

Obituary: Akhmad Kadyrov

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3160962.stm>

Sunday, 9 May, 2004

Akhmad Kadyrov was the man the Russian government hoped would bring stability to strife-torn Chechnya.

But the 52-year-old's record had earned him plenty of enemies. Earlier in his career he led a rebel division and called for a jihad against Russia.

But the guerrillas later condemned him as a traitor when he condemned Islamic radicalism and threw in his lot with the Kremlin.

It was this combination of a separatist past and moderate Muslim credentials with pro-Moscow sympathies which persuaded the Kremlin he would be a good man to back in Grozny.

Mr Kadyrov, barrel-chested and often seen in a traditional sheepskin hat, won the presidency in October 2003 in an election which some Chechens condemned as a sham. International observers said the poll was questionable because of a lack of pluralism.

'Enemy number one'

Akhmad Kadyrov was born in Kazakhstan in 1951, during the mass exile of Chechens ordered by Stalin during World War II.

He studied Islam in Soviet Uzbekistan in the 1980s, and rose to prominence in 1989 as head of the first Islamic institute in the North Caucasus.

He was appointed deputy mufti, a Muslim legal expert empowered to give rulings on religious matters, in Chechnya in 1993, when Dzhokhar Dudayev's separatist regime was still tolerated by Moscow.



Kadyrov was used to regular assassination attempts

By the time he took over as mufti in 1995, the 1994-96 Chechen war had already begun. Combining religious activities with a separate role as a guerrilla commander, he proclaimed a jihad against Russia in 1995. The following year Russian troops withdrew, without having restored control from Moscow.

However, things changed in 1999 when Mr Kadyrov openly condemned Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev's attempt to forge an Islamic state by force of arms in neighbouring Dagestan.

He also called on Chechens not to put up armed resistance when Russian forces returned to the republic later that year. Separatist leader Aslan Maskhadov branded him "enemy number one" and sacked him as mufti.

It was this change of fortune which put him in the Kremlin's sights. Someone was needed to head a new pro-Moscow administration, and after some hard negotiation Mr Putin appointed him. As leader, he now found himself with a whole host of enemies and quickly became used to regular attempts on his life.

Moscow critic?

At one point, Mr Maskhadov's forces said they would not even bother to try to kill him any more, because he had so many other mortal enemies to do the job for them. He was accused of forming his own militia, but also criticised because this left his entourage open to infiltration by rebel spies.

Although in the eyes of the Chechen rebel leadership he remained the Kremlin's puppet, he was critical of Russia's actions. He complained of Russia's failure to invest adequately in Chechnya's future, and openly accused Moscow's forces of brutality against Chechen civilians.

On his death, in a bomb attack on a stadium in Chechnya during a parade to celebrate Russia's WWII victory over Germany, President Putin said: "Kadyrov passed away on the day of our national holiday and he passed away undefeated." "He was a truly heroic person. By his activities he convincingly proved that the bandits and the people cannot be put on the same footing."

He had four children.