

Administration, now, we are headed for a form of World War III, beyond the imagination of most.

In 1999 I produced a recorded tape, a videotape, called "Storm Over Asia." If you look at the events which have occurred, since the early Autumn of 1999, when that tape was produced, and trace the course of events up to this moment, the moment of the Putin speech, reported this weekend, then, you understand the nature of the present strategic situation. And you understand, that if we don't get rid of the Bush-Cheney Administration, this planet, as a whole, will go into, very rapidly, a succession of events which will culminate in the establishment of a planet-wide new dark age of all humanity.

This is not a debater's question. This is the question of the survival of humanity. And that is the question posed, in this U.S. Presidential election campaign. If Bush wins, kiss humanity good-bye, for some time to come.

Putin Addresses Russian Nation on the Crisis

Russian President Vladimir Putin flew into Beslan, North Ossetia in the early hours of Sept. 4. He held a meeting with security officials involved in the school hostage siege, then spent half an hour at one of the local hospitals, visiting wounded children and School No. 1 Principal Lidiya Tsaliyeva, who was seriously wounded but conscious.

Upon his return to the Kremlin, Putin addressed the nation later the same day with a statement excerpted below. It included a very sharp formulation about terrorism being run from the outside, by people who see Russia as a strategic adversary, highlighted in italic below.

It is difficult and bitter to speak. A terrible tragedy has taken place in our land. . . . We encountered not only murderers, but people who used their weapons against defenseless children. . . .

There are more than a few tragic pages and heavy events in the history of Russia. We are living in the conditions that came about after the collapse of an enormous, great state. A state that proved unviable in a rapidly changing world.

But, despite all the difficulties, we have managed to preserve the core of that giant, the Soviet Union. And we called this new country the Russian Federation. We all expected changes. Changes for the better.

But we turned out to be absolutely unprepared for much

also on Sept. 7, also fingered the "West" for the assault on Russia.

In addition, the Russian Foreign Ministry has asked for the extradition of top Chechen rebel leaders Akhmadov and Zakayev, who have asylum in Washington, D.C. and London, respectively.



Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sept. 7 in Moscow, lighting candles for the children, parents, and teachers slaughtered in Beslan.

of what changed in our lives. Why is that?

We are living in a transitional economy, which does not correspond to the condition and level of development of our society and political system.

We are living in conditions of internal conflicts and inter-ethnic frictions, which have become aggravated, having earlier been harshly suppressed by the state ideology.

We stopped paying adequate attention to defense and security, and allowed corruption to afflict the courts and law enforcement.

Moreover, our country, which had had the most powerful system of defense of its borders, in an instant became undefended from either West or East. It will take many years and billions of rubles to create new, modern, truly defended borders. But we could be more effective here, if we were to act in a timely and professional manner.

In general, it has to be admitted that we have failed to grasp the complexities and dangers of the processes taking place in our own country and in the world. In any event, we

The Caucasus Chessboard



were unable to react to them adequately. We showed weakness. And weak people get beaten up.

Some people would like to tear off a juicy morsel from us, others are helping them do it. Helping, on the assumption that Russia, as a major nuclear power, is still a threat to them. And therefore this threat should be removed.

Terrorism, of course, is only an instrument for achieving such goals.

As I have said many times, we have repeatedly encountered crises, rebellions and acts of terror. But what has happened now is an inhuman, unprecedentedly cruel crime of the terrorists. It is not a challenge to the President, the Parliament or the government. It is a challenge to all Russia. To our entire people.

It is an attack on our country.

The terrorists think they are stronger than we are. That they will be able to terrorize us with their cruelty, paralyze our will, and disintegrate our society. And, it would seem that we have a choice—to repulse them, or to come to terms with their claims. To give in, to allow Russia to be destroyed and dragged apart, in hopes that they will finally leave us in peace.

As President and head of the Russian state, as a person who has sworn to defend the country and its territorial integrity, and simply as a citizen of Russia, I am convinced that we really have simply no choice. Because if we allow ourselves to be blackmailed, and succumb to panic, we will plunge millions of people into an endless succession of bloody con-

flicts, like Karabakh and the Transdniester and other such tragedies. . . .

We are dealing not with individual acts of intimidation or discrete terrorist intrusions. We are dealing with a direct intervention of international terror against Russia. With a total, cruel, full-scale war, which again and again is taking the lives of our compatriots.

World experience shows, unfortunately, that such wars do not end fast. . . . We are obliged to create a rather more effective security system and to demand from our law enforcement agencies, actions adequate to the level and scale of the new threats that have emerged.

But the most important thing is the mobilization of the nation before this common danger. Events in other countries show that terrorists are most effectively repulsed, when they run up against not the power of the state, but organized civil society that has closed ranks.

Dear compatriots, those who sent the bandits to commit this terrible crime had the objective of setting our peoples one against another, terrorizing the citizens of Russia, and unleashing bloody strife in the North Caucasus.

I would like to say the following, in that connection.

First. In the immediate period ahead, a complex of measures will be prepared, for reinforcing the unity of the country.

Second. I believe that a new system of interaction must be established for the forces and resources involved in overseeing the situation in the North Caucasus.

Third. An effective anti-crisis management system needs to be created, including fundamentally new approaches to the work of law enforcement agencies. I especially stress that all of these measures will be completely constitutional.

Dear friends, together we are living through very difficult, sorrowful hours. . . . We were and shall always be stronger than them—with our morals, our courage, and our human solidarity. I saw this again last night. In Beslan, people literally soaked with grief and pain took even more care for and supported each other. And they were not afraid to risk themselves, for the life and peace of others. Even in the most inhuman conditions, they remained people. It is impossible to reconcile with the pain of these losses. But these trials have brought us closer together and made us re-evaluate many things. Today we must be together. That is the only way we shall defeat the enemy.

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