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TatyanaLokshina (Dir.), *Chechnya. Zhizn' navoine*

Tsentr sodeistviia provedeniiu issledovaniia
grazhdanskogo obshchestva Demos, 2007, 248
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Anne Le Huérou

TatyanaLokshina (Dir.), *Chechnya. Zhizn' navoine*

Tsentr sodeistviia provedeniui issledovaniui grazhdanskogo obshchestva
Demos, 2007, 248 pages

- 1 Yet another book about the war in Chechnya? Today, the small North Caucasian Chechnya Republic is often seen as a post-conflict country, enjoying fast and blinking reconstruction and relative safety thanks to the authoritarian and paternalistic rule of its President Ramzan Kadyrov.
- 2 Since 1994, despite censorship, propaganda and extremely difficult access, a considerable amount of material has been issued on the conflict. However, this material is available almost exclusively to Western readers, whereas those concerned most by the conflict, the Russian public, have very few alternatives to official information.
- 3 This makes the publication of *Chechnya. Zhizn' na voine*, a Russian publication, particularly relevant. Part of a non governmental project, it aims to sensitise especially Russian youth to develop empathy with the victims of the conflict.
- 4 The book includes a thorough introduction to the conflict as well as testimonies from Chechens and the author himself, who extensively travelled Chechnya during the conflict. These direct accounts of the day to day life during the war will certainly attract the readers' attention, and may even come as a shock to an audience that is used to official propaganda.
- 5 However, the book does not only dwell on emotions. It also offers much reflection. The introduction includes contributions by prominent specialists, both from Chechnya and from Russia, such as T. Lokshina, Alexandre Cherkassov of the Human Rights Center of Memorial and Timur Aliev, a Chechen Journalist who founded the newspaper *Chechen Society*. Easy to understand, but without being simplistic, the analytical chapters trace the developments that led to the two Chechen Wars in 1994 and again in 1999 against the background of internal politics in Russia in the 1990s.
- 6 The analysis establishes responsibility for the violence and human rights violations on both sides, while – highly unusual for books published in Russia - paying due attention to those of the Russian army. The contributions also touch on the so-called 'normalization' and post-conflict period of the second Chechen War, which were marked by Moscow's attempts to promote a loyal Chechen administration that only fuelled the conflict and increased civil strife.
- 7 Notwithstanding its worth, the book fails to address the international and geopolitical aspects of the war as the author willingly insists on the deep internal causes of the conflict. Also, the text includes some unfortunate factual mistakes that could have been easily avoided ².
- 8 Most importantly, however, one question remains: How will this book reach its target audience, and how many Russian youth have read or will ever read this book?
- 9 (*Free access to this book is available on www.demos-center.ru, see publications*)

Pipss.org is grateful to Suzanne Gentz who edited this book review.

Notes

1 A journalist and expert on Chechnya and the Caucasus, Tanya Lokshina is the former Head of the Moscow based human rights think tank Demos Center. She is presently a researcher for Human Rights Watch based in Moscow .

2 Such as saying the D. Dudaev government came to power in the mid-80s... At the time, D. Dudaev was a brilliant Soviet Army air force General, the first Chechen to have reached such a rank, combating in Afghanistan on the Soviet side.

Tatyana Lokshina (Dir.), *Chechnya. Zhizn' na voine*. Tsentr sodeistviia provedeniuiu issledovaniu grazhdanskogo obshchestva Demos, 2007, 248 pages

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