



Allah's Mountains: The Battle for Chechnya

Sebastian Smith

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Ancient travellers called the Caucasus the mountain of languages. Greeks, Persians, Romans, Goths, Arabs, Mongols and Turks have all passed through the region; poets and artists have been inspired by its rugged beauty and yet its history is a tragic one - for centuries it has been ravaged by virtually continuous war. Every 50 years, it seems, Russia attempts to take control of this hugely strategic part of the world - sandwiched as it is between Iran, Turkey and Russia and crossed by some of the most valuable oil pipelines in the world. The latest conflict to sweep across the area began when Vladimir Putin invaded Chechnya in 1999. Thousands of Russian soldiers and thousands more Chechens - both rebels and civilians - died and Chechnya's towns and cities were bombed beyond recognition. Sebastian Smith travelled to Chechnya during this period. A mixture of travelogue, history and war journalism, Allah's Mountains tells the story of the conflict between this nation of mountain tribes and the might of the Russian army.

A moving example of how history can be written. Smith's account of the historical background to the conflict reads like a novel, but better, because it also has the intimacy and immediacy of an eyewitness account. He has given us a memorable, well-researched account of a peculiarly horrible war. - Literary Review

This is a riveting book, written with almost seamless elegance. - International Affairs

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