

The University of Bradford Institutional Repository

<http://bradscholars.brad.ac.uk>

This work is made available online in accordance with publisher policies. Please refer to the repository record for this item and our Policy Document available from the repository home page for further information.

To see the final version of this work please visit the publisher's website. Where available access to the published online version may require a subscription.

Author(s): Russell, J.

Title: Terrorists, bandits, spooks and thieves: Russian demonisation of the Chechens before and since 9/11.

Publication year: 2005

Journal title: Third World Quarterly.

ISSN: 1360-2241

Publisher: Taylor & Francis (Routledge).

Link to original published version:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=t713448481>

Citation: Russell, J. (2005) Terrorists, bandits, spooks and thieves: Russian demonisation of the Chechens before and since 9/11. Third World Quarterly, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp.101-116. ISSN 1360-2241.

Copyright statement: © 2005 Routledge. Reproduced in accordance with the publisher's self-archiving policy.

Terrorists, bandits, spooks and thieves...

Russian demonisation of the Chechens prior to and since 9/11

By Dr John Russell (University of Bradford)

Abstract The Russo-Chechen conflict, arguably the bloodiest confrontation in Europe since World War II, only attracts the attention of the Western media when the Chechens stage terrorist 'spectaculars' such as the 'Nord-Ost' or Beslan sieges. Putin's uncompromisingly tough line against the Chechens is popular amongst an ethnic Russian electorate traumatised since its own 'Black September' in 1999. Since 9/11, this conflict has been presented almost exclusively as Russia's front line in the international 'war on terrorism'. All Chechens who oppose Putin's policies in Chechnya are dismissed as 'terrorists' and 'bandits'. Yet a satisfactory political resolution of the conflict seems far off; thousands of Chechen civilians continue to suffer and die. Russia's attempt at 'Chechenisation' of the conflict appears to have achieved its 'Palestinisation'. How far has the policy of demonising the Chechens, which helped Yeltsin and Putin to launch their respective wars, become a major obstacle to peace in Chechnya?

Those engaged in studying the conflict in Chechnya are aware that that public concern in the West over one of the bloodiest confrontations on the European continent since World War II remains uncharacteristically low. How is it that the two Russo-Chechen wars (1994-1996 and 1999 to date), which have cost perhaps as many as 200,000 lives,¹ mainly civilians, or more than one-fifth of the entire Chechen population, as well as those of 25,000 Russian forces,² are barely mentioned in any meetings of the G-8, NATO or European Union, or even in national parliaments in Western Europe?³

Clearly, the geographic location of the conflict exacerbates what has been termed 'complexity fatigue'.⁴ During the NATO campaign in Kosovo, memories were resurrected of Neville Chamberlain's infamous description of the German attack on Czechoslovakia as 'a quarrel in a faraway country between peoples of whom we know nothing'.⁵ Demonstrably, people in Western Europe have found it difficult enough to get to grips with the consequences of the collapse of the socialist bloc in the Balkans and Central Europe, let alone comprehend the ethnic and territorial implications of the break-up of the Soviet Union including the constituent parts of the Russian Federation. Chechnya, which does indeed lie in the southeastern corner of Europe, remains for most West Europeans a faraway country and the Chechens, a people of whom they know little or nothing. Political leaders in Western Europe and the United States are well aware that this region only registers on their public's political radar screen at the time of such terrorist 'spectaculars' as 'Nord-Ost' in 2002 and Beslan in 2004 and, to the disappointment of those NGOs and individuals that have engaged with the complexities of this conflict, appear to adopt a policy of 'appeasement' in allowing President Putin virtually a free hand in Russia's crude handling of Chechen self-determination.

Of course, the Chechen wars on occasions have hit the headlines in the Western press. However, this, too, tended to be only when Chechen insurgents launched 'terrorist spectaculars'. In the first war these included the taking of hostages at Budennovsk (June 1995) and Kizlyar (January 1996) and, in the second, the Nord-Ost theatre siege (October 2002), the 'Black Widow' suicide bombings throughout 2003 and the Beslan school siege in September 2004. Significantly, the events of the first war were not generally referred to in the Western press as 'terrorist attacks', whereas those in the current war routinely

were, especially after 9/11, since when the Western public has tended to perceive the Chechens, as it were, through Russian eyes. The ‘rebels’, ‘armed resistance’ and ‘freedom fighters’ of the first war have been replaced in the public perception by the ‘Islamic terrorists’ of the second.

Demonisation of the Chechens - The Russian and Soviet legacy

Paradoxically, due to the popularity in translation of the works written during the Great Caucasian War (1817-64) by Pushkin, Lermontov and Tolstoi, Western readers prior to the Russo-Chechen wars, and to some extent right up until 9/11, tended to share the same highly romanticised perception of the freedom loving, savage yet brave and honourable Chechens and their fellow mountain peoples with that of the native American Indians as portrayed by James Fennimore Cooper’s ‘Last of the Mohicans’ (1826) or the Scottish highlanders in Walter Scott’s ‘Rob Roy’ (1817). What all three groups represent, of course, is the romantic writer’s nostalgia for a traditional tribal/clan-based way of life, tinged with regret that its suppression and extinction are inevitable given its incompatibility with the demands of modernising, ‘civilised’ societies.

The grim reality was that the military confrontation with modern civilisation, in these three cases, led to defeat followed by the *mukhadzhirstvo* (deportation) in 1864 for the Chechens, the Removal Acts for the Indians and the clearances for the Highlanders, all effectively destroying the old way of life.⁶ A common experience, too, was that the injustice, brutality and unequal struggle that accompanied the suppression of the natives, however much this was justified by the perpetrators, left those on the receiving end with a sense of collective cultural superiority over the invading ‘barbarians’. This is graphically described by Leo Tolstoi in *Hadji-Murat*, his tale set in Chechnya in the 1850’s:

Nobody spoke of hate towards the Russians. The feeling, which all Chechens large and small experienced, was stronger than hate. It was not hate, but a refusal to accept these Russian dogs as people and such repugnance, loathing and bewilderment at the clumsy cruelty of these creatures that the desire to destroy them, like the desire to destroy rats, poisonous spiders and wolves, was as natural a feeling as that of self-preservation.⁷

For their part, the Russians, although sharing a positive perception of the *djigit* (mounted mountain warrior), have always counterbalanced it with the negative ‘bogeyman’ image of the ‘wicked Chechen’ who ‘whets his dagger keen’ in Lermontov’s famous ‘Cossack Lullaby’.⁸ Although the average Russian would be hard put to distinguish between a Cherkess or Kabardinian (let alone an Ingush) and a Chechen, it is the Chechens that have entered the Russian imagination as the epitome of this negative perception. This is not just because they are the most numerous of the North Caucasian ethnic groups, but also because even the neighbouring mountain peoples regard them as being the most aggressive and uncompromisingly hostile to Russian rule.

Prior to the first Russian incursion in the 19th century, the Chechens had won already a fearsome reputation for being the most skilled and daring raiders, sweeping down from the mountains to steal livestock, hostages and women and slaves. It was at the request of the Georgians in 1805 that Imperial Russia set out to finally suppress the Chechens. Indicatively, in the first agreement of this campaign to be signed by Chechen elders in 1806 with Russian General Khudovich, setting out the terms upon which the Chechen people might become subjects of the Russian Empire, one clause states:

‘Finally, if the Chechens do not refrain from carrying out raids, they must expect to be completely exterminated and destroyed’.⁹ The message was clear: abandon your old ways or die.

The ambiguity of the Russians’ perception of the Chechens is perhaps best summed up by the evolution of the word *abrek*, which in Lermontov’s time meant a lone armed and mounted outlaw resisting Russian rule, traditionally portrayed, rifle in hand, on a hilltop silhouetted like a wolf against the moon,¹⁰ but by the beginning of the 20th century had acquired the less positive connotation of a *blagorodnyi razboinik* (noble robber).¹¹ By Soviet times, following fierce Chechen resistance first to the Bolshevik Revolution, then to the collectivisation of agriculture and, finally, to alleged support for the Nazi invaders, this word had become a totally negative ‘enemy of the state’.¹²

Although Stalin used this epithet against millions of individuals during his reign of terror, he was selective in collectively punishing whole peoples, as he did the Chechens and 9 other minorities before, during and after the Great Patriotic War (1941-45).¹³ Along with the mass deportations to Turkey and the Middle East in 1864, the injustice of the enforced exile to Siberia and Kazakhstan in 1944 of every last Chechen man, woman and child is etched deeply in the collective cultural narrative of the Chechen people

It has been argued that, apart from military considerations,¹⁴ there was an ideological logic to Stalin’s deportation of entire peoples. Steven T Katz writes:

The Stalinist program of complete cultural conversion through migration...directly and indirectly caused up to 500,000 deaths. It is therefore a

paradigmatic instance of ethnocide facilitated through mass murder. But it was neither intended, nor did it become in practice, an example of physical extermination of a minority nation. The intent was to destroy a variety of minority cultures and the ambitions built upon them, rather than to murder all the members of a specific people.¹⁵

Yet, in effect, Stalin's so-called 'socialist culture' was a thinly disguised version of the Russian culture that the Chechens had fought so hard for so long to resist. Paradoxically, therefore, it led to a strengthening in exile of the Chechen self-reliance and the *teip* (clan) structure that helped sustain this.¹⁶ Unsurprisingly, the return to Chechnya failed in itself to resolve the Russo-Chechen relationship, the Russians still demanding assimilation to Soviet 'proletarian' norms and the Chechens seeking to restore their traditional customs (*adat*) and code of honour (*nokhchallah*).¹⁷

Unequipped or unwilling to follow the opportunities in the oil industry or collectivised agriculture available in the Soviet Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic, many Chechens turned to the nascent 'grey' and 'black' economies that were to thrive in the USSR under Brezhnev. This produced considerable profits for the Chechens and resentment from the Russians, who felt that they were being ripped off.

The link between the deportations and Chechen involvement in organised crime was encapsulated well in an interview given to a Western writer by a Moscow detective:

They had a strong clan system, based on family ties...Every Chechen youth was taught to obey and respect his elders and distrust outsiders. They were also

addicted to firearms as a way of settling disputes or merely demonstrating prowess...They seemed to me very similar to the Sicilian mafia...When the Chechens were finally permitted to return after the war, they discovered that their best land had been occupied by strangers. What else could many of them do but turn to crime? ...It was a logical step to turn their clans into criminal groups.¹⁸

As the power and influence of the Chechen gangs grew, the transition in the stereotype of Chechens held by both the authorities and the public in Russia from that of *abrek* to that of *vor* (thief) or *bandit* (bandit) was not at all difficult. By the time the Soviet system collapsed in 1991, it was widely recognised that, of all the mafia groups: ‘the most successful were the Chechens and their hallmark was extreme violence’.¹⁹ Certainly, the Chechen mafia, established in the major Russian cities, was well placed to exploit the opportunities afforded by the post-Soviet transition to a market economy.

Historically, then, the relationship between the Russians and the Chechens has been characterised by the Russian willingness to use overwhelming might to suppress the Chechen’s distinctive understanding of freedom²⁰ and the Chechens sporadically fighting back while stubbornly refusing to submit to Russian rule. Given the asymmetry of the human and military resources in this confrontation, it is not surprising that the Russians have managed to subdue the Chechens for much of the past two hundred years. Although it could be argued that, unlike the Nazis attitudes to *Untermenschen*, neither the Russians nor the Soviets wished to physically exterminate the Chechens, but rather to resettle and re-educate them en masse, such has been the brutality employed against them as a people, that Chechens find it difficult to distinguish ‘assimilation’ from ‘genocide’.

The Years of the Wolf: Russian demonisation under Yeltsin, 1991-99

From its declaration of independence in October 1991 until the outbreak of the first war in December 1994, Chechnya was *de facto* independent. Russia was more concerned with more immediate internal problems and was faced with a greater security threat on its borders, the civil war in Tajikistan, than that posed by the Chechens. By 1993, the Chechens were alone in refusing to sign the new Russian Constitution, even the Ingush having broken away in 1992 to join the Russian Federation. In 1994, when the Yeltsin administration finally focussed attention on the rebellious southern republic, a series of botched armed insurrections and coups were launched, culminating in the humiliating capture and destruction in November 1994 of a column of Russian tanks masquerading as Chechen oppositionist forces. On 11 December 1994, Yeltsin launched a full-scale land and air attack on Chechnya to 'restore constitutional order', culminating in the disastrous assault on the Chechen capital, Grozny, on New Year's Eve.²¹

Once it was obvious that Yeltsin would not achieve the quick victory in Chechnya that he sought, public opinion in both Russia and the West turned sharply against the Russian federal forces. The disproportionate use of massive air power and artillery to flatten Grozny, ostensibly to 'save' its citizens, the incompetence of the Russian army and the heroic resistance of the Chechen defenders were all played out in front of the world's (and Russia's) media, with the result that support for the Chechen 'underdog' against the Russian 'top dog' was widespread.

Yeltsin's attempts to brand the Chechen resistance as 'bandits' or 'terrorists', the regime 'criminal', and its leader Djokhar Dudayev as 'mad' sounded like hollow rhetoric to a considerable proportion of the Russian population, some 70% of whom remained opposed to the war throughout.²² Because the Chechen fighters spoke Russian and were much more accommodating to both Russian and Western journalists and human rights activists than were the federal forces, the insurgents got more than their fair share of positive reporting and were generally held to have won the propaganda war.

A feature of this war of images between 1994 and 1999 was the identification of the Chechens, by themselves and by the Russians, with wolves. The Chechens adopted the wolf as their national symbol; it featured on the flag of independent Chechnya-Ichkeria and figured in the first line of their national anthem. A Chechen fighter was proud to be called a *borz* (wolf) and strove to uphold the spiritual affinity between the *abrek* and the courageous, lone wolf silhouetted against the moon.

The wolf, however, figures large in the Russian imagination, too, from the host of fairy tales to the machismo of the wolf hunt. Perceived to be a fearsome, cunning, fierce and untameable opponent, for the Russians the wolf came to symbolise the Chechen, a worthy enemy, but one that was wild and dangerous enough to warrant only destruction. Lupine epithets were given to the Chechen leaders: Aslan Maskhadov (President of Chechnya-Ichkeria from 1997) – 'the wolf with a human face', Shamil Basayev – 'the lone wolf' and Salman Raduyev – 'the loony wolf'.²³

The Chechen wolf theme had so caught the public imagination in the first war that it was quite easy for the media to resurrect it when fighting broke out again in 1999. This time,

however, it was against the background of Russia's own 'Black September' after which the public mood swung decisively against the Chechens.

In the aftermath of the apartment house bombings in Moscow and other Russian cities in September 1999, *Izvestiya* headlined one of its reports of a Chechen connection 'Wolf tracks',²⁴ and *Argumenty i fakty* featured on its front page a pack of rabid wolves under the headline 'The Chechen wolves have been driven back to their lair, but for how long?'²⁵ It was alleged that Russian guards at the notorious Chernokozovo detention camp in Chechnya would terrify male Chechen prisoners by calling 'Wolves, the hunters have come', before dragging them out and raping them.²⁶ The campaign by the Russian federal forces to rid Grozny of Chechen fighters on 1 February 2000 was called Operation Wolf Hunt²⁷.

The ordinary Russian soldiers picked up on the wolf theme but, as is usually the case in counterinsurgent operations, the troops soon came up with their own names for their opponents. Among these were *dukhi* (spooks), because of the way the Chechen fighters would appear as if from nowhere, especially at night and melt away again; *chichi* and *chekhi* (both shortened and distorted variants of *chечentsy* - the Russian for Chechens). 'Chichi' was also the name of the monkey known to all Russian children in Kornei Chukovsky's celebrated children's book, *Doktor Aibolit* (Doctor Ouch). The 'monkey' theme was quite popular amongst troops, even officers, such as General Mikhailov, going on record to foreign correspondents calling the Chechen fighters *obezyany* (monkeys).²⁸

The Russian population at large, however, continued to call Chechens, as they did all other inhabitants of the Northern Caucasus *cherniye* (blacks), *chernozhopy* (black arses)

or by the euphemistic acronym 'LKN', meaning *litso kavkazskoi natsional'nosti* (a person of Caucasian nationality). Sergei Sossinsky, wrote in the English-language periodical *Moscow News*: 'Most city residents of peasant origin in Russia blame Jews or "Caucasians" (people who come from the Caucasus) for all their woes. Despite the fact that Caucasians (being Caucasians) are largely white-skinned, common Russians call them blacks or black asses. Police officials have even come up with a term "a person of Caucasian nationality"'.²⁹

Angry and ashamed at their forces capitulation in the first war, and horrified at independent Chechnya-Ichkeria's slide into savage anarchy in the inter-war period, Russian public opinion was not minded to be magnanimous to its southern neighbours. This was reflected in the Russian media, significant sections of which had previously been sympathetic to the Chechen cause. When even Russian reporters who had supported the Chechens during the first war were caught up in the frenzy of hostage taking, an inevitable and significant shift occurred in Russia on the reporting of events in Chechnya.

Moreover, under Maskhadov, a leader who proved incapable either of stopping the excesses of the Chechen warlords, or of creating viable state institutions to tackle the wave of crime, sadistic cruelty and religious fundamentalism that subsequently engulfed it, Chechnya lost its image internationally as a brave 'David' fighting 'Goliath' and became perceived as yet another failed state like Afghanistan or Lebanon, when they were ruled by warlords. The fact that Russia stood by and, effectively, allowed Chechnya to descend unaided into anarchy did little to redeem the Chechens in the eyes of a horrified Western world, which perceived the resurrection of some of more gruesome native customs as barbaric, medieval and uncivilised.

In Russia, the shocking sequence of *Shari'a* beheadings and torture of Russian and foreign hostages by the Chechens, which were captured on videos and widely distributed by both sides for propaganda reasons,³⁰ raised anti-Chechen feeling to fever pitch and led to the Russian media introducing the term *oborotni* (werewolves) to describe the Chechen rebels.³¹ Although not etymologically connected to the wolf in Russian, it did represent a transitional shift in the Russian perception of the Chechens from a wild animal to something as equally inhuman but much more sinister.

'Iron' Putin takes control.

Into this emotional maelstrom stepped Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, the virtually unknown FSB security chief before he was promoted in the wake of the Chechen incursion into neighbouring Dagestan in August 1999. Although this ill-advised attack, initiated by the more militant Islamic faction of the Chechen opposition led by Basayev and Khattab, was condemned by Maskhadov, it served to heighten fears amongst Russians of a fundamentalist Islamic assault on Russia's soft underbelly in the Northern Caucasus and was a critical factor in winning over Russian public opinion for a renewal of military action against the Chechens. To this extent, Putin's rise to power – first as Prime Minister but by March 2000 to President - was linked closely to the hard-line policy adopted vis-à-vis the Chechens. .

However, it was the apartment house bombings of September 1999 that killed over 300 Russians, which finally provoked Russian public opinion into expressing its pent-up fury against the Chechens. Whatever one makes of the conspiracy theories that point the

finger of blame for the explosions at the Russian authorities themselves, what is clear is that the ethnic Russians believed that the Chechens were responsible.³² A poll taken shortly after the bombs found that 64% of Russians wanted all Chechens expelled from the country and a similar percentage wanted Chechen towns and settlements to be bombed, effectively giving the Russian leadership a green light for an all-out assault on Chechnya. However, as one Russian journalist was later to complain, ‘the words “terrorist”, “Caucasian” and “Muslim” had merged into one demonic figure’.³³ Thus, Operation Whirlwind, launched in Moscow to round up suspects connected to the atrocities, affected people from all over the Caucasus.³⁴

Upon coming to power, Putin immediately struck a chord with the Russian public by promising to ‘waste the terrorists in the outhouse’.³⁵ The overwhelming majority of ethnic Russians, it would seem, agreed with their new leader and, two years before the West, perceived their renewed struggle with Chechnya as a front line battle for survival against Islamic fundamental terror.³⁶ Putin at once set about linking this fear of Islamic terrorists to the deep-seated Russian prejudice against Chechen criminality, evoking the following warning from an American commentator on Russian politics:

But the most serious consequences of Putin’s continuing efforts to portray the Chechens as a uniquely criminal nation are likely to be felt elsewhere. Such charges may very well poison relations between ethnic Russians and non-Russian groups within the Russian Federation by opening the door to the possible demonization of others.³⁷

Although the BBC reported, as early as 19 November 1999, that Putin had ordered all Russian news media to refer to the Chechen opposition as ‘terrorists’, this clearly took a little time to take effect. The shift was aided significantly by the rise in profile within the Chechen ranks of the radical Islamist field commander, Khattab, the Jordanian-born ‘wahhabite’ fighter who joined the first war in 1995, and Shamil Basayev’s conversion to the fundamentalist cause during the course of that war. This was reflected in the Russian press by horror stories about the ‘wahhabites’, along the lines of ‘Diary of a Terrorist’ and ‘Concubine of the Wahhabites’ printed under headlines in Arabic font.³⁸

This was the background against which Vladimir Putin handily won the Russian presidency. At the very time in March 2000 when he was declaring the completion of the rout of the Chechen armed formations while likening their leaders to ‘Nazi criminals’, news was breaking of a major ambush in Chechnya led by Khattab, which had left 86 Russian paratroopers dead. Also in March 2000, as Interpol’s new Internet site placed the names of Basayev, Khattab and other Islamists in Chechnya as wanted terrorists alongside that of Osama bin Laden,³⁹ tank commander Colonel Yuri Budanov was raping and killing the teenage Chechen girl El’sa Kungayeva, acts which served as the basis for the most high profile ‘war crime’ trial of the second war.⁴⁰

The impact of these conflicting events on the Russian population was ambiguous; on the one hand both Putin and the army were held to be doing a much better job than had Yeltsin and his forces in the first war. On the other hand, 63% of Russians were ‘alarmed’ by the situation in Chechnya (and another 7% ‘ashamed’), against just 15% ‘satisfied’ and 2% ‘delighted’. A mere 12% wanted the restoration of Chechnya to be paid for out of Russia’s budget. Significantly, given the signals emanating from the

Kremlin, the Russian population was not fooled into thinking that the war was over, 58% believing that the Chechen armed formations had not yet been routed.⁴¹ These contradictory opinions: approval of Putin's strong leadership accompanied by a strong desire for a resolution of a conflict that sporadically gives rise to fear and insecurity over the situation in Chechnya have characterised the Russian public's attitude to the war ever since.

It is clear that the Russian population had been traumatised by the events of September 1999, as were to be both the Israelis in September 2000 with the start of the al-Aqsah *intifada* and the Americans in September 2001 after 9/11. This was manifested in all three countries by intensified feelings of insecurity, an intolerance of any opposition to sometimes quite drastic counterinsurgency measures and an ambiguous attitude to both the norms of international law and the reaction of world public opinion. In all three cases, too, Islamic fundamentalist terrorism was popularly perceived to be the biggest security threat.

Putin was the first leader to link Islamic insurgencies across the world when, on 6 July 2000, in an interview with *Paris Match* he noted that 'We are witnessing today the formation of a fundamentalist international, a sort of arc of instability extending from the Philippines to Kosovo', adding, in relation to Chechnya, 'Europe should be grateful to us and offer its appreciation for our fight against terrorism even if we are, unfortunately, waging it on our own'. Although he repeated this warning at the G-8 summit in Okinawa later that month,⁴² it was not until 9/11 that Western leaders really took note.

If Putin and the Russian population sought to eradicate the threat emanating from Chechnya, then the Russian army generals were out for revenge against the Chechen people for the humiliation of the first war. In June 2000, General Vladimir Shamanov, excused the killing of the wives of Chechen fighters, by asking ‘How do you tell a wife from a sniper?’⁴³ A year later, General Gennady Troshev, called for the public hanging of captured Chechen fighters, stating ‘This is how I'd do it: I'd gather them all on a square and string up the bandit and let him hang, let everyone see.’⁴⁴ With the army chiefs taking such a prejudiced view, it was not surprising that the lower ranks felt that they could act with impunity towards all Chechens. Unlike the first war, with a few brave exceptions, neither Russian nor Western media were allowed free access to the conflict zone. The Russians had clearly learned the utility of ‘information warfare’.

Having used the renewal of the conflict as a springboard to power, Putin’s political future was tied intrinsically to the future conduct of the war. At any time between the enforced withdrawal from Grozny by Chechen forces in February 2000 right up until the summer of 2001, Putin could have satisfied Russian public opinion and sought a political settlement with his opponents. By opting for the absolutist approach advocated by his generals, he was now going to have to find an alternative way out of the impasse into which his policies had driven Russia in Chechnya.

That policy was to be the ‘Chechenisation’ of the conflict, cutting Maskhadov and his ‘moderate’ rebels off from the political process and, in June 2000, replacing them with the Mufti of Chechnya – Akhmad Kadyrov - as his Chief of Administration. All those who continued to advocate Chechen, rather than Russian choices for self-determination were demonised as ‘criminals’, ‘bandits’ and ‘terrorists’. The humanitarian disaster in

Chechnya was deliberately allowed to continue when it could, and should, have been ended. In a move to further strengthen his hand in Chechnya, in January 2001, Putin ordered the FSB to take over control of the counter terrorist operation from the Ministry of Defence.

If 'Chechenisation' was to provide a political settlement in Chechnya, Putin wanted to ensure that it would be one controlled by his 'Chechens' and his 'Russians' from the outset. So, with the Russian public starved of information on the conflict and Western media and human rights organisations no longer free to operate safely in Chechnya, all that was required for Putin's plan for Chechnya to be accepted internationally was for Western political leaders to acknowledge that the Russian president was on the frontline of the struggle against Islamic terrorism. The dramatic events of 9/11 were to provide a most important piece for Putin's Chechen jigsaw.

After 9/11: Putin on the side of 'right'?

By the summer of 2001, only 22% of Russians listed the largely forgotten war in Chechnya as a major concern; compared to 66% mentioning rising prices, 59% the level of poverty, and 41% the rise in crime.⁴⁵ Although NGOs in the West continued to hammer Russia for gross human rights' violations in their reports, the Western public appeared to be curiously disengaged from the suffering. In the absence of any meaningful criticism from Western governments, Putin could continue to operate as he pleased in Chechnya.

However, *Le Monde* reported on 6 April 2001, that for the first time since the launch of the second war in October 1999, the percentage of Russians opposed (46.4%) to Moscow's Chechnya policy exceeded the percentage for (42.8%). In this respect the al Qa'eda attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 came at a juncture that was extremely fortuitous for the Russian leader. Almost overnight, Russia became a key partner of the USA and its allies in the common struggle – the global war on terrorism - against a common foe – Islamic fundamentalism.

Members of the Putin administration were quick to draw the link between the Chechen rebels and Osama bin Laden, the Presidential aide, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, claiming that 800 fighters from the Middle and Far East had been in Chechnya at the start of the second war.⁴⁶ Despite denials by the Chechen side, and doubt cast by journalists covering Chechnya as to the real number and influence of 'Arab' or 'Islamist' mercenaries, the importance of this linkage was accepted both by Western leaders and the Russian public.

Since 9/11, the terrorist attack in Bali and the Moscow theatre siege of October 2002, followed by a succession of domestic terrorist-related incidents in Russia and Chechnya have not only kept the anti-Chechen sentiments high amongst Russians, but done enough to persuade Western leaders that Chechnya is, indeed, on Russia's frontline in the war on terrorism. On receiving President Putin at Chequers in December 2001, Tony Blair drew parallels between the September 1999 bombings and the attacks on 9/11.⁴⁷ With such powerful allies as President Bush and Prime Minister Blair, Putin has been able to play shamelessly the 'Islamic terrorist' card, every time Chechnya appears on the agenda.

By April 2002, in his state of the union address, Putin felt secure enough to declare once more that the military phase of the war in Chechnya was over.⁴⁸ Predictably, within weeks the rebels hit back to prove that it was not, choosing symbolically 'Victory Day' (9 May 2002), when a bomb planted at a military parade in the Dagestani town of Kaspiisk killed 43 soldiers and family members and injured more than 100. Although Dagestani rather than Chechen militants were arrested subsequently, they could still be portrayed as part of an Islamic terrorist alliance and an enraged Russian public blamed the Chechens.⁴⁹

Despite hostility from the Putin administration, but in line with preferences indicated in Russian public opinion polls, prominent Chechens, Russians and Americans were meeting, in the summer of 2002 to elaborate a peace plan for Chechnya. This culminated in Maskhadov's envoy, Akhmed Zakayev, attending a major conference in Liechtenstein in August 2002, alongside such Chechen representatives as Ruslan Khasbulatov and Aslanbek Aslakhanov, the Russians Ivan Rybkin and the late Yury Shchekochikin, as well as such American public figures as Zbigniew Brzezinski, Alexander Haig and Max Kampelman. The compromise peace plan that emerged would grant Chechnya autonomy within the Russian territorial space. Although, the World Chechen Congress in Copenhagen was to endorse this Plan on 29 October 2002, the fall-out from the 'Nord-Ost' theatre siege effectively aborted this process.⁵⁰

Perhaps to counter these positive developments, on 25 June 2002, Putin finally drew a distinction between the civilian population in Chechnya and the rebels, by claiming: 'As far as the negative image of Chechens is concerned, the Chechen people are not to blame for anything. I think this is the fault of the federal center that the Chechen people were left

to the mercy of fate at some point [...] Our task is to destroy this image [of Chechens] as terrorists.’⁵¹

While this policy shift should have enhanced the prospects for an all-embracing political settlement, Putin’s failure once more to distinguish between genuine ‘terrorists’ and those merely opposed to his policies robbed his initiative of any real political substance. Thus, no such tolerance was to be shown to any Chechen advocating a political solution other than that proposed by Putin. For example, Kadyrov, who had fought the Russians in the first war was, to all intents, amnestied, whereas such first war commanders as Turpal-Ali Atgeriev and Salman Raduyev, who also took no part in the second war, were tried, sentenced and died, in less than transparent circumstances within a few months of each other in 2002, in Russian prisons.⁵² FSB agents, meanwhile, had apparently assassinated the Arab field commander Khattab, in April 2002.⁵³

Putin’s policy of demonising the Chechens certainly had borne fruit. The phenomenon of ‘Caucasophobia’ amongst ethnic Russians was spreading fast and, by October 2002, Lyudmilla Alekseyeva, Chairperson of the Moscow Helsinki Group, had identified it as ‘definitely the most serious problem that Russia is faced with today. It is very widespread among the population in general, at all levels’.⁵⁴ It was exacerbated later that month by the ‘Nord-Ost’ theatre siege.

The circumstances around the ‘Nord-Ost’ siege in October 2002 have attracted as many conspiracy theories as had the Moscow bombings of 1999, with the finger of suspicion pointing at the Russian administration.⁵⁵ Whatever the truth, Putin came out of the affair well representing a triumph for the policy of demonisation. Although the Russian special

forces killed all but two of the 129 hostages and 41 hostage-takers, Putin was absolved of blame by his Western allies, with three groups led by Basayev being added to the US State Department's list of terrorist organisations.

The act of terror also further alienated the Russian public, which was quite ready to believe that the Chechens under Movsar Barayev were willing and able to blow up a theatre with more than 800 people in it. The prominence of the 'Black Widow' female suicide bombers reminded the public at home and abroad of the parallels between Palestinian and Chechen tactics in the international 'war on terrorism'.⁵⁶

Putin moved immediately to put an end to the international peace plan process by seeking Zakayev's extradition from first Denmark and then the United Kingdom. At the same time he set in motion his own programme to hold in April 2003 a referendum in Chechnya on a new constitution, which would ban all political parties advocating Chechen independence.⁵⁷ Finally, in October 2003, Putin resolved to hold new presidential elections. Obviously the moves were so controlled and coordinated as to ensure that no one of Zakayev's persuasion would be allowed to participate in these 'democratic' processes, which as a result were not recognised as free and fair.⁵⁸

By cutting out the peace process all moderate opposition, Putin's policy effectively rendered impotent all those advocating diplomacy and inclusive negotiations as a means of reaching a political solution. Those intent on carrying on the fight switched their tactics to suicide bombing. In December 2002 trucks driven by suicide bombers destroyed the government headquarters in Grozny, killing 80, and in May 2003 a further 59 in Znamenskoye. Throughout 2003, female suicide bombers struck in Moscow, in

southern Russia and in Chechnya. At over 300 dead, these attacks proved just as costly in human terms as the series of apartment blasts in September 1999.⁵⁹

On 9 May 2004 (on Victory Day once more), the newly elected president Akhmad Kadyrov was assassinated in a bomb blast at a stadium in Grozny, an act for which Shamil Basayev has claimed responsibility.⁶⁰ As soon as Putin had made clear that Kadyrov successor would also be a Kremlin-approved candidate, even Aslan Maskhadov was moved to warn that any such 'Chechen president' would be the target of future assassination attempts.⁶¹

Although since 11 September 2001, there has been a growing awareness of the danger of giving regimes countering insurgency a *carte blanche* - a Report of the Policy Working Group on the United Nations and Terrorism in August 2002 warned that: 'Labelling opponents or adversaries as terrorists offers a time-tested technique to de-legitimize and demonize them', in the post-9/11 world, Maskhadov's stance is not likely to endear him or his supporters to those advocating peaceful solutions to military conflicts.⁶² As in the wake of the recent tragedy in Beslan, in both the Russian and Western public's perception, it is Putin that emerges as the 'peacemaker' and his Chechen opponents as the 'terrorists'.

Conclusion

By playing shamelessly the 'Islamic terrorist' card, Putin has effectively created in Chechnya a self-fulfilling prophecy. By offering those that still advocate any degree of Chechen separatism a choice merely between abject surrender and continuing a campaign

of sabotage, any that follow the latter path are perceived in Russia and the West as advocates of the very Islamic terrorism against which Putin has warned.

Putin is under little pressure, either domestically or internationally, to acknowledge what is obvious to all who have engaged seriously with the Russo-Chechen conflict: that the war has much more to do with unresolved conflicts left over from previous eras than it has with international terrorism. By tolerating the existence of the 'black hole' of lawlessness on all sides in Chechnya and by continuing to portray even the most moderate of Chechen opponents as 'terrorists', Putin has created his own obstacles to peace in Chechnya.

Perhaps, the debacle in Iraq, a change of administration in the USA or a broader realisation within Russia of the debilitating consequences that the war in Chechnya has on Russian civil society will put pressure on Putin to adopt a more humane and rational approach to settling the Russo-Chechen conflict. For the present, however, the Russian President appears to be firmly in step with the policies of such leaders as Bush and Sharon, who advocate that the eradication of terrorism by force is the best way of tackling insurgency. Unless this changes then a further 'Palestinisation' of the conflict in Chechnya looks more likely than any 'Good Friday' type of agreement to end military hostilities.

The centuries-long failure of the Russians to accommodate the 'other' represented by the Chechens has turned a minor irritant into a costly fixation. Writing in the English-language publication *New Times* in December 2003, two Russian commentators noted that 'the impression has been created that our authorities have a sort of drug addiction to everything connected with Chechnya. And sometimes they react irrationally to it'.⁶³

At times, Putin's irrationality vis-à-vis Chechnya is all too apparent, as demonstrated by his outburst in Brussels on 12 November 2002, when he responded to a French journalist asking probing questions about Chechnya by inviting him to Moscow for a circumcision!⁶⁴

The latest opinion polls show, however, that ordinary Russians are tired of the war in Chechnya, 63% in July 2004 favouring peace talks, with just 24% for continuing military action.⁶⁵ Putin could demonstrate his diplomatic skills and bring an end to the Russo-Chechen conflict. Clearly, this is a compromise that he does not appear eager to embrace. He is aware that fear of Chechen terrorism in Russia remains high, before the tragic events in Beslan 88% of Russians polled expect a recurrence in the near future.⁶⁶ In continuing to play on these fears, by deliberately confusing Chechen self-determination with Islamic fundamentalist terror, Putin is avoiding having to engage with the complexities of Chechnya. Like Yeltsin before him, Putin has got a lot of mileage out of demonising the Chechens; he must now beware of reaping the whirlwind that he has sown.

¹ If one adds together the casualties in all of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, then this figure could be exceeded, see Vanessa Pupavac, 'Disputes over war casualties in former Yugoslavia', *Radical Statistics*, no 69, Autumn 1998, accessed on <http://www.radstats.org.uk/no069/article3.htm>. Like the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, reliable statistics of civilian deaths in Chechnya are hard to come by and are prone to be inflated or understated for propaganda purposes by the warring sides. Akhmed Zakayev, the deputy prime minister of the separatist Chechen Republic of Ichkeria claims that 180,000 civilians have died in the two wars, *International Herald Tribune*, 18 June 2004; the highest aggregate for those killed in both wars of 250,000 was reported on a pro-separatist website on 20 June 2004. <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/article.php?id=2899>.

² Valentina Melnikova, of the Russian Soldiers' Mothers Committee released the figure of 25,000 on 4 May 2004, during an interview on the radio station, Ekho Moskvyy. See Charles Gurin, 'Group Claims 25,000 Russian Soldiers Have Died in Chechnya', The Jamestown Foundation, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol.1, Issue 3, 5 May 2004. By way of comparison, there were 14,751 combat deaths during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979-1989), see Paul F Kisak, 'Recently Declassified Soviet War and U.S. Covert Casualties', <http://www.geocities.com/echomoscow/warcasualties.html>. The same source cites 8,943 Russian combat deaths in the two Chechen wars up until the end of 2001.

³ The pro-separatist Kavkaz Center accuses Western media and governments of paying more attention to animal rights issues than to the Chechen war, see Sirajdin Sattayev, 'Litsemiye i nenavist' (Hypocrisy and Hate), <http://www.kavkaz.org.uk/russ/article.php?id=23998>

⁴ First identified in my forthcoming work: John Russell, 'A War by any other name... Perceptions of the conflict in Chechnya: 11 September and the war against terrorism, Richard Sakwa (ed), *Chechnya: from the past to the future*, London, Anthem Press, 2005.

⁵ Paddy Ashdown, 'We must aim for a Kosovan protectorate' in *The Observer* 28 March 1999. If one takes Iceland as the western, and the Urals as the eastern, extreme of Europe then the midway line would run through Priština, placing the capital of Kosovo firmly in the centre of Europe!

⁶ I have discussed the parallels between the Chechen and Scottish highlanders' experiences in John Russell, 'Mujahedeen, Mafia, Madmen: Russian Perceptions of Chechens during the Wars in Chechnya, 1994-96 and 1999-2001' in *Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol.18, no.1, March 2002, pp.73-96.

⁷ Lev Tolstoy, *Hadji-Murat*, Moscow, Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1965, p. 110.

⁸ 'Cossack Lullaby' by Mikhail Lermontov, translated in Laurence Kelly, *Tragedy in the Caucasus*, London, Constable, 1977, p.207. The film about the current conflict, 'Chechen Lullaby' (Nino Kirtadze, France, 2000) commences with a reading from this poem.

⁹ Ivan Rybkin, *Consent in Chechnya, Consent in Russia*, London, Lytten Trading, 1998, p.157.

¹⁰ See, for example, <http://www.abrek.vov.ru/>.

¹¹ The word *razboinik* (robber) can also be used in an affectionate, jocular sense, particular when addressing children, to mean a 'scamp' or a 'scallywag'.

¹² Yuri Botyakov, 'Abrechstvo – real'nost' i predrassudki' (The Abrek way of life – reality and prejudices), in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 August 2003.

¹³ Apart from the Chechens, the Ingush, Balkars, Karachai, Kalmyks, Germans, Greeks, Meskhetian Turks, Crimean Tatars and Koreans were deported en masse from their traditional areas of settlement, all for allegedly collaborating with the enemy. For the experience of the Chechens in exile, see Michaela Pohl, "'It cannot be that our graves will be here": the survival of Chechen and Ingush deportees in Kazakhstan, 1944-1957', in *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol.4 (3), September 2002, pp.401-430.

¹⁴ The military case was undermined if only by the fact that some 300 Chechens and Ingush fought in the heroic defence of the Brest fortress in the summer of 1941, one of them –Magomed Uzuyev- being made posthumously a Hero of the Soviet Union for his exploits. See

<http://www.chechnyafree.ru/index.php?lng=eng§ion=fwareng&row=4>.

¹⁵ Steven T. Katz, 'Mass Death under Communist Rule and the Limits of "Otherness"', in Robert S Wistrich (ed), *Demonizing the Other; Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia*, Amsterdam, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999, p. 280.

¹⁶ See Yan Chesnov, 'Byt' chechentsem: lichnost' i etnicheskiye identifikatsii naroda' (To be a Chechen: individuality and ethnic identification of a nation) http://www.sakharov-center.ru/chs/chrus04_4.htm

¹⁷ For adat, see V. A Dmitriyev (ed.), *Adat; traditsii i sovremennost'* (Adat, traditions and the present day), Moscow-Tbilisi, MNIINK, 2003; for *nokhchallah*, see

<http://www.chechnyafree.ru/index.php?lng=rus§ion=nohrus&row=0>

¹⁸ Stephen Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: the Theft of the Second Russian Revolution*, London, Michael Joseph, 1994, p. 39.

¹⁹ Martin McCauley, *Bandits, Gangsters and the Mafia: Russia, the Baltic States and the CIS since 1992*, London, Pearson Education, 2001.

²⁰ The traditional Chechen greeting is 'Be Free!' ('Marsha woghiyla' in the masculine form). See Lyoma Usmanov, 'The Chechen Nation: a Portrait of Ethnical Features', <http://www.truth-and-justice.info/chechnat.html>.

²¹ There exists a substantial literature in English on the run up to and conduct of the first Russo-Chechen war. Among the most valuable sources are Carlotta Gall and Tom de Waal, *Chechnya: a Small Victorious War*, London, Pan, 1997; John B Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999. For a Russian perspective, in English, that covers both wars, see Dmitri V Trenin and Aleksei Malashenko with Anatol Lieven, *Russia's Restless Frontier: the Chechnya Factor in Post-Soviet Russia*, Washington, Carnegie Endowment, 2004.

²² Michael Haney, 'Russia's First Televised War: Public Opinion on the Crisis', *Transition*, vol.1, no.5 (1995), pp. 6-8.

²³ For Maskhadov, see the front cover of *Novoye vremya*, 1996, (38); for Basayev, *Moskovskiyev novosti* 18-25 June 1995, p.4; for Raduyev, *Moscow News*, 15-21 May 1997, p.1.

²⁴ *Izvestiya*, 11 September 1999

²⁵ *Argumenty i fakty*, 1999, (38)

-
- ²⁶ <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/4253.html>
- ²⁷ <http://www.rian.ru/rian/chechnya/en/02/06.html>
- ²⁸ For *dukhi*, see Vyacheslav Mironov, 'Ya byl na etoi voine' (I was in that war), original of 1995 published online by http://www.artofwar.spb.ru:8101/mironov/index_tale_mironov.html. The English translation (by Alex Dokin), 'Assault on Grozny Downtown' was published in 2001 online, http://lib.ru/MEMUARY/CHECHNYA/chechen_war.txt; for *chichi*, see Igor Mariyukin, 'Tri nochi, chetyre dnya' (Three Nights, Four Days), http://www.artofwar.ru/mariukin/tale_mariukin_3.html., see <http://bestbooks.ru/Child/Chukovsky/0101.shtml>; for *chekhi* (which means Czech in Russian) but appears to have derived from a combination *chechentsy* and *dukhi*, see Vadim Rechkalov, 'Razboi na Ploshchadi Trekh Durakov' (Robbery on Three Fools' Square), <http://main.izvestia.ru/print/?id=26227>.
- ²⁹ See his 'Our Own and Strangers', <http://english.mn.ru/english/issue.php?2002-5-15>
- ³⁰ In the film *Chistilishche*, ORT Video, 1998, the Chechen commander has his *mujahideen* crucify the young Russian tank driver; on the weekend prior to the Russian invasion of Chechnya on 1 October 1999, Russian TV2 showed one of these gruesome videos of a stereotypical bearded Chechen cutting the throat of a fair-haired Russian soldier, see Jeffrey Taylor, 'Russia on the Edge', <http://www.salon.com/travel/feature/1999/10/02/moscow.index.html>.
- ³¹ See the video 'Oborotni' on <http://www.compromat.ru/main/chechya/video1.htm>
- ³² Among sources pointing to a 'conspiracy' are Yuri Felshtinsky & Alexander Litvinenko, *Blowing Up Russia*, New York, Liberty, 2002; David Satter, *Darkness at Dawn; the Rise of the Russian Criminal State*, Yale University Press, 2003, and the documentary film 'Assassination of Russia', Charles Gazelle Transparences Productions, France, 2002.
- ³³ Marina Koldobodskaya, *Novoye vremya*, 2000 (42), p.5
- ³⁴ For the poll, see *Novoye vremya* 1999 (40), p.9; for 'Operation Whirlwind, see CNN report 'Turmoil in Russia', 28 September 1999. <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9909/28/moscow.roundup/>;
- ³⁵ *Nezavisimiya gazeta*, 25 September 1999.
- ³⁶ For a detailed account of Putin's handling of the 'Islamic factor' in Chechnya, see John Russell, 'Exploitation of the "Islamic Factor" in the Russo-Chechen Conflict Before and After 11 September 2001', in *European Security*, vol.11, no.4, Winter 2002, pp. 96-109.
- ³⁷ See Paul Goble, 'Russia: Analysis from Washington – Criminalizing Politics', <http://www.rferl.org/features/1999/10/F.RU.991020133930.asp>.
- ³⁸ For an account of Chechen attitudes to 'wahhabism', see Anne Nivat, *Chienne de Guerre: a Woman Reporter Behind the Lines of the War in Chechnya*, New York, Public Affairs, 2001, pp.1-30; for a brief introduction to 'wahhabism', see <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/analyses/wahhabism.html>; for 'wahhabite' horror stories see *Argumenty i fakty*, 2000 (38), p.6 and 2000 (44), p.23.
- ³⁹ *ITAR-TASS*, 6 March 2000; Alan Kachmazov, 'V Internete poyavilis' seti Interpola: chechenskikh boevikov nakonets priznali terroristami' (Interpol site appears on the Internet: at last the Chechen fighters have been recognised to be terrorists), *Izvestiya*, 7 March 2000.
- ⁴⁰ <http://www.compromat.ru/main/chechya/budanov.htm>
- ⁴¹ <http://www.wciom.ru/?pt=43&article=490>
- ⁴² <http://www.sptimesrussia.com/archive/times/589/opinion/army.htm>
- ⁴³ From an interview published in *Novaya gazeta*, 19-25 June 2000. Shamanov was later elected Governor of the Ulyanovsk Region; see Boris Kagarlitsky, 'Insane "Heroes" of our Time', *Moscow Times*, 25 June 2002.
- ⁴⁴ <http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/06/04/russia.execution/>
- ⁴⁵ <http://www.wciom.ru/?pt=48&article=341>
- ⁴⁶ *The Jamestown Monitor*, vol.7 (197) 11 October 2001.
- ⁴⁷ *The Guardian*, 22 December 2001.
- ⁴⁸ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1936998.stm>
- ⁴⁹ 'Vzryv v Kaspiiske, 9 maya 2002 goda' (Explosion in Kaspiisk, 9 May 2002), 'Novaya gazeta' special investigation, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/rassled2/vzrivi/karta-kaspiysk.shtml>
- ⁵⁰ http://www.peaceinchechnya.org/peace/peace_liechtenstein.htm
- ⁵¹ <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2002/06/1-RUS/rus-250602.asp>
- ⁵² <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2002/12/161202.asp>
- ⁵³ <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2002/04/260402.asp>
- ⁵⁴ Zinaida Sikevich, 'The Caucasus and "Caucasus Phobia"', translated by Robin Jones for Rosbalt News Agency, 18 December 2002, <http://www.rosbaltnews.com/2003/02/07/60777.html>; for Alekseyeva, see <http://www.csce.gov/pdf/101502CSCEbriefing.pdf>

⁵⁵ John Dunlop has analysed Kremlin involvement in the ‘Nord-Ost’ drama, ‘The October 2002 Moscow Hostage-Taking Incident’, *RFE/RL Organized Crime and Terrorism Watch*, 18 December 2003, 8 and 15 January 2004.

⁵⁶ See articles by Bobo Lo, ‘No Compromises’, Jack Thompson, ‘Telling Lies’, and John Russell, ‘On the Side of Might’, *The World Today*, vol.56 (12), December 2002, pp. 13-18.

⁵⁷ Article 8, point 4, forbids the creation and functioning of social organisations... that aim to... violate the territory integrity of...the Russian Federation. The Russian President is also given the right to remove the elected President of Chechnya (Article 72d). See <http://www.chechnya.gov.ru/republic/const/>

⁵⁸ Officially, the turnout in this referendum was 89.48%, with 95.97% approving the Constitution. For a sceptical account of the vote, see International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights report, ‘The Constitutional referendum in Chechnya was neither free nor fair’, <http://www.osce-ngo.net/030328.pdf>; for the presidential elections, see Andrei Riskin, ‘Kak “izbirali” Kadyrov’ (How Kadyrov was “elected”) in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 6 October 2003. The Zakayev extradition hearings at Bow Street Magistrates’ Court in London, in which I appeared along with Tom de Waal as an expert witness for the defence, supported by the evidence given in court by Sergei Kovalev, Andrei Babitsky, Yulii Rybakov, Ivan Rybkin and Aleksandr Cherkassov, lasted from December 2002 until November 2003.

⁵⁹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/world/europe/3020231.stm>

⁶⁰ John Russell, ‘Primed to Explode’, in *The World Today*, vol.60 (6), June 2004, pp. 20-21.

⁶¹ See interview given to Chechen press website on 1 August 2004,

<http://www.chechenpress.info/news/2004/08/01/07.shtml>

⁶² Paragraph 14, see <http://www.un.org/terrorism/a57273.htm>

⁶³ Nairi Hovsepyan and Lyubov Tsukanova, ‘Chechnya and Russia. War and Peace’, in,

http://www.newtimes.ru/eng/detail.asp?art_id=535

⁶⁴ See Robert Wielaard, ‘Chechnya Query Incenses Putin’, *Washington Post*, 13 November 2002.

⁶⁵ <http://www.levada.ru/chechnya.html>

⁶⁶ <http://www.levada.ru/takoemnenie.html>