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## The Pitfalls of the Normalization Process in the Chechen Republic

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On 12 June, 2000, a decree was made public entitled “On the Organisation of a Provisional System of Executive Power in the Chechen Republic”, with Akhmad Kadyrov at its head. In the opinion of some commentators, that decree was intended to mean the *de facto* establishment of presidential rule in the republic.<sup>1</sup> Half a year later, in January 2001, Vladimir Putin signed a decree entitled “On the System of Institutions of Executive Power in the Chechen Republic”, signalling the definitive predominance of the concept of “managed Chechenisation”, and thus a retreat from *de facto* direct presidential rule. According to that decree, the provisional administration was to be transformed into the permanent government of the Chechen Republic with broader, clearly defined authority. The process of stabilising the social and political life in the republic was to have been accompanied by the creation of the attributes of democratic statehood – a constitution, the institution of a presidency and of legislative power (parliament). The ultimate goal was to have been the signing of an accord on the division of authority between the Chechen Republic and the central, federal government. The parliamentary election which took place last autumn was characterized by the Kremlin as the last step in bringing Chechnya back to the constitutional realm of the Russian Federation, thus indicating a clear stabilization of the situation in the republic.

The present article is an attempt to explore the peculiarities of the process of institutional *regime legitimization* which has been taking place in Chechnya for at least five years.

### **The Demographic Aspect**

At midyear 1999, just before the second Chechen war, in an attempt to illustrate the extent of the humanitarian catastrophe afflicting the country during 1996–1999, officials of the Russian Federation repeatedly made reference to the extremely small number of inhabitants in Chechnya. In the role of premier, Vladimir Putin spoke of readiness for political dialogue with the 220 thousand Russians and 550 thousand Chechens who had left Chechnya.<sup>2</sup> In order to legitimise the standing of the Chechen “exile parliament”, in the autumn of 1999 he stated that “parliament is prepared to take the initiative, particularly in light of the fact that there are now more Chechens in Russia than in Chechnya itself.”<sup>3</sup>

We should bear in mind that the number of Chechens permanently residing in the republic until 1994 was 900 thousand people at the most. On the basis of simple arithmetic using these official figures, it follows logically that before the beginning of the invasion in late September 1999, the number of Chechens living in their homeland would come to between 300 and 350 thousand (if, of course, we do not take into account the victims of the first Russo-Chechen War). As is well known, the vast majority of the non-Vaynakh population (including nearly all of the local Russians and Russian speaking people, numbering ca. 300 thousand before the war<sup>4</sup>) had left the country by the mid 1990s. Sober estimates of the population of the Chechen Republic currently speak of between 600 thousand<sup>5</sup> and 700 thousand residents.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, according to data from 2001 from the so-called Federal Project for Reconstruction of the Economics and Social Sphere of the Chechen Republic, the population was said to consist of 603.4 thousand people, with 145 thousand living in cities and 458.4 thousand in villages. According to official data, in the year 2000 the number of inhabitants in their productive years, i.e. the bulk of the voting population, was around 400 thousand.<sup>7</sup>

Since 2000, however, priorities have changed. Authorities have begun to feel the need for showing the extent to which life in Chechnya has been stabilised in order to support the perceived legitimacy of Russian federal rule. The growing number of inhabitants in Chechnya is argued in support of this legitimacy. Toward this end, Moscow began a massive campaign to relocate Chechens from camps in Ingushetia where around 150 thousand refugees were living. Human Rights Watch has reported that during relocation, “cases of the use of intimidation and blackmail by migration authorities have been registered.”<sup>8</sup>

Simultaneously with their refusal to extend the mandates of the OSCE in the Chechen Republic as well as of other international organisations, in late 2002 Russian authorities began using force to close the camps in Ingushetia and “in a situation when temperatures were hovering at below freezing, authorities are using threats and promises in an attempt to force [Chechen refugees] to return to what is de facto a combat zone.” According to Human Rights Watch, “Representatives of migration authorities are putting camp residents under constant pressure, threatening them with arrest on trumped-up charges, denying them their food rations and turning off gas and electricity in the winter, and in some cases even moving them out of their tents.”<sup>9</sup> The last camp for Chechen refugees was shut down on 10 June, 2004.

### **The Constitutional Referendum of March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

Let us now return to the constitutional referendum itself. A sociological research survey conducted by representatives of Memorial just a few weeks before the referendum produced some noteworthy data. According to that field study, only 12% of those asked said they intended to vote, 20% were undecided and 68% were certain that they would not participate in the referendum.<sup>10</sup>

Of the 656 people surveyed in more than 70 residential areas, only 4% agreed with the statement that the conditions in Chechnya are currently suitable for free and fair elections, while 79% gave negative answers. Six percent of those surveyed expected a tangible improvement of the situation as a result of the referendum, 36% expected everything to remain unchanged, and 34% expected the situation to worsen.<sup>11</sup>

The results of the referendum held on 23 March 2003, strangely enough, showed totally different figures. In response to one of the three questions, “Do you accept the Constitution of the Chechen Republic?”, 96.03 % of the votes were in favour and 2.69 % were opposed. 95.03 % of Chechens voted ‘yes’ on the holding of presidential elections in the republic (only 2.84 % voted no). The distribution of votes was similar for the question on the need for holding elections to the Parliament of the Chechen Republic.<sup>12</sup>

According to official data, 89% of the adult population of the republic participated in the constitutional referendum on 23 March. Paradoxically, the highest voter turnout was not in the traditionally pro-Moscow oriented northern districts (78.45% in Shelkovskiy District and 68.11% in Naurskiy District), but rather in the bastion of the separatists, i.e. in war-torn Ichkeriya, in

which 82.92% of the voters participated in the Shatoyskiy region, 99.58% in Shroy, 91.37% in Itum-Kale and 88.23% in Basayev's home village of Vedeno.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Putin's secretary Sergei Yastrzhembsky was already making reference before the referendum to the "traditionally high" voter turnout in Chechnya.<sup>14</sup> The chief mission of the referendum was, therefore, confirmation that it was the will of the Chechen nation to keep the republic within the framework of the Russian Federation.

Because of the expectation of fraud, recognised international organizations refused to monitor the holding of the referendum, so the only participating observers were foreign journalists and a delegation from the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly.<sup>15</sup> Nathalie Nougayrède, a reporter for *Le Monde*, had this to say concerning voter turnout: "on the day of the election, Grozny was practically abandoned. At one or two voting precincts I saw a few people, maybe four or five, and 20 to 25 people during the whole day. Everyone I had talked with a few days before the referendum claimed that they had intended not to vote."<sup>16</sup> Human Rights Watch made similar observations in a report from 2003: "Official reports on the referendum spoke of an extraordinarily high turnout at polling sites, of the enthusiasm and hope with which the Chechen population greeted the referendum, expressed with singing and dancing in the streets. This depiction, of course, is absolutely contradictory to reports from journalists and other observers who visited Chechnya independently, and this constitutes grounds for doubting the legitimacy of the referendum. According to information from other independent sources, no crowds of people were recorded at polling stations, and Grozny seemed to be more or less abandoned (if we overlook a protest against 'disappearances')."<sup>17</sup>

The day after the election, Alexander Veshnyakov, chairman of the All-Russian Central Election Commission, declared that the number of voters was even higher than the 540 thousand registered voters. This figure – 540 thousand registered voters – means that the population of the republic had actually doubled from 1999 to 2004. The fact that figures from the census taken in Chechnya in October 2002 indicate a population of 1,088,000 (!) is not without interest.<sup>18</sup> A. Veshnyakov tried to explain such optimistic figures in part by the fact that many Chechens from refugee camps in Ingushetia had voted in the referendum.<sup>19</sup> In spite of the pressure to participate in the referendum exerted by federal and republic authorities, Anna Neistat from Human Rights Watch, who had spent election day directly in Ingushetia, stated that their participation in the election was "terribly small. Our sources indicate that of the 50,000 registered

voters among the forced migrants, only about 5000 took part in the referendum.”<sup>20</sup> Independent media also reported on the total absence of participation in the referendum outside of Chechen cities. Of course, Russian television broadcasts were full of images of long lines in front of polling stations.

The Russian soldiers serving on Chechen territory who were allowed to participate in the referendum were naturally much more enthusiastic. On the eve of the referendum, Alexander Veshnyakov declared that the 38 thousand Russian soldiers “permanently displaced in Chechnya” would participate in the vote.<sup>21</sup> According to unofficial figures, most independent commentators agree that the contingent of occupation soldiers “permanently displaced” on Chechen territory is around 80 thousand.<sup>22</sup> On 25 March, referring to sources from the interior ministry, the newspaper *Krasnaya zvezda* stated that 98.7% of the Russian soldiers serving in the republic had participated in the vote.

In reference to the outcome of the referendum, President Vladimir Putin told the Russian public that the high voter turnout “exceeded our most optimistic expectations.”<sup>23</sup> He also boasted emphatically that the “Chechen nation had done this [made its choice] directly and in the most democratic manner.”<sup>24</sup> A week before the referendum on 17 March, he had already been heard to say that the “referendum is an immensely important step in the struggle against devastation along the path towards order. I am convinced that a constitution accepted by the nation is the basis for a political solution in Chechnya. Its adoption will allow the election of a truly democratic government that is backed by the people’s trust.”<sup>25</sup> The date of the election of the Chechen president was then set for 5 October, 2003.

### **The presidential election of October 5th, 2003**

The presidential election in Chechnya was held using tried and true methods. Potential observers from respected international organisations refused to participate in election monitoring, although many observers from CIS member countries and mainly from Middle-Eastern and African countries (Organisation of the Islamic Conference, League of Arab States, Organization for Solidarity of the Peoples of Asia and Africa) were present at selected polling venues.

A pre-election voter preference survey conducted by the independent agency Validata in the middle of 2003 deserves attention. According to that survey, Ahmad Kadyrov had the lowest confidence rating from the Chechen population (11.4%). The majority of those surveyed had

confidence in the young Chechen billionaire Malik Saydullayev (20.1%), followed by the members of State Duma Aslambek Aslakhonov (18.3%) and by Professor Ruslan Khasbulatov of the Plekhanov Academy of Economics in Moscow (19.2%). All three of them had long been living in Moscow. Moreover, 66.5% of those surveyed named Ahmad Kadyrov in response to the question: “For which of the politicians listed above would you not vote under any circumstances?”<sup>26</sup>

Just before the election, however, three of Kadyrov’s realistic challengers were blocked from participating in the election. Alexei Malashenko summed it up very well: “They thoroughly frightened Jabrailov and they compromised Saydullayev with a mudslinging campaign. In the case of Aslakhonov, however, a more elegant approach was taken. He was offered the post of advisor to the Russian president for the Southern Federal District. Such offers are not refused, especially when failure to do so might (and certainly would) lead to other, less humane methods of persuasion.”<sup>27</sup>

Malik Saydullayev, respected in his homeland for his humanitarian efforts and his untarnished reputation, was excluded from the election campaign at the request of the poet Nikolai Payzulayev, one of the eight remaining presidential candidates. The official pretext for his exclusion was the accusation that some of the signatures collected in support of Saydullayev’s candidacy had been forged. After Saydullayev’s registration had been cancelled by the Supreme Court of the Chechen Republic, the businessman appealed to the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation for a review of the decision, but the high court let the Chechen court’s challenged ruling stand. In this connection, it is interesting that immediately afterwards, the relevant commission examined the signatures collected by Saydullayev’s team and recognized them as authentic, but this had no bearing whatsoever on the final decision made by the authorised officials. Moreover, the “complaint that was the basis for Saydullayev’s exclusion, though this may seem ridiculous, was dated 1 August, and at the same time, it contained references to 27 August.”<sup>28</sup> Payzulayev’s complaint was thus, with respect to legal formalities, totally inadmissible.

Another businessman from Moscow, Hussein Jabrailov, brother of Umar Jabrailov, the owner of a chain of hotels and casinos in Moscow, withdrew after consultations with Alexander Voloshin, so as not to become the “cause of a civil war”, as he told the member of State Duma, Aslambek Aslakhonov, referring to the pressure exerted on his (armed) relatives by Kadyrov’s

armed bodyguards. His fears, which began to take a more concrete profile after his aforementioned emergency meeting with Voloshin, were apparently also based on the situation back at home and were by no means unfounded. Gantamirov's right hand man, Sultan Satuyev, left no one in doubt about the determination of "real" Chechens, declaring in the year 2000: "We have earned our right to power in Chechnya with our own blood. So-called Moscow Chechens are trying to take that power from us. They sit there in their fancy apartments and don't want to get themselves dirty here with us, but they still keep forcing their way to power. And if they try take our right to power from us, we will declare war on them."<sup>29</sup> In recent years, this type of dynamic has been at work in the relationships between various groups of Chechens. There seems to have been a similar attitude among Kadyrov's supporters in 2003 towards Jabrailov, Saydullayev et al.

In an interview for the newspaper *Moskovskiy komsomolets*, Aslakhanov admitted that during a special meeting with Vladimir Putin, the president had asked him: "Would you like a job with the executive branch?" And he offered me the position of presidential advisor for Southern Russia and Chechnya."<sup>30</sup> Aslakhanov certainly could not resist such a flattering offer.

On election day, besides Kadyrov there now remained only little-known candidates who played the parts that the Kremlin had intended for them, acting as extras in this staged travesty of democratic politics. The fact that Ruslan Khasbulatov decided at the last minute to withdraw his candidacy is also quite interesting. According to the journalist Petra Procházková who had interviewed him, "He had gotten the feeling just in time that he should not play another role in this farce."<sup>31</sup> As a result, with a voter turnout of 87.7%, Kadyrov received 82.55% of the votes.<sup>32</sup> The life of the Chechen leader came to an end unexpectedly; due to a blast on 9 May, 2004 at Dynamo Stadium in downtown Grozny that took the lives of Kadyrov and five other people, including a seven-year-old girl. The circumstances of the assassination clearly indicated that the explosives must have been installed by people close to Kadyrov – those who had access to construction work at the stadium. In a touching address to the inhabitants of Chechnya and Russia, Putin called Kadyrov a "truly heroic person", who had "departed undefeated."<sup>33</sup> Putin awarded him the highest state award – the Star of the Hero of the Russian Federation posthumously and named a street after him in a newly built suburb of Moscow.

### **The free presidential election of Alu Alkhanov” of August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

Ahmad Kadyrov was a charismatic leader and was feared and respected by some of the Chechen population. His authority more or less ensured the functioning of the republic's agencies. Some former field commanders and their associates had held on in the Chechen militias only because he had been able to secure immunity for them from federal security agencies. After his death, the key task became to hold onto the gains made through “Chechenisation”, securing under the existing conditions the continuity of power in the republic. If we don't reckon with Ahmad Kadyrov's younger son Ramzan, whose candidacy was formally devaluated due to his age of 28 (the approved Chechen Constitution requires the minimum age of 30 to be qualified for presidency), two local candidates were seriously considered: Taus Jabrailov and Alu Alkhanov – not politicians, but the people closest to Ahmad Kadyrov and his clan. The “Moscow Chechens” were not considered. Jabrailov's candidacy (he specialised in public relations and helped Kadyrov to win the presidential election) was soon eliminated from consideration because, among other things, he was not considered to be a sufficiently influential and charismatic politician to handle securing “order” in the republic. Putin's choice fell to Alu Alkhanov<sup>34</sup>, general-lieutenant of Interior forces, who had repeatedly shown himself to be faithful to the Kadyrov clan and to Moscow. According to the Chechen political scientist Timur Musayev, “in the person of Alu Alkhanov, the interests of the Kremlin, striving for the maintaining of the present situation in the republic (neither war nor peace), coincided with the interests of the ruling elite, whose main goal is to remain in power and also to maintain and solidify control over the main flows of money in Chechnya.”<sup>35</sup>

The early presidential election, held in Chechnya on 29 August, 2004, went entirely the Kremlin's way. Alu Alkhanov won by a clear majority after Malik Saydullayev's candidacy was refused by the Central Election Commission on account of a technicality. He had Chechen Republic instead of Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic written in his ID as the place of birth.<sup>36</sup> With an 84.6% voter turnout, 73.8% of eligible voters cast their votes for him. Nothing else was to be expected, after all. For the umpteenth time, his only real rival, the Moscow businessman of Chechen origin Malik Saydullayev, had been eliminated from the campaign on procedural pretexts. He had been barred from registration because of an alleged inaccuracy in his passport. The other supposed candidates, whose candidacy was regarded as rather fictive, received far fewer votes: Movsur Hamidov 8.48%, Abdulla Bugayev 4.62%,



Vakha Visayev 4.14%, Umar Abuyev 3.21%, and Mahomed Aydamirov 0.72 %.<sup>37</sup> The Kremlin's logic can be seen in the opinion stated in the pro-government newspaper *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, referring a few days after the election to how the Chechen voters had shown "a truly high level of activity, far higher than the Russian average, and had without hesitation voted for the government candidate, of whom they might never even have heard half a year ago [...]. Why Alu Alkhanov? First of all, Chechen voters would have voted for just about anybody that had been recommended by Vladimir Putin, who is their only hope, thanks to his firmness and rigour in the fight against terrorism and the renewal of political power, the economy and civilisation in Chechnya."<sup>38</sup>

The real state of affairs obviously was not as pretty as it had been described by official Russian agencies and their partners abroad. When the decision was finally made on Alkhanov's candidacy, Moscow put the tried and true "election mechanisms" to work. The real challengers were eliminated from the campaign, and the other candidates were given the roles of bit players – their election campaigns were limited to a few villages or city districts where the Russians quickly set up election headquarters. The Kremlin protégé's election campaign was massive, overwhelming the others. Putin came in person to support Alkhanov, his addresses were broadcast on television day and night and the media constantly referred to his ambitious plans for reconstruction of the republic. The promise of the withdrawal of Russian troops was made repeatedly. The majority of Chechens see that as a real and necessary precondition for a peaceful existence. The Kremlin's most important mechanism, however, was the repeated use of the potential of "ghost voters". Like the previous time, tens of thousands of Russian soldiers displaced in the republic took part in the election. Independent observers said Grozny looked "absolutely empty" on election day. "In the rooms where we stayed (about 15–20 minutes) we met about two or three people," said Tanya Lokshina, the executive director of the Moscow Helsinki Federation. Antuan (Antoine) Arakelyan, a Strategy Centre independent observer from St. Petersburg, visited polling sites in the villages Vedenov, Tsa-Vedenov, Shali and Germenchuk and "everywhere during the same period there were at the most two or three voters." Grigoriy Shvedov, a representative of Memorial noted that "in none of the voting districts did the numbers of voters counted by the election commission match the figures counted by observers. The chairpersons of the election commissions counted four to five times as many. Another peculiarity is the enormous number of soldiers; there are more of them than there are voters." The election witness Alexei Malashenko spoke of the total "apathy of potential voters", making this election

different from earlier ones. Describing his observations, he said: “Last year there existed, one might say, at least some courage: even if Moscow itself is behind Kadyrov, even if the final outcome is known in advance, we will still have our say at least by tearing down and destroying posters of his face, by going to vote for our own candidate and not for the candidate dictated by Moscow. This year, nobody tore down posters, and there was also less excitement at the election headquarters of Alkhanov’s opponents.”<sup>39</sup>

### **The Parliamentary Election of November 27th, 2005**

The long awaited election of the Chechen parliament – the last phase of the purported return of Chechnya to the constitutional embrace of the Russian Federation – took place beneath the shadow of the strengthening influence of Kadyrov Jr., Ramzan. Again, well-proven demographic mechanisms were used. Most international organizations refused to send election observers to Chechnya due to the extent of election fraud they could expect. Interestingly, according to a public opinion survey conducted in the country on the eve of the election, 72% of those responding conceded that the election would go the way the young Kadyrov wanted; in past years, few would have questioned the leading role of Moscow in such serious matters. The election was held using already proven “electoral mechanisms”, and respected international organisations refused to monitor the voting. The winner was the “Fatherland Party” (Otechestvo), the faction "Sole Russia" (Yedinaya Rossiya), which received 60.65% of the votes, followed by the Communists with 12.2% and the Union of Rightist Forces 12.39%.<sup>40</sup> No really independent or significant Chechen politician got into parliament, who could have represented a threat to Ramzanov’s paramount interests. A final clean-up of the ballot took place before the election, and the only opposition candidate who could theoretically have threatened Kadyrov’s eminent standing, Bislan Gantamirov, was “surprisingly” excluded from the slate of the ultranationalist party “Homeland” (Rodina) a few weeks before the election without the offering of any comprehensible reasons. It was later determined that this occurred as the result of a relatively banal incident – his brother had been kidnapped by Kadyrov’s followers, and the withdrawal of his candidacy was the ransom demanded for his brother’s release.

Interesting details concerning the methods used for the parliamentary elections were provided by a worker for Memorial, according to whom the results of the election were known „a minimum of 24 hours in advance“: "Thus, for example, as early as November 26 we received

information that in constituency No. 7 of Kurchaloi district, where Ayshat Israpilova and Salman Zakriev were standing as candidates for election to the Republic's Council (the upper house), Zakriev 'would get in,' since he is Ramzan Kadyrov's brother-in-law," he said. "In the adjacent constituency of the same district, where three candidates were standing for election—Arbi Esembayev, Adam Khamidov and Aslanbek Aydamirov—the person supposed to be elected was Aydamirov, who is the brother of Kadyrov's wife. That is precisely what happened. Already on the evening of November 28 it became known that these two candidates [Zakriev and Aydamirov] had been 'elected' as deputies".<sup>41</sup> This was the outcome of the elections, which have been featured by Vladimir Putin as „another serious step towards the political reconciliation in the republic“.<sup>42</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Despite all the tireless efforts the Kremlin have made to promote the referenda in Chechnya as part of the so-called “political process” indicating a serious stabilization of the situation in this North Caucasian republic, the reality is quite different. Both the constitutional referendum and the presidential and parliamentary elections were carried out under the full control of the government. In fact, the people had little say in the whole process, which might be said as a phenomenon common in many post-Soviet states. Indeed, the emergence of institutions that may have a democratic face, but ultimately not a democratic nature, cannot be interpreted as a way to achieve real normalization of the political situation in the region. What we are witnessing in present-day Chechnya instead represents a pretentious democratic show intended for both domestic and international spectators.

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A different version of this text is part of the author's book, *An Endless War: The Russian-Chechen Conflict in Perspective*, with a preface from Anatol Lieven (Peter Lang Publishing Group, forthcoming in Fall 2006).

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> According to the current Russian constitution, the introduction of direct presidential rule could only occur in the case of the declaration of a state of emergency, which did not take place, and therefore there was never a formal declaration of presidential rule. See contemporary expert commentary on this question in *Obshchaya gazeta*. 15 June, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> As quoted by Memorial, online: <http://www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/N-Caucas/habitants.htm>. [18. 12. 2004]

<sup>3</sup> *Kommersant-Vlast*. 19. 10. 1999.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Alexander Cherkasov's article „Kniga chisel. Kniga utrat. Kniga strashnogo suda“, online: <http://www.hro.org/war/2004/02/25-4.php>. [28. 12. 2004]

<sup>5</sup> Cherkasov, A.: Rezultaty perepisi v Chechte: demograficheskoe chudo, politicheskiy mirazh ili finansovaya aferay? A Memorial dokument, online: <http://www.memo.ru/hr/news/demo02b.htm>. [28. 12. 2004]

<sup>6</sup> Malashenko, S.: Chechnya dlya vnutrennego i vneshnego polzovaniya. Brifing. Dil 5. 9–10/2003. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Moskva.

<sup>7</sup> *Rossiyskaya gazeta*. 20. 2. 2000.

<sup>8</sup> See online <http://www.hrw.org/russian/reports/2003/russia/osce-chechnya.php>. [18. 11. 2004]

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Jamestown Foundation's Chechnya Weekly. 03. 03. 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> RIA Novosti. 24. 03. 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Chechnya Weekly. 03. 04. 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Chechnya Weekly. 20. 03. 2003

<sup>15</sup> Chechnya Weekly. 27. 03. 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Radio Radicale. 25. 03. 2003.

<sup>17</sup> See [http://www.hrw.org/russian/reports/russia/2003/chech\\_rights.html](http://www.hrw.org/russian/reports/russia/2003/chech_rights.html) [26. 12. 2004]

<sup>18</sup> Grani.ru. 29. 10. 2002.

<sup>19</sup> It appears that Veshnyakov was indeed 'right'. In some polling districts set up near refugee camps in Chechnya, as many as 190% of the registered voters participated.

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- <sup>20</sup> Grani.ru. 25. 3. 2003.
- <sup>21</sup> BBC World News. 21. 3. 2003.
- <sup>22</sup> Die Welt. 31. 12. 2002; Russian redaction of BBC. 26. 3. 2003; Tribune de [Genève](#). 4. 3. 2004.
- <sup>23</sup> RFE/RL. 31. 3. 2003.
- <sup>24</sup> Nezavisimaya gazeta. 25. 3. 2003.
- <sup>25</sup> For the complete text of Vladimir Putin's address to the people of the Chechen Republic, see the web pages of the Press Services of the President of the Russian Federation. Online: <http://www.president.kremlin.ru/text/psmes/2003/03/40678.shtml>. [11.11.2004].
- <sup>26</sup> Nezavisimaya gazeta. 18. 7. 2003.
- <sup>27</sup> Malashenko, S.: Chechnya dlya vnutrennego i vneshnego polzovaniya. Brifing. Díl 5. 9–10/2003. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Moscow.
- <sup>28</sup> Lokshina, T.: Inykh uzhe net, i te daleche. Istoriya snyatiya Saydullayeva. In: Prezidentskiye vybory v Chechne: pravozashchitniy monitoring. Avtorskiye statyi. Online: <http://www.mhg.ru/24957D5/26E7AAD>. [15.11.2004]
- <sup>29</sup> Obshchaya gazeta. 23. 3. 2000.
- <sup>30</sup> Moskovskiy komsomolets . 13. 9. 2003. Aslambek Aslakhonov himself proudly declared that he had already made his decision to withdraw from the upcoming election before the meeting in question with V. Putin.
- <sup>31</sup> See Petra Prochazkova's interview with Ruslan Khasbulatov at Prague Watchdog, online: <http://www.watchdog.cz/index.php?show=000000-000014-000434-000006&lang=3>. [03. 09. 2003].
- <sup>32</sup> Interfax. 07. 09. 2003.
- <sup>33</sup> [http://194.226.82.50/appears/2002/06/24/1158\\_type63380\\_29002.shtml](http://194.226.82.50/appears/2002/06/24/1158_type63380_29002.shtml) [03. 09. 2004]
- <sup>34</sup> Alu Alkhanov was born in January, 1957 in exile in Kazakhstan. He belonged to the Gendergenoy teyp, and his birthplace was the village of Geldigen. After deportation, his family settled in the town of Urus-Martan, considered to be a bastion of pro-Russian forces in Central Chechnya. After graduating from Mogilev police school he served in the army. After his discharge, in 1992 he graduated from the Police Academy in Rostov-on-Don. He held various positions with the interior ministry of the Chechen-Ingushetian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. From 1992 until 1997 he was assistant director and then later director of the Grozniy office of the North Caucasian Headquarters of the Ministry of Interior. During the first Russo-Chechen war, he saw combat action on the side of the Russian forces. At the turn of 1996/1997 he left the territory of the republic, and in the years from 1997 until 2000 he was the commander of a district militia division in the town of Shakhty in the Rostovsky region. Thereafter he returned to the position of the head of the Grozniy branch of the North Caucasian Headquarters of the Ministry of Interior. In 2003 he succeeded Ruslan Tsakayev in the role of interior minister of the Chechen Republic. He is the brigadier general of a militia and has been awarded the Order of Courage. He is married and has three children.
- <sup>35</sup> Respekt. 37/2004.
- <sup>36</sup> By the way, the same „faul“ in Alkhanov's passport was smoothly revised a day before the registration; unlike Saydullayev, Alkhanov was swiftly given a new passport which solved his problem without any complication.
- <sup>37</sup> Interfax, 01. 09. 2004.
- <sup>38</sup> Quote from Sergey Markov. Rossiyskaya gazeta. 31. 8. 2004.

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<sup>39</sup> Malashenko, A.: Chechnya: vybory posredi tetroda. Brifing. Dil 6. 8–9/2004. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Moscow.

<sup>40</sup> Chechenskoe obshchestvo, No 26, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> As quoted by Eurasia Daily Monitor, 01. 12. 2005.

<sup>42</sup> As quoted by Chechnya Weekly, 07. 09. 2005.