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Putin, the Patriot

That's why the neocons hate him – and love Chechen terrorists

With the recent **downing** of two planes over Russian airspace, now **believed** to be the **result** of a **terrorist** attack, and the horrific **Beslan** stand-off, in which women and children were butchered on the world stage and **in living color**, a curious double standard is asserting itself in the West, almost without argument or even much notice. The response to these attacks by Western leaders has been almost uniformly to put the onus of blame, not on the terrorists, but on Vladimir Putin, who is accused by, **among many others**, neo-connish "libertarian" Cathy Young, *Reason* magazine's resident New England schoolmarm and inveterate busybody, of "**misusing**" the Beslan incident. Putin has long been **demonized by the neocons** as an aspiring Stalin, and now he is being blamed for provoking and inflaming the Chechen terrorists by refusing to negotiate with them.

George W. Bush, who has presided over an unprecedented assault on civil liberties in the post-9/11 era, had the gall to express his "concern" over "**the decisions that are being made in Russia**," echoing **earlier comments** by Secretary of State Colin Powell. The Europeans were quick to join the chorus, as **Reuters reported**:

"Though the European Union and the United States condemned the Beslan violence, they infuriated Moscow by pressing it to deal with the root causes of the decade-long Chechnya conflict. The 25-nation bloc, Russia's biggest single trading partner, said on Wednesday that a settlement could be reached only through 'far-sighted, humane and resolute' policies.

"I hope they (the solutions) are forthcoming and that the government of the Russian Federation will not conclude that the only answer to terrorism is to increase the power of the Kremlin," said EU External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten."

Patten should talk: the EU **regularly seizes** every opportunity to **increase its own power** at the expense of member states, routinely ignoring the **popular will**. When the Euro-crats don't like the results of an election, they simply **ignore it** – and hold another one, until they get the "right" result.

The Russians, to their credit, told Washington to **stuff it**. "First of all," replied Foreign Minister Sergei Lavror,

"The processes that are under way in Russia are our internal affair. And it is at least strange that, while talking about a certain 'pulling back', as he (Powell) put it, on some of the democratic reforms in the Russian Federation, he tried to assert yet one more time the thought that democracy can only be copied from someone's model. We, for our part, do not comment on the US system of presidential elections, for instance."

Them's fightin' words. In the era of American hegemony and preemptive belligerence, there is no such thing as an "internal affair." *Everything* that goes on *everywhere* is subject to Washington's critical review. Will Russia elect its regional governors directly, or will Kremlin appointees be confirmed by local legislatures? Going way beyond mere hypocrisy, the Americans, who long ago abolished the rights of the separate states written into their own Constitution, insist on preserving states' rights ... in the former Soviet Union!

Surely they jest.

But it's no joke to the Russians, who are reeling under the impact of the worst terrorist attack since 9/11 – and the follow-up body blow in the form of a rhetorical attack from the West. Editorialists **left** and **right** attack Putin as a dictator, wail that the Russian media is politically monochromatic, and demand that Moscow negotiate a "peace accord" with the crazed killers of the Chechen "insurgency," who have been murdering, raping, and pillaging their way through the entire region since the Soviet collapse.

The Beslan massacre was almost certainly **carried out by Chechen and Ingushetian bandits led by Shamil Basaev**, who call themselves "separatists" but don't seem to have any real political program other than a nihilistic devotion to violence for its own sake. The gang that took over Beslan was reportedly paid to carry out the act, and some of those captured are now saying that they didn't know what the mission was beforehand, and objected when it came down to killing kids. Whomever is subsidizing these terrorists has one goal in mind: the destabilization of the Putin regime and the further atomization of the former Soviet Union.

The West, far from assisting the Russians in their fight against Osama bin Laden's co-thinkers in the Caucasus, is aiding and abetting the Chechen "separatists": The same Western governments that strained to create phony "links" between Iraq and al-Qaeda are weirdly oblivious to the numerous Chechen/al-Qaeda links. One would think that Washington, at pains to detect any sign of Muslim support in the war on terrorism, would have taken full advantage of the near-universal condemnation that greeted the Beslan outrage **from Tangier to Tehran**. But no: instead, the British have **granted political asylum to Akhmed Zakayev**, a top Chechen military commander accused of murder, kidnapping, and other crimes, who is now feted in London by the likes of **Vanessa Redgrave**.

Imagine if Moscow agreed to shelter **Abu Musab al-Zarqawi** – because that's what this amounts to.

The almost unbelievable hypocrisy and outright treachery of the Western response to Beslan might baffle the more naïve among my readers, in Russia as well as the West, who wonder how and why Bush, Blair, and the EU-weenies are pursuing such a course. But Putin, a proud Russian patriot, knows perfectly well what he's up against, and why. Because it isn't only a few stray Chechen bandits who enjoy the sympathetic hospitality of the West. **Boris Berezovsky**, the Russian "oligarch" who made his fortune from political connections that enabled him to scarf up newly-"privatized" Soviet state assets, fled Russia to evade charges of massive fraud and other crimes, and found a natural home in Tony Blair's Britain, which received him with open arms. The campaign against the oligarchs – former Commies who cashed in on their connections to steal billions from the decomposing Soviet state – particularly enraged Richard Perle, the neocon **Achilles**, who mourned the arrest of Russian oligarch **Mikhail Khodorkovsky** as bitterly as the Greek hero **mourned Patroclus**, bitterly demanding that **Russia be thrown out of the G-8 group of nations**.

The Chechen "liberation" struggle is being taken up by a very odd crowd, **as John Laughland notes** in the *Guardian*:

"This harshness towards Putin is perhaps explained by the fact that, in the US, the leading group which pleads the Chechen cause is the American Committee for Peace in Chechnya (ACPC). The list of the self-styled 'distinguished Americans' who are its members is a rollcall of the most prominent neoconservatives who so enthusiastically support the 'war on terror.'"

Laughlin lists the ACPC's supporters, including

- Richard "**Conflict of Interest**" Perle
- Elliott "**Iran-Contra**" Abrams
- Kenneth "**Cakewalk**" Adelman
- Midge "**Rummy's a Stud Muffin**" Decter

- Frank "**Military-Industrial Complex**" Gaffney
- Bruce "**Lockheed-Martin Marietta**" Jackson
- Michael "**Creative Destruction**" Ledeen
- R. James "**World War**" Woolsey.

The neocons, who supposedly abhor "appeasing" terrorists, are demanding, through the ACPC, that Putin negotiate with the murderers of children. Their **website** is filled with "peace proposals" and articles blaming the Russians themselves for the wave of violence being visited upon them, and extolling the Chechens as "oppressed" victims of Great Russian expansionism.

Any suggestion that the U.S. ought to negotiate with bin Laden would be – rightly – rejected out of hand by these very same people. But somehow a different standard applies to Putin's Russia. Check out **this radio interview with ACPC director Glen Howard**, conducted by Scott Horton, of the Republic Broadcast Network, in which Howard continually evades the question of how to explain this curious conundrum. Well, he hems and haws, bin Laden was never elected to anything, but the Chechens have a "President." But he never gets too specific about the credo of this acclaimed "democrat," **Aslan Mashkadov**, who endorsed the Iraq war, but **has this to say** about the leader of the terrorist group responsible for Beslan, **Shamil Basaev**:

"Basaev has no ties with international terrorism. He has no contact either with al Qaida or with bin Laden. I repeat, this is an official declaration. Moreover, Basaev has no foreign bank accounts, he is not seeking a foreign visa. Basaev is a warrior. He is someone who is seeking vengeance. He is using the same methods as the enemy, who uses those methods against Chechen civilians. It is eye for eye. His chief target is the principal structure of the Russian state, the FSB or ex-KGB. Today, as Troshev has said, the army does not decide anything, the war is being directed by the FSB. If it were possible to subordinate Basaev and to direct all his energy against the enemy, with the use of acceptable methods, then he would accomplish much. Unfortunately, he and I disagree about this. I say that it is necessary to fight Russia in an organized way, with a unified diplomatic policy and unified military strategy and tactics. I condemn methods which lead to the suffering of innocent civilians. Basaev has his own methods. But he has nothing to do with international terrorism."

If the **murderous** Basaev "has no ties with international terrorism," then no one does. The 9/11 Commission report **informs** us that chief 9/11 hijacker Muhammad Atta and some of his comrades had initially **planned on traveling to Chechnya**, instead of the United States, to **join Basaev** and fight alongside his Islamic separatist rebels. It only was because they were **intercepted** on a German train by an al-Qaeda courier, and personally introduced to bin Laden, that they were diverted to **another task**.

The neocons are promoting a Russified version of the "**Bush knew**" **tinfoil hat** conspiracy theories pushed by **Michael Ruppert** and the nuttier fringe of the "Anybody But Bush" movement, who essentially believe that, on September 11, 2001, the U.S. government bombed itself. According to the "Putin knew" crowd, the 1999 terrorist bombings in Moscow and elsewhere, widely and credibly attributed to Chechen terrorists, were *really* an inside job pulled off by the Russian security services. The ACPC's Howard avers that there's "a lot of evidence" to support this theory, but fails to offer any in the above-linked interview. **David Satter**, a resident scholar over at the neoconservative Hudson Institute, is also pushing this nutso conspiracy theory.

I suppose it won't be long now before that "vast industry of well-funded NGOs stretching – literally – from the Atlantic to the Urals," as Laughland puts it, which so eagerly promotes Chechen independence, finds "evidence" implicating Putin and his cops as the *real* culprits behind Beslan. Yeah. Sure. (Oh wait, I see my prediction has **already come true**.)

So, what's going on here? As usual with the neocons – and as with any sort of folly, ideological or otherwise – don't take it at face value: ask only what it accomplishes.

Contrary to what the adherents of preemptive war would have us believe, the doctrine of American hegemony on every continent is not a response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, but a goal the neocons have been pushing since the end of the cold war. As early as 1992, chief neocon theoretician – now deputy secretary of defense – Paul Wolfowitz had written up their post-cold war manifesto in the form of **a policy memo**, that was subsequently cited by the *New York Times*. Wolfowitz foresaw a future conflict with Russia over the Baltic states, and even advocated going to war over Lithuania, if necessary, while warning that Russia is still the only nation on earth capable of destroying the U.S. in a nuclear confrontation. The possibility of a Russian resurgence is the strategic nexus of the Wolfowitz memo, and the Chechen war is no doubt seen as evidence that this prediction has come true. Never mind that Chechen "rebels" routinely pour into neighboring regions, such as **Dagestan, looting, killing, and kidnapping**: any assertion of Russia's right to safety in her own back yard is contrary to the principle of hegemonism, which, as Wolfowitz put it,

"Requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power. These regions include Western Europe, East Asia, the territory of the former Soviet Union, and Southwest Asia."

If Russia resists NATO expansion and the extension of U.S. and European forces into Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, then the United States, says the Wolf, must be prepared to go to war in order to defend its imperial prerogatives.

The neocons hate Putin with a passion because he is a patriot. He puts Russia first– not the "international community," not the oligarchs and their Western partners – and that, to them, is treason. He failed to support the Iraq war. He stood up to the West as best he could when President Clinton attacked the former Yugoslavia – yet another country that had never attacked us, and represented no threat to our legitimate interests. When Putin cracked down on the criminals known as "oligarchs" for looting the quasi-"privatized" Russian economy ... well, that was the last straw. The knives were out.

Terrorism schmerrorism. 9/11 changed nothing – the neocons would rather support al-Qaeda-affiliated rebels than give one iota of support to Putin.

Whether or not Chechnya ought to be independent, or part of a larger Federation of nations, is not for American diplomats and politicians to decide. Before they get too critical of the Russian system for its lack of "democracy," so-called "human rights activists" and other international busybodies ought to **acquaint themselves** with the difficulties **Ralph Nader is having** getting on the ballot **in Florida** (not to mention **Pennsylvania**). It is far easier for a political party to gain ballot status in Russia than it is in most states in the U.S. The professional democratists are **criticizing** Putin for substituting party lists for individual candidacies, but why aren't they equally critical of the many other nations that have a similar system, such as the Netherlands and Italy, which do not suffer from either a death of democracy or a lack of small parties?

The danger of the anti-Putin crusade is that it represents an alliance of the neocons and the "humanitarian interventionist" left, i.e. the same crowd that brought us the bombing of Belgrade and created **a Mafia state** in the formerly Serbian province of Kosovo. It's no accident that among the separatist terrorists captured at Beslan were **mujahideen from Bosnia**, which has been described as **"a one-stop shop for Islamic militants"** on their way to Chechnya.

The neocons supported that war, too, just as they have taken advantage of *every* war – except the **FBI's war on Israeli spies** – to pursue their agenda on all fronts. Reduce the Middle East to rubble, and the splinters of sundered nations: where once there was Iraq, create **Kurdistan**, Sunni-stan, Shi'ite-stan, and enclaves for the Turkmen, the Assyrians, and don't forget the Zoroastrians. Where once there was the Soviet Union, or the Russian Federation, let us make way for Chechnya, Ingushetia, and literally dozens of other ethnically homogenous enclaves.

Each in turn will receive their "independence," thanks to their great benefactor and builder of military bases on the other side of the planet, the United States of America – where the **neoconservatives**, the architects of the modern day **cult of Abraham Lincoln**, memorialize and **extol** the crushing of the southern secessionist

movement as the high point of American politics.

The neocons, far from being believers in decentralism and regional autonomy, want one and only one great centralizing force in world politics, and that is the one headquartered in Washington, D.C. The only permissible centralism is their own. All others are to be ruthlessly crushed – in the name of "human rights" and national "independence," of course.

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