. There were no monitors from the Western world. The authors of chapters in this book do not describe anything like the enthusiasm that was expressed by voters in 1997. Kadyrov, with the open support of the Kremlin, was in effect self-appointed as president of Chechnya. The number

of votes reported as cast for Kadyrov had little to do with reality. The election echoes Stalin's reputed declaration 'Those who cast the votes decide nothing. Those who count the votes decide everything'.

To Westerners elections are usually orderly affairs with occasional disputes over matters such as disenfranchised minorities, hanging chads, and postal voting. It may be difficult for Westerners to imagine the scale of denial in Chechnya of election procedures that are taken for granted in established democracies. It is equally difficult to imagine and not to be horrified at the scale of lawlessness in Chechnya. Two wars in less than a decade and a breakdown of civil order mean that arbitrary arrest, kidnapping, violence, imprisonment, torture, execution and other violations of human rights have become so common that they are hardly regarded as worthy of report or investigation.

It is hoped that this book, by putting on record political events in 2003, will indicate the range of problems that will have to be dealt with to stop the growth of lawlessness in Chechnya. The fake political settlement of 2003 represents a stark failure to reconcile the need to prevent terrorism with the need to allow for development of a stable and peaceful society. The political events of 2003 have maintained and exacerbated lawlessness in Chechnya. Akhmad Kadyrov's son Ramzan Kadyrov took over his father's private army and was appointed deputy prime minister in 2004. Such a growth in warlordism and the prospect that Ramzan might be appointed prime minister offer little hope of a restoration to normality for the foreseeable future. Perhaps we can learn from Chechnya's calamitous experience. It might be expected that problems that occurred in Chechnya are echoed in other countries subjected to externally imposed regime-change.

Chapters 1 and 2 give the background to this book and sketch the historical background to the conflict in Chechnya. Chapter 3 describes the referendum of March 2003 that was used to legitimize Russia's return as sovereign power in Chechnya. Chapters 4 to 9 are mostly about the candidates for the presidential election of 5 October 2003. How is it that of more than ten candidates nominated only seven got through to the election itself? How is it that just one candidate, Akhmat Kadyrov (interviewed in Chapter 4), is recorded as having received 380 thousand votes while the other six candidates only managed to

get 60 thousand between them? This book aims to give some components of an explanation.

One component is that only seven got through because the three other strong candidates dropped out or were removed. President Putin persuaded candidate Aslakhonov to take another job (Chapter 5). Candidate Dzhabrailov was pressured to withdraw. The most popular candidate Saidullaev (Chapters 6 and 8) was removed by the actions of a pseudo-candidate Paizullaev (Chapter 7). Chapter 9 is about activity and inactivity in the election campaign office of a candidate who the author, for reasons best known to himself, does not identify by name. The reader is expected to work this one out (not difficult!).

Chapters 10 and 17 comprise interviews, before and after the October election, with the chair of the Chechnya Election Commission. Chapters 12 to 15 are about how the 5 October election was conducted from different vantage points – including what happened to refugees who became classified as internally displaced persons (IDPs). Chapter 16 examines the election result in the light of what is known, and what is not known, about the size of Chechnya's population.

The remaining chapters begin an examination of the consequences. Chapter 18 gives a picture of the impact of Kadyrov at a United Nations meeting on human rights. Chapter 19 gives an account of a visit to Chechnya at the time of the elections for the Duma in December 2003. Finally Chapter 20 presents a summary of the book and puts the events in Chechnya in a broader context. Does escalation of the war against terrorism in Chechnya portend parallel trends in other parts of the world? Does the growth of lawlessness in Chechnya presage a typical outcome of anti-terrorist activities?

Quite apart from such broad questions, the detail of this book is important because it presents an exceptionally well-documented account of the ways in which elections can be manipulated and corrupted. There are a growing number of countries where it is believed that elections are systematically rigged. But there are fewer countries that also have the organisational infrastructure, as Russia has, to allow for the production of evidence relevant to the scale and extent of rigging.

Russia has statistical systems that provide information on population – from censuses conducted in 1989 and 2002 and from annual statistics produced from administrative sources. The annual statistics help demonstrate the overstatement of population in the census of 2002. In reality the census result provided an indirect indication of the scale of refugee movement (see Chapter 16). But the overstatement encouraged the powers-that-be to inflate figures for the size of the electorate and for the number of votes cast. Inadvertently the powers-that-be thereby provided evidence relevant to the scale of falsification.

As well as statistical systems Russia also boasts of, or at least tolerates, a number of dedicated civil rights organisations – the Moscow Helsinki Group (Centre Demos), the Memorial Human Rights Centre and the Caucasian Knot. This book is the product of cooperative work of these voluntary non-government organizations (NGOs), and came into existence only as a result of initiatives taken and dangerous field work carried out by members of these NGOs.

The detail of the first-hand accounts given, reinforced by background population statistics, provide a kind of checklist of the many different ways in which elections can be influenced or corrupted. It could well provide a checklist for people appointed as monitors of elections held in other situations where there is any doubt that proper procedures are being followed.

The nature of the material of the book makes it difficult to maintain consistency in style and tone or even in the transliteration of Russian proper names. One reason is for that the book is the product of many eyes, ears and minds. Another is the difficulty of maintaining contact with reality in the face of contradictory accounts of the nature of reality. It would be cumbersome, for example, to report that Kadyrov *allegedly* obtained 83% out of more than an *alleged* 562 thousand votes cast in the October 2003 election. It is impossible to believe that the official figures given for the size of the electorate, for the number of votes cast and for the proportion of votes for Kadyrov are other than distorted exaggerations of reality. But we have had to report some fantasies as facts to maintain coherence in the story. The book presents as unchallenged facts many official statements – as well as the accounts of our authors and to contributions from civil rights organization and the media. It is

important to keep in mind ways in which official statements may disguise reality.

The contrast between the world of officialdom and that faced by people in their day-to-day lives is illustrated in many ways in the Chronicle of Events that accompany the main text of this book. The Chronicle gives many examples of incidents of terrorism by the powers-that-be in Chechnya – as experienced by the victims and by their families. The Chronicle also gives examples of activities of law enforcement agencies designed to reduce terrorism that can be terrifying to the local population affected. There are descriptions of attempts by ordinary people to recover from the dislocation and destruction left in the wake of two wars in Chechnya. The accounts of such incidents are often juxtaposed in the Chronicle with contemporaneous events in the very different world of political decision making.

At the beginning of the book we give a few items for reference purposes. There is a map of Chechnya and its neighbours. A one-page chronology focuses on 2003, but is not limited to that year. Detail is given of the 1997 and 2003 presidential election results. A list of principal characters is included for those who like to study the cast-list. An explanatory list of abbreviations, acronyms and other terms is included for those who may not have much knowledge of Chechnya or Russia. At the end there is a list of recent books and online resources about Chechnya.

Ray Thomas & Mary Mayer

October 2005

CHECHNYA AND ITS NEIGHBOURS



Reproduced from a CIA website

CHRONOLOGY AT A GLANCE

<i>1944–1975</i>	Chechen population deported to Khazakhstan.
<i>November 1990</i>	First Chechen national congress
<i>March 1991</i>	Chechnya opts out of Russian presidential election.
<i>October 1991</i>	Dudaev became president after first non-soviet elections.
<i>June 1992</i>	Ingushetia becomes republic within Russia.
<i>April 1993</i>	Dudaev dissolves parliament and assembly.
<i>November 1994</i>	The first war. Russian tank incursion into Chechnya.
<i>December 1995 – January 1996</i>	Fighting in Gudermes, Kizlar (Dagestan), Pervomaiskoye, Grozny
<i>April 1996</i>	Dudaev killed.
<i>August 1996</i>	Maskhadov and Lebed sign peace agreement.
<i>27 January 1997</i>	Maskhadov elected president.
<i>May 1997</i>	Yeltsin recognises Maskhadov as president of Chechen republic of Ichkeria
<i>August 1999</i>	Chechen incursion led by Basaev into Dagestan
<i>September 1999</i>	The second war. Bombing of Grozny resumes.
<i>October 1999 – Jan 2000</i>	Russian troops invade. A quarter of a million refugees to Ingushetia.
<i>June 2000</i>	Russia appoints Kadyrov as head of Chechnya.
<i>October 2002</i>	Census of population.
<i>23 March 2003</i>	Referendum on Chechnya constitution.
<i>5 October 2003</i>	Kadyrov elected president.
<i>7 December 2003</i>	Duma elections.
<i>May 2004</i>	Kadyrov killed.
<i>March 2005</i>	Maskhadov killed.

A SUMMARY COMPARISON OF TWO PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS IN CHECHNYA

<p>Election held 27th January 1997:</p> <p>Registered voters: 513,585.</p> <p>Turnout: 407,699 (79.4%).</p>	<p>Election held 5th October 2003:</p> <p>Registered voters 561,817 (includes 30,000 servicemen).</p> <p>Turnout: 462,000 (82.2%).</p>
<p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aslan Maskhadov 242 thousand votes, - 59.3% of votes cast. - Shamil Basaev 23.5%. - Zelimkhan Yanderbiyev 10.1%. - Other candidates 7.1%. 	<p>Result:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Akhmat Kadyrov 381 thousand votes, - 82.5% of votes cast. - Abdula Bugaev 5.6%. - Shamil Buraev 3.4%. - Other candidates 8%.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

(Candidates for the presidency in 2003 are given two stars. Those who had been candidates but withdrew, or were withdrawn, get one star.)

- Alu Alkhanov* Minister of Interior in Chechnya. Appointed president in 2004 on death of Kadyrov. Won election in 2004 in style of that of 2003.
- Aslambek Aslakhonov** Duma deputy. Presidential candidate August 2003, but withdrew in September 2003 when Putin appointed him special Aide for south Russia.
- Abdul-Kerim Arsakhanov* Chair, Chechnya Election Commission. Chapters 10 and 17 comprise interviews with Arsakhanov before and after the presidential election of 5 October 2003.
- Magomed Arsanukaev* Head of Saidullayev's election campaign. See p 118
- Ruslan Aushev* 1954– Formerly Soviet general. President Ingushetia 1993–2002
- Shamil Basaev* 1965– Chechen field commander. Runner up in 1997 presidential election. Led excursion into Dagestan in 1999 triggering the second war.
- Khusein Biybulatov*** 1939– Former communist activist and Deputy in CI-ASSR. Petitioned the Election Commission about violation of his rights as candidate. See Chapter 5. Seven thousand votes.
- Abdula Bugaev*** 1949– Historian and academic. Deputy tp CIASSR 1990–91. See Chapter 3. Runner up to Kadyrov with 26 thousand votes.

*Shamil Buraev*** 1958– Agriculturist and entrepreneur. Head of the administration of the Achkhoy-Martan district. 1995–97 and 1999–2003. See Chap 7. Sixteen thousand votes.

Alexander Cherkasov A senior member of the Memorial Human Rights Group, author of chapters 2, 16, and 20.

Dzhokhar Dudaev 1944–1996. Served in Soviet Airforce becoming a General. Prime Minister of Chechnya 1991-1993. Killed by a Russian rocket that honed onto his satellite phone in April 1996.

*Khussein Dzhabrailov** Chechen Moscow businessmen. Became candidate in August 2003 but withdrew in September after talks with Putin administration.

Beslan Gantamirov Minister for the Press until dismissed in September 2003. Supported Dzhabrailov for presidency.

Boris Gryshov United Russia party leader and Russian Federal Minister for internal affairs.

*Akhmat Kadyrov*** 1951–2004. Elected Chechen President 2003. Assassinated 2004. See personal file, page 49..

Ramzan Kadyrov 1978– Son of Akhmat Kadyrov and inheritor of his army. Appointed deputy prime minister of Chechnya by Putin in 2004.

*Avkhat Khanchukaev*** 1954– Professor Grozny University. Established Ortsa organization. Four thousand votes. See Chapter 4.

Ruslan Khasbulatov 1947– Speaker of the Russian Parliament before it was dissolved in 1993. Returned to Chechnya in 1994 to unify opposition to Dudayev, but sidelined by Kremlin. Lost Duma seat to United Russia party in 2003.

Khattab 1969-2002. A fighter from Saudi Arabia, said to be a Wahhabi, allied to Basaev in 1999 raid on Dagestan. Killed in 2002.

- Frants Klintsevich* Head of the Chechen branch of United Russia Party.
- Tanya Lokshina* Author of eleven chapters. Former Executive Director Moscow Helsinki Group, Chair of Centre "Demos" (Moscow-based human rights think-tank) and journalist.
- Aslan Maskhadov* 1951–2005 The former general who made peace with Russia's General Lebed in 1996. Elected President of Ichkeria in 1997. Assassinated March 2005.
- Alexander Lebed* 1950–2002. Russian general who made peace with Maskhadov in 1996. Killed in helicopter crash.
- Salambek Maigov* Former deputy for Chechnya until 1993 election, representative of Mashkadov,
- Alexander Mnatsakanyan* Moscow journalist/editor. Author of chapters 3 and 9.
- Nikolai Paizullaev*** 1948– Press officer for Chechen president. Folk poet. Instigated removal of Saidullaev as candidate. See Chapters 7 and 8.
- Anna Novaya Gazeta Politkovskaya* *Novaya Gazeta* correspondent. Author of *A Dirty War: A Russian reporter in Chechnya*, 2001.
- Anatoly Popov* Acting president Chechnya during 2003 election.
- Vladimir Putin* 1952– Former KGB officer elected president of Russia in 2000 after promise to wipe out Chechen terrorists.
- Kudus Saduev*** Director Grosneftgaz. Six thousand votes.
- Malik Saidullaev** Chechen born Moscow businessman. Disqualified as presidential candidate. See Chapters 6-8.
- Said-Selim Tsuev** Deputy Military Commandant of Chechnya. Withdrew in September 2003.
- Vladimir Shamanov* 1962– Russian General in Chechen wars. Reported as favouring imprisonment of insurgents families and forcible repatriation of Chechen diaspora.

- Ruslan Umarov* Correspondent for Caucasian Knot. Contributions to Chapters 4, 7 and 10.
- Zelimkhan Yandarbiev* 1951–2000. A Chechen nationalist poet who succeeded Dudayev as president in 1996. Assassinated by Russian agents in Qatar.
- Sergey Yastrzhembsky* 1953– Diplomat/editor appointed as Putin’s aide on Chechnya and North Caucasus in 2000.
- Boris Yeltsin* President of Russia until he nominated Putin as his successor in 1999.
- Akhmed Zakayev* Deputy to Maskhadov. Former actor. Regarded as moderate. Russia tried to extradite him from UK for terrorist offences. Zakayev freed on bail from Vanessa Redgrave.
- Akhmar Zavgaev* Brother of Doka Zavgaev. Ally of Kadyrov. Elected as United Russia candidate to Duma in 2003.
- Doka Zavgaev* Head of Chechnya Supreme Soviet in late 1980s. Declared Chechen sovereignty in 1990. Replaced by Dudayev in 1991.
- Murat Zyazikov* FSB General who replaced Ruslan Aushev as president of Ingusheita in 2002.

ABBREVIATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

- census* All-Soviet population censuses were conducted in 1979 and 1989. The results of these censuses and the all-Russia census conducted in 2002 are discussed in chapter 16.
- CIASSR* Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic – the formal name in the Soviet era.
- CIS* Commonwealth of Independent States. Established in 1991 by Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, soon joined by nine other former soviet states - Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
- cleansing operations* Translated from *zachistki*. Cleansing, or ‘mop-up’ operations, are raids carried out by law enforcement agencies or *siloviki* ostensibly to identify and arrest insurgents.
- CSU* Chechen State University
- Dagestan* Republic to the east of Chechnya. Multicultural, relatively healthy.
- FSB* Federal Safety Bureau, the successor to the KGB.
- Grozny* Capital of Chechnya. Believed to have a population of more than 400,000 before the wars of the 1990s. Population 200,000 in 2002 according to census.
- Ichkeria* Name adopted for Chechnya on achieving independence in 1996 after the first Chechen war.
- IDP* Internally Displaced Person. A refugee within Chechnya
- iman* faith, spiritual leader.
- Ingushetia* Republic between Chechnya to the east and Ossetia to the west. See Vainakh.
- intelligentsia* Term used widely in Russia to refer to educated people.

- Khazakhstan* The birthplace of many Chechens whose parents were deported to Khazakhstan by the Russia in 1944..
- law enforcement agency* The term *law enforcement agency* is used generously and ambivalently in reports quoted in this book to cover identified and unidentified forces such as the *siloviki*.
- mop-up* Mop-up operation. See cleansing
- mufti* An interpreter of Islamic law. Collectively the muftiat.
- NGO* Non-government organization.
- ORB-2* Operative and Search Bureau of the N Caucasus Dept of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, a place of detention in Grozny. Visited by the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture in 2002 and later.
- OSCE* Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Established in 1972 concerned with conflict resolution and human rights.
- Ossetia* Republic west of Ingushetia.
- PACE* Parliamentary Assembly for Cooperation in Europe. The parliamentary assembly of OSCE.
- RFE/RL* Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Prague, Czech Republic)
- RNE* Russian National Unity Party. See United Russia.
- rouble* In 2003 about 50 roubles made a £ sterling or 30 to \$.
- RSFSR* Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
- Russian names* Russians have a first name, a patronymic, and a family name. First name plus patronym is a common form of address – exemplified in interviews in Chapter 4.
- siloviki* 'the strong ones' – used to describe members of the FSB and military and other armed groups who raid, detain, torture and kill – apparently above the law.
- SPS* Soyuz Pravykh Sil - Union of Right Forces.

- TAC* Temporary Accommodation Centre , typically tented accommodation in Ingushetia
- tiep* A clan or tribe. A traditional social division in Chechnya nowadays of uncertain importance.
- UAZ* Ulyanovsk Automobil Zavod. Russian version of Land Rover or Jeep for rough country.
- United Russia* 'Party of power' that inherited methods of communist party of Soviet era. Established in 2001 to support Putin. Lacks policies. Gained majority in Duma in 2003.
- vainakh* Name of the ethno-linguistic group to which both the Chechens and Ingushs belong
- Wahhabis* An Islamic sect originating in Saudi Arabia. Believed to be, or labelled as, providing ideological support for Al Qaeda and other extremist activities.

1 WHY THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN

Tanya Lokshina & Sergei Lukashevsky, Moscow Helsinki Group/Centre 'Demos'

Human rights defenders have monitored the situation in the Chechen Republic in recent years not just because of the continued violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, but also because of the ambiguous legal situation in the region. There can be rule of law only if there is law to apply. In Chechnya it is not clear whether the formal law of the Russian constitution, rulings by the Kremlin, dictates by the Russian military in Chechnya or *ad hoc* decisions by the-powers-that-be in Chechnya, are governing human behaviour. There is a crisis of legitimacy.

The federal attempt to restore its sovereignty has led to continued military conflict accompanied by massive and brutal violations of human rights and humanitarian law. But when the Republic was granted *de facto* independence from the federal centre between 1996 and 1999 it could hardly be said that the government of Chechnya (or Ichkeria as it was called) was in control. The Ichkerian government was unable to defend basic human rights, prevent waves of criminal violence or effectively counter extremist groups.

Most Russian and Chechen human rights defenders firmly expressed belief that it would be impossible to conduct a free and fair election in autumn 2003. The impossibility of ensuring conformance of the election with international standards under conditions of military conflict seemed obvious. An open and fair election campaign was not possible because neither candidates nor voters could be guaranteed security. Moreover, supporters of independence were effectively disenfranchised by the federal centre from its 'political settlement'.

The impossibility of conducting a free and fair election in October 2003 was confirmed by reports of violations of election laws, massive abuse of official powers, numerous cases of violence against supporters of candidates opposing the acting president, Akhmat Kadyrov, and against election staff and their relatives. There was a faint hope that the election would be seriously con-

tested, so giving the people of Chechnya a small window that would help establish a right to express their views. The election then might have helped to stabilize the situation in the Republic.

The events of the beginning of September, however, dispelled any illusions about the forthcoming election. Effectively a single candidate -- Akhmat Kadyrov – was imposed on voters. Those who might have competed with him either withdrew their candidacy or were withdrawn. Such tactics are not new in Russian electoral campaigns. Similar situations have existed in the Yakutia Republic, the Kursk region, the Far East, and in the Republic of Ingushetia. But Chechnya differs in principle from any other Russian Federation subject. The election in Chechnya was presented by the federal authorities as a key step towards peace following logically from the referendum held in March 2003 in favour of remaining part of Russia. The October election was presented as part of a chain of measures that would stabilize the situation in Chechnya.

Citizens should be able to express their will and should be free to nominate who they choose for public positions. They should be free to nominate even if those nominated do not express total loyalty to Russian authorities. The failure to secure a free election, with an imposed (or self-imposed) winner, did not in any way resolve the conflict in Chechnya. On the contrary, the failure exacerbated the problems that the election should have addressed.

It should be clear to all concerned that it is not possible to solve the problems in Chechnya by force. A political settlement is urgently required. But the presidential election in the republic in 2003 bore no relation to a political settlement. A president elected in such a way will not be accepted as legitimate by the Chechen people.

After the election the 'guards' of the acting president grew rapidly in number. At the time of writing they comprised between 1,500 and 3,000. That growth is a symptom of failure to establish an accepted authority. As Talleyrand said to Napoleon "One can do anything with bayonets – except sit on them".

What stability did the Kremlin achieve by selecting Kadyrov as president? They achieved stability only in terms of a continuation of the brutal policies of recent years. For several years the Russian authorities have relied on force to

solve the Chechen problem and have treated the legality of their actions as a formality. Russian military actions in Chechnya, with thousands of soldiers, armoured vehicles, and bombing aircraft, were labelled as 'anti-terrorist operations'. Current interventions by the-powers-that-be are justified in terms of the same anti-terrorist label allowing for continuation of the same policy of force – but 'chechenizing' the conflict. The emphasis by the Kremlin on 'political processes' concealed both the scale of violence and the causes of violence. A democratic election in the republic would have revealed something of the complexities that were being covered up.

Kadyrov became a Kremlin favourite because of his readiness and eagerness to rule Chechnya brutally. His record indicated no fear of blood and violence. His attitude was shown in speeches right after Election Day. In an interview with *Kommersant* on 7 October 2003, Kadyrov affirmed his position with the following comments, "If I am the head of the republic, then my people should be everywhere. In the future I am going to be even tougher. Nothing else is possible; they must be totally subordinate to the president. I am not going to allow anybody to rule the Republic. If anybody still thinks this, they are sadly mistaken."

The way the legal president of Chechnya intended to act was clear. The infamy of Kadyrov's men and the growth of his personal army made it clear how these brutal policies would be implemented. The people of Chechnya, and even federal servicemen in the region, so feared Kadyrov and his men that no one could oppose him.

The brutal violations of human rights and humanitarian law made monitoring the election situation in Chechnya our civic and professional duty. Such monitoring is essential in the light of the increasing impunity of the ruling authorities associated with the lack of any recognized political opposition. We collected detailed data on the events of August – mid-October 2003 and attempted to create a full and objective picture of the conduct of the election in the situation of a continuing armed conflict.

We issued an electronic bulletin twice a week starting on 22 September 2003. The bulletins gave news of the election campaign prepared from federal and Chechen documents, from the mass media, from information from local

NGOs and from candidates for the presidential office. The bulletins included thematic articles by our monitors who travelled to the republic to get fresh evidence. In total six bulletins were published that were widely disseminated in Russian and in English among the Russian public and the international community.

A thematic section on 'The Presidential Election in Chechnya: Human Rights Monitoring' was open on the site of the Moscow Helsinki Group (www.mhg.ru) to feature comprehensive and daily updated data about the election in the Chechen Republic, and particularly violations of the electoral law and human rights violations.

During the period mid-October to the close of December 2003, we carefully analyzed all materials gathered in the course of the monitoring effort. We made another trip to the republic to assess post-October developments and the effects of the results of the election on the human rights situation in Chechnya.

Based on the result of this work, we bring to your attention the product of our efforts. The book gives first-hand accounts of political events in Chechnya in 2003 supplemented by thematic summaries, copies of public documents, and fragments of evidence that aim to give indications of the impact of political events, and the often violent activities of the powers-that-be, on ordinary people's lives. The book focuses on the election of October 2003 that symbolises the failure of political processes in Chechnya. Regrettably the book is permeated by the theme of unending violence and human rights violations – the context within which all political events in this region are taking place, the context within which people in Chechnya live their day to day lives.

We stress that in reality there has been no political process in Chechnya. No solution to the conflict has been found. The elections held do not indicate any kind of promise to end war in Chechnya, but are signals of failure. Our book is an open invitation to the Russian public and the international community to participate in a debate on the situation in Chechnya to find a way out from this crisis of many years standing.

Our work would have been impossible without the generous help we received from our colleagues. We thank the Human Rights Houses Network and the

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights for their assistance in the preparation, translation and dissemination of the bulletins and of this book. We express our utmost appreciation to the Internet-media 'Kavkazsky Uzel' (Caucasus Knot at <http://kavkaz.memo.ru/>) for the practical and effective nature of their informational support. We are particularly grateful to our friends and colleagues from the Memorial Human Rights Centre for the information, materials and consultations they provided to us. We thank the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society for regular provision of information as well as for their direct participation in our monitoring effort. We are also happy to acknowledge that in this book we used some of the materials of the Chechen Committee for National Salvation.