

The geopolitical Great Game and Russia's 'Pinochet' option

by Konstantin George

The city of Moscow and all Russia are in a state of shock, sorrow, and anger following two deadly bombings of eight-story apartment buildings in the capital, on Sept. 9 and Sept. 13, resulting in at least 215 deaths. The first blast reportedly killed 94 persons, and the second 121. These horrors were immediately followed by a further escalation, as the terror wave rolled into the Russian provinces. In the early morning of Sept. 16, a car bomb exploded outside a residential building in the southern Russian city of Volgodonsk, killing at least 17 people.

The scale of the terrorism and its nature—random mass killings of civilians in their homes—have effected a profound phase-change in Russia, which will have a great impact on the global strategic situation. A favorite theme of London geo-strategists and associates of the “Bush league” International Republican Institute (IRI), namely, that Russia needs a dictator strongman to restore order and enforce delivery on its obligations to international financial institutions, has reared its head again.

Before the Moscow bombings, the Russian media and many Western outlets had been jammed with articles predicting that President Boris Yeltsin and his faction would stage provocations to provide the pretext to declare a state of emergency, cancel the December elections for the Duma, and thereby postpone next year's Presidential election. Equally visible now is the Russian tradition of “standing together” in the face of an external enemy, as during World War II. Moscow sources even suggested Yeltsin might contemplate coming to terms with the Fatherland-All Russia opposition bloc, led by former Premier Yevgeni Primakov and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov. The State Duma on Sept. 13 voted its unanimous support for the government's anti-terror searches and related measures.

The bombings occurred in the strategic context of the destabilization of the entire Caucasus and Central Asian southern rim of Russia, whose players include major factions of British intelligence and allied figures in the United States, including former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. At lower, operational levels are British-run or -corrupted sections of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Saudi Arabian circles that generously fund “Islamist” insurrections in the Caucasus-Central Asian “arc of crisis,” and British-Pakistani-

allied networks from the United Arab Emirates.

A model for the barrage of blind terrorism against Russia, was the strategy of tension aimed at Italy in the late 1970s, which culminated in the August 1980 Bologna train station bombing. This atrocity came simultaneously with the first great escalation along the Eurasian “arc of crisis” against Russia. The Soviet Union had been lured into Afghanistan, where it found itself in the beginnings of a ten-year war against “Islamist” guerrillas, liberally funded and armed by Britain, the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. In September 1980, the second major war in the arc of crisis was initiated when Saddam Hussein was emboldened to attack Iran, commencing a mass slaughter that ended only in 1988.

The Russian leadership is aware that the source of the blind terror against its people is a strategic threat coming from outside the country. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin told a meeting of Commonwealth of Independent States defense ministers in Moscow on Sept. 15, that the CIS is threatened by international extremists, seeking control of the southern rim of the former Soviet Union: “We are dealing with well-trained international provocateurs who are sheltering behind religious Islamic slogans and trying to establish a so-called ‘new world order,’ ” he said. The reference is to the slogan of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and former U.S. President George Bush after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and East bloc. Putin added: “They [the rebels] have impudently and shamelessly declared their zone of aggressive interests to stretch from the North Caucasus to the Pamirs. We are not fighting rebels, we are fighting terrorists.”

The multi-front destabilization

Timed with the start of the British-sponsored NATO war against Yugoslavia, a destabilization of Russia in the spirit of the 19th-century British “Great Game” went into a heightened mode. In the 19th century, the “Great Game” bogged Russia down in endless wars against British-backed Muslim Caucasus tribes, wars centered in the mountainous areas of what is now Chechnya and Dagestan. Simultaneously, Britain played Persia (modern Iran) against Russia in wars for control of the Caucasus and Central Asia. The third arena of combat, scene of the Russo-Turkish Wars, was the Balkans.

The main purpose of these wars and revolts was to consolidate an “autocratic model” in Russia, in that case, the long

reign of Nicholas I, 1825-55. Behind the autocratic facade, Russia was, in reality, becoming fundamentally weaker, as was exposed before the whole world in the 1854-56 Crimean War humiliation.

Since 1996, *EIR* has been covering the role of British factions and allied Bush circles in the United States, operating through the International Republican Institute, in promoting for Russia the “strongman” or “Pinochet model” (after Chile’s former dictator). This means recasting the rule of the International Monetary Fund-allied comprador caste as a Bonapartist dictatorship, to keep a system of austerity enforcement going. Now, through the interplay of the protracted Dagestan war, the bombing terror outrages, and popular shock and anger, the climate has been created for a “Pinochet model.”

In this scenario projected by British intelligence and its allied IRI circles, both the Yeltsin faction and the opposition bloc centered on Primakov and Mayor Luzhkov, would be swept aside. On Sept. 9, just as the bombed Moscow apartment building was crumbling to dust, one possible Russian “Pinochet” option became official. Krasnoyarsk Gov. Gen. Aleksandr Lebed (ret.) announced his intention to run for President. He was speaking to French journalists in the context of his meeting with former French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua. France’s *Le Monde* reported on Sept. 11 that Lebed compared himself to Charles de Gaulle, who had “established himself in world history by proving that a general could lead a state. In Russia a general can do it and must do it.”

Pasqua, who represents the seamier side of French politics, commented: “Lebed is, in his way, a Gaullist. I am seduced by the personality of the general,” and convinced that “one day or another, the general will have a determining role to play in this country.”

Whether or not Lebed emerges as the “Pinochet” (he certainly is no de Gaulle), is uncertain. But, with the Pasqua visit, the theme that Russia “needs a strongman” was sounded in the West.

Strategy of tension

Since Aug. 7, Russia has been hit by a so-called Islamist revolt in the Caucasus republic of Dagestan. The “Islamists” in question are mercenaries of the Wahhabi sect, which was created by Britain in the 18th century and used in British-run revolts against Russia during the 19th century. The biographies of many of these mercenaries read like a timeline of modern-day British Great Game operations in the Caucasus and Central Asian theaters.

For instance, Field Commander Khattab, a leader of the Wahhabi revolt in Dagestan, is often described as a Jordanian of Chechen extraction, but is reliably reported to hold Saudi citizenship. His profile shows him to be part of the “Afghan mujahideen” mercenaries, created by the British-American-Commonwealth nexus in the 1980s. In 1984, Khattab was recruited in the United States to fight in Afghanistan. He was then active in British-sponsored military operations against

FIGURE 1
The Caucasus chessboard



the southern “soft underbelly” of the former Soviet Union during the 1990s. He fought with “Islamic” rebels in Tajikistan against the republic’s pro-Russian government, in the 1992 civil war there. In 1995-96, he showed up fighting in the Chechen war against Russia.

Another such figure is Salman Raduyev, an ethnic Chechen, responsible for numerous terror acts in the North Caucasus and Southern Russia in the 1990s. Raduyev’s exact whereabouts are not known, nor is his real identity: “Salman Raduyev” resurfaced after being reportedly killed during the Chechen war. Today, he is said to be in the Russian Federation, having recently returned from Pakistan, in a “pre-mission” sojourn to coordinate operations with the Pakistani ISI faction working with British intelligence. Raduyev is on record vowing to spread terrorism to the Russian heartland.

There are British assets at other levels of the terrorist drive. *Izvestia* of Sept. 15 cited Khojakhmed Nukhayevev as “chief architect” of the underground Chechen financial system, exerting such great influence that Azerbaijani Army fighters are deployed under his orders. As *EIR* has reported, (“Russia’s North Caucasus Republics: Flashpoint For War,” Sept. 10, 1999), Nukhayevev is a close friend of Britain’s Alistair McAlpine, initiator of the “Caucasus Common Market.” In April, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* carried a picture of Baroness Thatcher flanked by Nukhayevev and Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov, during their visit to London in 1998.

Nukhayevev and the Wahhabites are also known to operate from and use Azerbaijan territory to funnel men and supplies

into Chechnya and the Dagestan war zones. The Azerbaijani government of President Heidar Aliyev has recently urged the increased involvement of NATO as its ally in the region.

At the lowest, throwaway level, a terrorist "Dagestan Liberation Army" has emerged, and in a communication to Itar-Tass "took responsibility" for the Moscow bombings as "revenge" for Russian Air Force bombings of Chechen villages.

The Wahhabi sect also includes many expendable bomb-carriers, terrorists who conducted the Moscow bombings. Three have been arrested and two others are being sought. The two Moscow apartment bombings are the most dramatic in the escalating blind terror:

March 19: Bombing of the central marketplace in the city of Vladikavkaz, capital of North Ossetia in the North Caucasus. This bombing killed 52 people and was timed with the onset of the NATO war in the Balkans and preparations for new war in the Caucasus.

April 26: Bombing of a hotel and office building near the Kremlin, wounding 11.

Aug. 31: Bombing of the Manege underground shopping center near the Kremlin, killing one and wounding over 40.

Sept. 4: Bombing of housing for military and dependents in Buinaksk, Dagestan, killing 64 people.

Heavy security deployment

The "strategy of tension" employs blind terror to instill fear in the population, such that it will seek any way to end that terror—even dictatorship. So far, the Russian government has taken strenuous security measures to end the terror through law enforcement. Since the Sept. 13 bombing, in Moscow alone intensive police searches have turned up 3,800 kilos of explosives in apartment building cellars and one case (in the south of Moscow at Borisovskiye Prudy 16/2) found 42 sacks of the type of explosive used to blow up the buildings on Sept. 9 and 13.

Major Russian cities are in an effective state of emergency: Moscow is being patrolled by 80,000 police, Federal Security Service (FSB) units, Interior Ministry special units, Interior Troops, and the 7,000 men of the FSB's elite Feliks Dzerzhinsky Division. In St. Petersburg, as in Moscow, there are rush searches of as many apartment blocks per day as possible, coupled with passport and ID control points set up in the streets and train stations. Defense Minister Igor Sergeev announced on Sept. 14 that the Army stood ready to help the Interior Ministry and FSB in carrying out patrols and searches.

Responding to the first bombing, Prime Minister Putin said on national television, on Sept. 10, "Sorrow always unites people. . . . The Russian Federation will do everything . . . to ensure discipline and order." Appearing Sept. 14 on the NTV program, "Hero of the Day," Putin said: "One can act without a [formal] state of emergency—although there do exist other standpoints." This theme took the form of "unity" among factions, when the government and Kremlin supported the

announcement by opposition Presidential candidate Mayor Luzhkov, that he had placed Moscow under a "special regime." Luzhkov declared that all identification papers of non-Muscovites will be checked; those without valid residence permits will be expelled from the capital. It can be expected that those who do not look Russian or Slavic, namely, people from the Caucasus and Central Asia, will become the object of police dragnets. The same theme was sounded outside the cities, as Saratov Gov. Dmitri Ayatskov declared Sept. 14: "This is still not a state of emergency, but tough and even extraordinary measures will be carried out."

The Duma (lower house of Parliament) endorsed the police-state measures. Duma Speaker Gennadi Seleznyov spoke out on Sept. 14: "The authorities must ensure order and tranquility in the country, deputies stand for a severe rebuff to militant terrorists who have encroached on the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation."

As one observer put it, the people of Moscow and other cities are welcoming the troop deployment on the streets. Aman Tuleyev, Governor of the Kemerovo region in Central Siberia, summed up popular reaction to the bombings: "One more series of bombings in Moscow and the people themselves will demand a state of emergency. It will be introduced and then some kind of a Defense Council will be created, as it was under Stalin."

It remains to be seen whether Bush's IRI will succeed in imposing the pro-IMF Pinochet option, or whether the strategy of tension will bring forth a government of national resistance. One danger lies in the potential for Russian anger to be misdirected against neighboring Islamic countries—rather than the British controllers of the Great Game. Prime Minister Putin himself made a false move in this direction, when on Sept. 14, he told U.S. FBI Director Louis J. Freeh that Osama bin Laden was behind the Dagestan offensives, and was the "initiator and inspiration." The highly publicized bin Laden has been the center of the media propaganda put out to obscure the British-American-Commonwealth faction's strategic deployment of international terrorism.

There is also the danger that in this heightened atmosphere, there will be a general war in the Caucasus. Even before the Moscow bombings, Putin had said on Sept. 7 that the Chechen authorities are no longer in control of the republic and all agreements reached with them are worthless. This seemed to have undercut any chance to cooperate with moderate Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov against the rebel extremists. Then, over the weekend, Sept. 11-12, came a Chechen escalation, when President Aslan Maskhadov proclaimed a full national mobilization. Both sides are perilously close to the outbreak of a second Chechen war, which now would spread throughout the Caucasus. Russian military sources reported on Sept. 15 two concentrations of Wahhabite rebels along the Chechen-Dagestan border, one of 1,500 men in the Khasavyurt District and one of 1,000 in the Babayurt District.