

## British war provocations in Caucasus escalate

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Great Britain's longstanding plan to break up Russia as part of its global "divide and conquer" imperial stratagem has moved into a new and most dangerous phase, at precisely the moment when central bankers from throughout the advanced sector are finally admitting that the world financial system is at a near-breakdown point. This volatile mix of escalating British-manipulated provocations against Russia's North Caucasus region, and looming financial chaos, could take the world stumbling into a nuclearized World War III—much sooner than most world leaders and informed citizens are prepared to imagine.

On Sept. 29, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin admitted that Russian ground troops have launched an offensive into Chechnya, aimed at driving "Islamist" separatists into the mountain regions in the south of the breakaway republic. Unlike the 1994-96 Chechen War, Russian troops are apparently not aiming to crush the separatist forces, but are seeking instead to force them into the mountains, before the beginning of the harsh Caucasus winter, and to deny them the ability to carry out military operations in other parts of Chechnya or in bordering Dagestan, which has been the scene of two major incursions in recent months. Preparatory to the ground invasion across the plains of northern Chechnya, which began several days before Putin's statement confirming the action, Russian jets had carried out several weeks of aerial attacks all over Chechnya, striking a wide range of targets, including civilian infrastructure that the Russian government claimed was abetting the terrorist operations.

The problem with the Russian military operation—while it is totally justified—is that it fails to address the true nature of the threat. Chechen separatists are but one element of a British-directed plan to break up Russia by exploiting to so-

called "soft underbelly" of the vast Russian territory, by fostering ostensibly "Islamicist" breakaway rebellions in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

In the past several months, that British drive has accelerated, with a series of "blind terrorist" attacks in Moscow and other major Russian cities, which have caused a mass psychological trauma, on top of the already intolerable economic hardships that most Russians have been experiencing, increasingly, for the past decade, under the weight of International Monetary Fund austerity prescriptions and the looting by western speculators and Russian compradors.

As Mark Burdman reported in last week's issue of *EIR* ("British Pyromaniacs Light War Fires in Eurasia"), the evidence is conclusive that London is the driving force behind the Caucasus warfare.

As if to underscore that British perfidy, the City of London's house organ, the *Financial Times*, ran a Sept. 30 editorial, calling for Chechen independence. Under the headline "Chechen Folly," the *Times* wrote: "The Russian military claims to be taking a leaf out of NATO's Kosovo campaign in launching 'precision' attacks. But it appears to be causing far more collateral damage to civilians than NATO did. If there is a parallel with Kosovo, it is more with Belgrade's attempts to keep Kosovo within Serbia, and the lesson of history is that a hostile people on a territory cannot be kept indefinitely within a country by force. . . . The pity is that Moscow did not recognize Chechen independence in 1996."

Simultaneously, the BBC aired an interview with "Islamist rebel" Shamil Basayev, the ostensible leader of the terrorist insurgency. BBC correspondent Phil Devall gloated as he described Basayev's broad grin as he predicted that Russia would "choke" on the Caucasus. Earlier in the week, BBC

had aired another interview, with Mullah Omar, the head of the Afghanistan Taliban, who attacked the United States and the United Nations for failing to condemn and counter Russia's military moves in the Caucasus.

These latest British advertisements of their drive to dismember Russia underscore the fact that no proper flanking attack against this British-led effort is possible without first understanding the British factor. Indeed, the current crisis in Chechnya and Dagestan is but the latest phase of an operation that was launched more than 25 years ago, *from London*. The fact that the British are just as adamant today about breaking up Russia as they were, at the height of the Cold War, about breaking up the Soviet Union, is but one measure of the fact that, for the London oligarchy, the issue was never "fighting communism." Rather, as several sources close to the British monarchy have recently told *EIR*, *it has been British Foreign Office strategy for the past 200 years to break up all rival empires*. Today, that list of "empires" includes Russia, China, Indonesia, India, and the United States.

### A brief timeline

Long before Zbigniew Brzezinski's famous visit to the Khyber Pass in 1979, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the beginning of the decade-long Afghan War, such British geopolitical strategists as Dr. Bernard Lewis had called for the creation of an "arc of crisis" stretching along the entire southern tier of the Soviet Union, from Iran through Central Asia. Lewis and his acolytes, including Brzezinski and Harvard University's Samuel Huntington, Brzezinski's Carter administration national security deputy, pressed for western backing of nominally Islamic insurgents warring against the Soviets all across this "arc."

The first direct move to implement the "Bernard Lewis Plan" came in 1978, with the Islamic Revolution in Iran, during which time, the British threw their support behind Ayatollah Khomeini. For the British, the Shah of Iran's efforts to modernize his country were unacceptable. However, no sooner did Khomeini consolidate power in Tehran, than the British encouraged Saddam Hussein to make war against Iran, a war that devastated both countries from 1980 to 1988. Afterwards, the Thatcher government in Britain got George Bush to bomb Iraq. This was a stereotypical British Foreign Office "divide and conquer" operation.

In a 1979 *Time* magazine cover story, both Brzezinski and his alter ego, Henry Kissinger, were quoted, reassuring people that the Islamic fundamentalist upsurge posed no threat to the West, but would do deadly damage to the Soviet Union. In a later manifestation of the same insane geopolitical dogma, Brzezinski clone Huntington would declare Islam to be the new enemy of the West, in his *Clash of Civilizations* recipe for a post-Cold War global conflagration.

It was in response to the British-steered developments in Iran, that Soviet airborne units were sent into Afghanistan on Christmas Eve, 1979. A decade later, Soviet troops withdrew

from Kabul, in what was universally described as "Russia's Vietnam."

### The Afghansi mujahideen

The Afghanistan War caused what some so-called experts euphemistically called "corollary damage." The Golden Crescent region, subsuming Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, became the world's largest opium-producing region. Of the 35,000 Islamic combatants who were recruited by the United States, Britain, Israel, and other western governments to conduct the surrogate war against the Red Army in the mountains of Afghanistan, many were left, following the "victory," with nothing to show for their efforts. Their fervor to defeat the Soviets was soon retargetted against the United States, their own Middle Eastern and North African nations, and others.

As Lyndon LaRouche wrote in *EIR* on Oct. 13, 1995: "A new wave of international terrorism is stalking the world. It is led by a horde of mujahideen mercenaries: human flotsam, like the 1920s 'rootless' veterans of World War I, cast upon the world in the wake of the 1980s Afghan War. This is the worst terrorism yet; it is much worse than that of the 1970s. It is coordinated from the capital of a former U.S. ally, London; worse yet, it was created with the complicity of former U.S. Vice President (later, President) George Bush. . . . Once the Soviet forces had retreated from Afghanistan, the Anglo-American-sponsored mujahideen, together with their massive drug- and arms-trafficking apparatus, were dumped on the world, a legion of 'special forces'-trained mercenaries, for hire. Today that legion of mercenaries is a keystone-element within a new international terrorism, which reaches westward across Eurasia, from Japan, coordinated through a nest of terrorist-group command-centers in London."

It is this Afghansi mujahideen apparatus that makes up the core of the networks running the terrorist insurgency in Dagestan, Chechnya, and on the streets of Moscow today. Through layers of cut-outs—inside the Pakistani military's ISI intelligence service, within the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, through a wide range of often-British-run non-governmental organizations, and drug-and-gun crime syndicates, which wash their criminal proceeds through British Commonwealth offshore banks—this international terrorist capability has been transported onto Russian soil, on behalf of the British strategic assault launched nearly a quarter of a century ago.

To a certain extent, this operation has taken on a life of its own. The name "Osama Bin Laden" has been attached to this structure, like a shorthand symbol, connoting an "Islamic" face on what is, in fact, a British classic countergang operation. However, the guiding British hand cannot be detected unless one views the sweep of developments of the past 25 years, summarized above. The British do not micro-manage all of their terrorist assets. They create the framework, set the process in motion, and let the "living theater" proceed on its own.