

SCTCMG 2018
**International Scientific Conference “Social and Cultural
Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism”**

**CHECHEN REPUBLIC IN THE BEGINNING OF “ANTI-TERROR
OPERATION”**

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Abstract

The Chechen Republic was elevated to the top of the leading news agencies worldwide by the events of the last 10 years of 20th century and the early 21st century. The situation was discussed by various international and human rights organizations, parliaments and democratic countries' presidents. During this period and later the habitants of the Republic had to go through fire attacks and shelling, mop-up operation and terrorist attacks, abductions and arrests, imitations of democratic procedures, persecution on ethnic grounds and religious differences. Since the summer of 1999 the Chechen and Dagestan Wahhabis and radicals, who are brought together under the banner of the Congress of the Peoples of Ichkeria and Dagestan, have focused on Islamic Jihad in Dagestan. It was intended by them to become a further stage "in the complete and irrevocable liberation of the Caucasus from Russia's oppression". However, the Wahhabis invasion in Tsumadinsky and Aukhovsky Districts and the rebellion in the Karamakhi "triangle" in August of 1999 have caused the Second Chechen War. At the end of 1999 the lack of established civil society and real politic parties in Chechnya. The great majority of the people in Chechnya was against the war, but it did not have any organizations expressing its intention to prevent the negative development of events. The rallies against the new war proceeded in Grozny, but they were small in number. People did not believe that they could change this situation. Chechnya needed the war as a policz instrument.

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Keywords: Anti-terror operation, the Chechen Republic, wahhabism, militia, human right, civilian population.



1. Introduction

Various politicians and researchers explain the "invasion" of Dagestan by various reasons. For example, Malashenko (2006) named the following reasons in his book: a provocation masterfully arranged by the Kremlin, as a result of which the Chechen group was defeated, and the autumn escalation of victories of the federal troops contributed to the victory of the pro-Putin unity in State Duma elections in December and paved the way to V. Putin for the presidential seat in March 2000; a collusion between the Kremlin and Sh. Basayev; Sh. Basayev decided to straighten his authority with the help of a new successful military operation, and at the same time to support his claims that his political and spiritual aura extended to other republics. The reason for the Basayev action is also called the desire of "Wahhabis" to raise the idea of an Islamic state to a higher, regional level.

2. Problem Statement

Analyze the causes and driving forces of the events in Chechnya, which had a connection with both Russian and the world processes.

3. Research Questions

In the article the events of 1999 and the first half of 2000 was analyzed: from the beginning of the Second War, covered by the euphemism "anti-terror operation", before the appointment of A. Kadyrov as Head of the Administration of the Chechen Republic.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyze the peculiarities of the social and political processes' development in the Chechen Republic at the end of the 20th century and the early 21st century, and to identify the factors that led to the start of the so-called "anti-terror operation".

5. Research Methods

The principles of historicism, scientific objectivity and systemic nature were used as research methods. The work is based on the problem-chronological principle, since the logic of research requires studying the subject in its development, change and relations.

6. Findings

A general analysis of the situation, publications in the media, memories of eyewitnesses and participants shows that Russian Special Services were aware of the upcoming "invasion of Dagestan", especially since the militia had sleeper agents. But such development of the situation seemed to respond to the interests of the ruling elite of the Russian Federation to resolve the political crisis in Russia, a painless transfer of power. Official Moscow and Grozny stated exactly the opposite. Moscow said that the troops of Chechen militants were being transferred to Dagestan, and Grozny denied any participation of Chechens in these events. Contrary to the allegations of Russian official propaganda, President A. Maskhadov and his supporters condemned the invasion of Wahhabis in Dagestan but did not take a single real step to stop the

military provocation organized in the territory of the state he headed. Long before the outbreak of hostilities, the official Russian propaganda did everything to prepare the Russian society for the war (Wilhelmsen, 2017) and almost all the parties, except Yabloko, supported it (Makinen, 2004).

In the evening of August 25, 1999, the Russian planes bombed the villages of Serzhen-Yurt, Benoy, Kenkhi, and the Veden Gorge. On August 27, V. Putin flew to Dagestan, where he awarded local militiamen, and on August 29 the operation began in the Kadar zone (Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, Kada) mainly by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation. At night of September 4, a residential building in the town of Buinaksk was blown up, and on September 5, several hundred militants who broke through from Chechnya captured several villages in the Novolaksky district. For some reason, there were no units of the Russian army at the breakthrough site, although they had previously been stationed there. At night of September 6, the Russian aviation bombed the villages of the Nozhai-Yurt and Gudermes districts, dozens of people were killed and wounded (Osmaev, 2008). On September 9, 1999, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin met with the mufti of the North Caucasus. There was the mufti of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, A. Kadyrov, who had sharply condemned the provocation in Dagestan and was an ardent opponent of so-called Wahhabism in Chechnya. In our view, neither the August nor September fights in Dagestan caused the Russian society to support the idea of bringing troops into Chechnya. However, the bombings of houses in Moscow on September 7 and 13 attributed to Chechens detonated an explosion of anti-Chechen hysteria, new bombings and shelling of Chechnya, arrests Chechens in Moscow and other Russian cities. On September 23, a new series of bombing attacks against Chechnya was carried out, including the airport, and on that day Putin's sensational "to 'soak' the terrorists 'in the john'" sounded. A. Maskhadov tried to meet with the Chairman of the State Council of Dagestan M.-A. Magomedov, but on September 30, the indignant residents of Dagestan, who blocked the roads, allegedly did not let them meet: the machinery of war was fueled (Osmaev, 2008).

On October 2, the Congress of the Chechen people was held. It was convened by A. Maskhadov (it is not known who elected the delegates and how) who adopted a resolution condemning terrorism, expressing condolences on those killed in the bombings in Moscow and other cities, proposing a peaceful settlement of the situation, but that was the day when the ground operation of the Russian army began.

Back in September 1999, airstrikes on Grozny, other settlements and victims of rocket-bombing attacks were primarily civilians (p. Elistanzhi, Grozny Central Market, p. Kalinina), and armed clashes and shelling were in June-July 1999 (Khvastov, 2012).

Bombings, artillery and rocket attacks on cities and villages of Chechnya caused a mass exodus of the population, but they accepted refugees from Chechnya only in Ingushetia - by the end of September there were about 10 thousand people, by October 11, 1999, - already 146 thousand people. On October 22, by order of General V. Shamanov, the border of Chechnya and Ingushetia was closed, and on October 29, a column of refugees near the village of Shaami-Yurt was attacked by airplanes - more than 20 people were killed, dozens were wounded (some of them died later).

After the outbreak of hostilities, a systematic and flagrant violation of human rights against Chechens throughout Russia was activated during the operation Whirlwind-Anti-terror (Burtin et al., 2001).

Already in the middle of October, Moscow was trying to resolve issues related to the civil authorities in territories under its control. For this, on October 15, the special representative of the Government of the

Russian Federation in the Chechen Republic was appointed with the rank of deputy prime minister – N. Koshman. Within the framework of the representation, the Transitional Administration of the Czech Republic was formed. At the end of October, B. Gantamirov was released from a Russian prison. With the help of the military, he began to form Chechen military detachments that were to take part in the assault on Grozny (Osmaev, 2008).

By the end of December, the entire flat part of Chechnya was under the control of the Russian military, and on December 26, the operation on the capture of Grozny began. Up to 20.000 servicemen participated there; a new cycle of war began.

Fighting simultaneously continued in almost all areas of Chechnya, except for the north. On January 9, the Chechen armed units attempted to counterattack and entered the settlements of Shali, Argun, Germenchuk and Mesker-Yurt. In the center of the city of Shali, the Russian military launched a missile attack that killed about 150 people, mostly civilians; all the settlements occupied by the militants were unlocked during the fighting by Russian troops (Osmaev, 2008).

By the end of January 2000, the Russian troops controlled most of Grozny, which was turned into ruins by rocket attacks, aircraft and artillery. However, the resistance of the armed forces of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, although it was focal, was not suppressed. Nevertheless, on the night of January 31 to February 1, 2000, most of the Chechen detachments attempted to escape from the surrounding Grozny towards the villages of Alkhan-Yurt and Alkhan-Kala. Russian generals G. Troshev, V. Shamanov and others claim that this was the operation of the Federal Security Services which managed to lead the militia into a trap - hundreds of militias and many famous Chechen commanders died (Troshev, 2002). Many Chechen detachments managed to escape through the villages of Alkhan-Kala-Zakan-Yurt-Shaami-Yurt-Katyr-Yurt-Gekhi-chu, to which the Russian troops launched powerful air strikes and artillery. It led to numerous casualties among the civilian population. In these settlements, as well as throughout Chechnya, many men between the ages of 16 and 50 were detained on suspicion of involvement in "illegal armed groups".

One of the most acute problems was the attitude of units of various Russian forces to the civilians. Thanks to M. Saydullayev, the first alarming reports about this were documented in the village of Alkhan-Yurt, where 40 civilians were killed in December 1999. The village itself was plundered. Impunity has caused a massive upsurge of crimes against the civilian population: in February 2000, in the village of Aldy and the Staropromyslovsky district of Grozny, mass murders of civilians occurred (Baysayev, Orlov, Cherkasov, & Estemirova, 2000).

In the second decade of February 2000, the bodies of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation opened a criminal case against the President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, A. Maskhadov, who until then was perceived by Russian politicians as the Head of the Republic with whom it is possible to negotiate.

In February, intensive hostilities continued, and the number of armed sorties reached 150 on some days. On February 29, Russian Defense Minister Sergeev (2000) reported to Putin that "the military part of the operation was completed". Literally several days later, on the edge of Grozny federal forces killed riot police officers of the Moscow suburban OMON who were taken for militia, and a company of the Pskov Airborne Division was killed near the village of Ulus-Kurt. In the village of Saadi-Khutor

(Komsomolskoye) of the Urus-Martan district, the large-scale by the standards of the war in Chechnya fighting began. They lasted until March 20, 2000. The heat of the battles is also indicated using the heavy flame-thrower systems Buratino, the Zmei Gorynych mine clearance units, the Tochka-U tactical missiles in the battles of Saadi-Khutor. By some estimates, between 600 and 1.500 militants died there (there is an information that the bodies of killed people from other areas of Chechnya were brought also) and about 120 Russian soldiers, and the village was destroyed. It was the last major battle after which the Chechen armed formations turned to guerrilla warfare tactics.

Against the background of harsh criticism of the policy pursued in Chechnya by Western countries, the Russian leadership decided to hold presidential elections in Russia there. As a candidate for this position, a Moscow businessman of Chechen origin, U. Dzhabrailov, was most likely registered to demonstrate the equal rights of Chechens in the Russian Federation. The OSCE delegation, which visited Chechnya, concluded that there are no generally accepted conditions for elections and pre-election activities in the Republic. However, the elections were organized and officially announced that 79.41% of the total number of voters in the Republic took part and more than 50% voted for V. Putin. Two weeks before, the Russian Security Services detained the notorious S. Raduyev. In late March, the commander of the 160th tank regiment, Colonel Budanov, was arrested for the rape and murder of 18-year-old E. Kungayeva. In that frame work, the statement of the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation S. Ivanov to the press is significant: "If you want, Budanov is a victim of circumstances and the shortcomings of the legislation that we have ... And he, as commander, could not watch his soldiers being killed and killed (Ivanov, 2004). During March 2000, the current and retired Russian politicians repeatedly raised the issue of introducing the so-called "Direct presidential rule" in the Chechen Republic. On March 27 the heads of administrations and commanders of the Chechen districts called upon V. Putin to introduce such a government, but this idea was not supported.

On April 15, the end of the military part of the anti-terror operation was announced, and the idea of negotiations with A. Maskhadov was actively promoted in the Russian and foreign media. Perhaps the catalyst for such rumors was the decision of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe during the April session to deprive the Russian delegation of the right to vote in connection with the policy in Chechnya.

May 2000 was marked by the small-scale clashes between the Russian units and the Chechen formations. Daily the media reported about casualties among the militia, estimated in dozens, and few killed and wounded Russian soldiers, and about "Zachistka", during which dozens of young men were detained "on suspicion of involvement in bandit formations". The "Zachistka" of the population of Chechnya is associated with mass arbitrary detentions, robbery, extortion, torture, the destruction of the homes of families whose members were a part of Chechen armed formations. The most frequent "Zachistka" or "special operations for checking the passport regime" were in the cities of Grozny, Argun, Urus-Martan, villages of Tsatsan-Yurt, Alkhan-Kala, Old and New Atagi, Chiri-Yurt, Avtury, Serzhen-Yurt, Vedeno District, etc., on the territory between the Sunzha River and the Black Mountains, where the main population of Chechnya is concentrated. The result of these "special operations" was the mass discontent of the population, demonstrations, protest rallies. Even the Head of the administration of the Chechen Republic A. Kadyrov said that the continuation of the practice of massive "Zachistka" can lead to popular

indignation and in this case, he will be forced to admit that the people are right and he will remain with this people (Osmaev, 2008).

By the middle of May and the beginning of June, the militia detachments were able to recover from the heavy losses and establish communication and coordination of their actions. This was evidenced by the shelling of roadblocks, commandant's offices, landmine explosions in almost all areas of Chechnya, the attempt on the life of the mayor of Grozny, S. Makhchayev on May 30. In June, explosions thundered. They marked the beginning of a new kind of militia activity. On June 3, a BMP was blown up on a land mine at the 27th kilometer of the Grozny-Shatoy highway, and on June 8 a car filled with explosives was blown up by two bombers one of whom was a woman in the village of Alkhan-yurt. The explosions like these soon became common in Chechnya and caused the death of hundreds of people.

Since the end of 1999, the statements about the process of restoring the economy and the social sphere of Chechnya have been repeatedly made, but the actual results as at May 2000 were quite modest. In the budget of the Russian Federation in 2000, there were no items of expenditure on Chechnya in full, except for the payment of children's allowances – 516 million rubles, the creation of a fund to support the delivery of petroleum products and food products – 58 million rubles, the payment of compensation for lost housing and property – 428 million rubles. The financing of Chechnya during 2000 was based on the redistribution of funds according to some planned items of the federal budget and extra-budgetary funds.

Significant progress was achieved in the restoration of electricity supply, except for Grozny, and gas supply. The work of many schools has been established, and it should be noted here that they have never stopped the learning process except for the period of hostilities, although some Russian politicians and officials like to say that there has not been an educational process in Chechnya since almost 1991. The universities of the Republic resumed work in Grozny, largely due to the insistence of their rectors.

Simultaneously with the fighting, Zachistkas, aviation and artillery shelling, and the restoration of the destroyed, there was a search for a strong and loyal Moscow leader, enjoying the support of most of the population.

On June 8, 2000, Russian President V. Putin signed the Decree and Regulation "On Establishing Temporary Executive Authorities in the Chechen Republic" (Putin, 2000). After a pause, the President of the Russian Federation on June 12 signed a decree appointing A. Kadyrov as the Head of Administration. According to V. Putin himself "it was not easy for me to appoint him as the Head of the Republic (Putin, 2000). In Russia, this appointment is assessed differently. I had to influence personally". A. Kadyrov, whose authority at the beginning of his activity was far less than that of his predecessor N. Koshman, began to persistently and consistently seek to transform his administration into a full-fledged Chechen government (Salgiriev, Betilmerzaeva, Shamsuev, & Osmaev, 2018), "able to independently form personnel authorities in the Republic and dispose of financial flows. But in Moscow, these proposals of A. Kadyrov were treated very carefully, and nobody was in a hurry to raise his status" (Kosikov, 2001).

The situation in the Chechen Republic was far from stable and peaceful: fighting continued, air and artillery strikes at various regions of the republic, "Zachistka" with blocking along the perimeter of settlements. It was possible to get to Grozny only after standing for many hours in the queue for entry. They began to find mass graves at the place of deployment of Russian subunits or close to them, and the murders of religious figures began. In the cities of Argun, Gudermes, Shali, Novogrozny, on July 2 and 3, the

bombers blew up trucks with explosives in the places of dislocations of the Russian power structures (Solodkiy, 2000).

7. Conclusion

Thus, at the beginning of the so-called “anti-terror operation”, federal forces resorted to indiscriminate large-scale military actions involving aviation and artillery, special operations – “Zachistka”, during which violence that caused the death and disappearance of thousands of people was widely and unmotivated, so to the “political settlement”. With the help of various political technologies, the authorities of the Chechen Republic were formed. As the level of military confrontation in the Chechen Republic decreased, the armed conflict began to “spread out” beyond the borders of Chechnya – to other republics of the North Caucasus.

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