

# Terror in Russia: Most horrible since 9/11



M. M. REZAUL KARIM

Chechen President had also been killed by an exploding bomb in his own capital. The last major hostage-taking took place when Chechen separatists seized 800 spectators in Moscow's Dubrovka theatre in October 2000 in a three-day seizure that ended in the death of 129 hostages and 41 militants. All these gruesome crimes were committed within the span of a two-year period, but it appears the world-renowned Russian

preach it. One has to trace the root of the cause that breeds such problems and then to address it in a manner with understanding, compassion and magnanimity which may promise a lasting solution satisfactory to all concerned. But nowhere in the hour-long speech of President Putin the word Chechen was mentioned even once. One may question the propriety of such omission when all the terrorist

problem and he succeeded, albeit temporarily, in bringing the rebels to terms by force. But the outcome did not last long and the same problems assumed a new form wherein the conflict did not remain confined only in Chechnya but spread all over the Russian Republic.

The President declared he was determined to solve this problem by resorting to stronger use of force. But one knows well that violence only begets violence. Use of force becomes efficacious only for a limited period of time. A permanent solution calls for a policy of mutual understanding, a give and take attitude and a will to compromise. Also, politics is a bizarre phenomenon. What was good then may not hold good now. There is nothing to blame, repent or be ashamed of, if there be a change. Change of policy and strategy is a constant phenomenon for any political party, lest it becomes static and is unable to go along with the tide of time. Even at this late stage, many may feel it worthwhile to attempt negotiation with the Chechens, if it does help promote a lasting peace.

On the other hand, it is no easy task for the Russian President to stage a volte-face and dangle an olive branch to those who had committed so many atrocious crimes and whom the President vowed to punish. Behind his solemn pledge, the hardliners lent him strong support. The latter argue, any softening of attitude towards a compromise would only bolster strength of the separatist movement in other parts of Russia where ethnic and religious sentiments run high and have rendered the country vulnerable. The now defunct Soviet Union had even a bigger problem of similar nature and broke into the components of the CIS states. The Baltic and Black Sea coast states in the west and the Muslim dominated states in the southern under belly of the one time superpower seceded and became independent. I had the

## CURRENTS AND CROSSCURRENTS

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intelligence system with its wide and intricate network hardly learned the lesson and was not able to prevent such heinous crimes. People cast doubt whether the President's stern warning and pledge for strong remedial measures, would come to fruition. However, the more recent announcement of the Russian authorities to undertake pre-emptive measures, anywhere in the world, adds a new dimension to the hitherto announced anti-terrorist policy and methods of the Kremlin.

To spare the rod and spoil the child method of making the wrong the right is now out-moded, impractical and discarded. It is universally recognised as such, but hardly practiced even by those who

activities in Russia in recent years were committed by Chechen rebels. It is not merely in Russia but in many other parts of the world that such attempts, wilfully or not, have been made to gloss over the core issue that gave rise to such major problems.

The Chechen demand for independence turned into an open rebellion a decade ago. Moscow took stern action and razed the capital Grozny, in many places, almost to ground reminiscent of post-World War II Berlin. But the strong military action made the militants go underground and create a hydra-headed monster swaying his heads from one corner of the Russian Republic to another. Putin won his election on the pledge of settling the Chechnya



The site of the tragedy -- the school in Beslan

personal experience of witnessing and even listening to the grievances of the people there during my assignment in Moscow from 1986 to 1989. Moscow did not oppose secession, but kept all the seceding states within the loose bounds of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

But the new Russian Republic still is not bereft of similar ordeals. There exists a number of autonomous regions where ethnic and minority grievances are strong and have been lying dormant for long. These are mostly located in the Caucasus region around the breakaway state of Georgia. Whereas strong dissatisfaction and grievances have erupted into a demand for independence and resulted in armed conflict in Chechnya, those in the neighboring Ingushia, North Ossetia and even distant Kazan are still brewing. I had the occasion to visit the oil-rich autonomous region of Kazan where the plight of the Muslim dominated population marked a striking contrast to the well-to-do people of the other regions of the country. One must not be oblivious of the fact that the same people, who are terrorists, are regarded as freedom fighters by many others.

So, the Russian President is faced with a big dilemma. If he continues with his policy of resorting to force and only force, he may be dragged into a long-drawn battle with his own people. If, on the other hand, he chooses to enter into the most arduous task of negotiation with the adversaries, there may be some loss of face and even something more to pay as a heavy price, but he may ultimately win peace. The option is open to the Russian President to take, and one feels it should be based on the opinion of the Russian people. The latter, at least the most unfortunate people of Beslan, are now asking the question --- is the state policy worth supporting at the cost of sacrificing one's own flesh and blood and the dearest possession, children?

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# The glorious Mi'raj

SYED ASHRAF ALI

**T**HE Night of Ascension or Shab-e-Mi'raj occupies a unique place in the annals of history. It is perhaps the only incident of religious importance which is considered significant in science and literature as well. From the religious point of view, it bestowed the highest honour and distinction on a human being when he was granted the most coveted Audience with Benign Providence. In the world of letters, it occupies a very significant place because it has influenced through ages great litterateurs and poets, both Moslems and non-Moslems. It calls for respectful attention in the world of science because it testifies so eloquently to the fact that time is not constant but varies with velocity -- a fact borne out 14 centuries later by the sensational Theory of Relativity.

Moslems all over the world normally celebrate this auspicious night through prayers and penance on the 27<sup>th</sup> of Rajab. The holy Prophet of Islam (pbuh) was first transported through a unique journey from the holy Ka'ba to the seat of the earlier revelations in Jerusalem, and then taken through the Seven Heavens, even to the Sublime Throne, and initiated into the spiritual mysteries of the human soul struggling in Space and Time. He was also blessed with the unique opportunity to meet in person the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful *Rabbul Alameen* -- an unparalleled 'Deedar' of the 'Concrete' with the 'Supreme Abstract'.

On the sacred Night of Ascension the holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was at Makkah in the house of his cousin Hazrat Umma Hani

(RA), sister of Hazrat Ali Murtaza (RA). Having said his night prayers, the holy Prophet (pbuh) was asleep "with closed eyes but a wakeful *Kalb*." Hazrat Jibrail (Gabriel) (AS) roused him from his sleep and informed him that Allah, in His infinite Mercy, has graciously decided to show him the Wonders, to honour him in a manner as He has not done with anybody else before.

It was indeed a unique incident in the annals of history. No other creation had ever been so close to the Creator. The holy Prophet (pbuh) had indeed seen the Great-

dawn prayer, he said, 'O Umma Hani, I prayed with you the last evening prayer in this valley as thou sawest. Then went I to Jerusalem and there prayed; and now have I prayed with you the morning prayer as thou seest.' 'O Prophet of God: I said, 'Tell not the people this, for they will give thee the lie and insult thee.' 'By God, I will tell them,' he said.

The holy Prophet completed the entire Journey, comprising the unique Audience with the Creator, visits to the Heavens and Hells, offering of prayers at various places on Earth and in the Heav-

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est Signs of Allah. According to Tirmizi, the holy Prophet (pbuh) said: "I saw my *Rab* with my eyes and *Kalb*." According to the Mishkat, the Apostle of Allah (pbuh) said: "I saw my *Rab* in His Best Appearance ... I was endued with knowledge of whatever is in the Heavens and on the Earths."

The holy Prophet (pbuh) then visited *Jannat* (the Paradise) and *Jahannam* (the Hell) and returned to Makkah. It was still night when they reached the Ka'ba. From there the holy Prophet (pbuh) went again to the house of Umma Hani (RA). "A little before dawn the Prophet (pbuh) woke us," says Umma Hani (RA), and when he had prayed the

ens, brief discussions with numerous Prophets, in an incredibly short period. The astounding feat surprised many. A few even went to the extent of claiming that the Journey was performed through a vision. Even a renowned and erudite exegetist like Abdullah Yusuf Ali opines: "Even on the supposition of a miraculous bodily journey, it is conceded that the body was almost transformed into spiritual fineness." But persons who doubt the physical ascension of the holy Prophet (pbuh) perhaps forget that Allah can do and undo anything and everything, nothing is impossible on His part. He is the Best of the planners and "when He hath decreed a Plan, He but saith to it,

'Be, and it is.'" (Sura Al-Imran, Verse 47).

The glorious Mi'raj has always furnished "worlds of golden dreams" for the imaginative genius of poets and philosophers and traditionists, both Moslems and non-Moslems. Prof. Miguel Asin, the renowned Spanish scholar in the University of Madrid, very rightly claimed that the Mi'raj had a great influence on the Mediaeval literature of not only Asia and Africa but of Europe as well. According to this great scholar, even the sublime Italian poem, *Divina Commedia* of Dante, which had a tremendous impact on the development of Italian language and literature, and which towered like a landmark in mediaeval literature, was greatly influenced by the Divine Ascension of the holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Prof. Asin's work, translated into English by H. Sunderland under the title "Islam and the Divine Comedy" in 1926, created sensation all over the world. His claim, duly substantiated by detailed and painstaking analysis, has not yet been challenged by any scholar in the East or the West.

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# The miraculous night journey

KAZI AULAD HOSSAIN

**A**LLAH Rabbul Alamin (Lord of all the worlds) was graciously pleased to send one or two lakh twenty-four thousand Prophets (peace be upon them) to this mundane world for the guidance of mankind and of them Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the only one who enjoyed the unique privilege and honour to be in the august presence of the Lord Creator Almighty Allah on the 27<sup>th</sup> night of the holy lunar month of Rajab. As Merciful Allah desired to show our Prophet (pbuh) some of His wonderful Signs He sent archangel Hazrat Jibrail (AS) with a special transport called *Al-Buraq* (winged horse) to take him to His presence on that night.

In this context we may refer to Ayat (verse) one of Sura (chapter) Bani Israel (or the Children of Israel) of the holy Quran where Almighty Allah says:

Who did take His servant for journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose precincts We did bless in order to show him some of Our Signs for He is the One who heareth and seeth (all things)"

The holy Prophet (pbuh) was

first carried in person on the 'Al-Buraq' by Hazrat Jibrail (AS) from the Sacred Mosque in Mecca to the Farthest Mosque, that is, Masjid-ul-Aqsa in Jerusalem. It may be mentioned here that immediately on his reaching this mosque the holy Prophet (pbuh) tethered his horse (*Al-Buraq*) to a ring in the gate and entered into it and during his short stay in this mosque, where other Prophets (peace be upon them) had also assembled, he offered two "Rakats" of special prayer with them, and it was his great privilege to lead the congregational prayer. Immediately after offering this special prayer the holy Prophet (pbuh) was carried on the same vehicle by Hazrat Jibrail (AS) to the first heaven where he met Prophet Hazrat Adam (AS) the progenitor of mankind, who after exchanging greetings expressed his faith in the Prophethood of Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh). The holy Prophet (pbuh) then resumed his onward journey and this time he reached the sixth heaven, after crossing four spheres of heaven where he met Prophet Hazrat Musa (A.S) (Prophet Moses) who also expressed faith in his Prophethood. While bidding good bye to Hazrat Musa (A.S) the holy Prophet found him weeping, and when he was asked the reason of

weeping, he said he was weeping because he witnessed he (Prophet Muhammad pbuh) was able to lead more people to Paradise than him (Hazrat Musa A.S). The holy Prophet (pbuh) then reached the 7<sup>th</sup> heaven and here he met Prophet Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S) and in the same way exchanged greetings and Ibrahim (AS) too expressed his faith in the Prophethood of Muhammad (S.M).

The ascension of Muhammad (S.M) continued and he reached near Sidratul Muntaha (a wonderful tree known as Lot Tree) and he was also shown here "Al-Baitul Mamur" the much frequented House which is encompassed by 70,000 angels. After witnessing these two important and wonderful things the Messenger of Allah (S.M) was taken from there to the Divine Presence by another special vehicle called "Raf Raf" passing through 70,000 Veils of Almighty Allah's "Noor" (Light) and here he "experienced the thrill of witnessing the Divine Glory and Manifestation at the closest possible propinquity. It may be mentioned that when the holy Prophet (pbuh) was in the Divine Presence of his Creator, Benign Allah gave him an extremely valuable gift of 5-times prayer ("Salat") for him and for all his

followers. Salat, it may also be recalled, is one of the five strong pillars on which the grand edifice of Islam stands. According to an important Quranic Ayat Merciful Allah enjoins: "Establish regular prayer for prayer restrains from shameful and evil deeds and remembrance of Allah is the greatest thing in life."

After his return to this world many people were in doubt about the Prophet's Journey by Night (*Laila-Tul-Miraj*) and they approached his close companion Hazrat Abu Baqar Siddique (R.A) to verify this unusual and wonderful event. He said: "Yes, I do verify it", and Hazrat Abu Baqar (R.A) earned the title "As Siddique" -- meaning "verifier of truth".

So, Almighty Allah chose the leader of all Prophets and the greatest of all men and all times, Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) to invite him and show him some of His wonderful Signs. This is the holy lunar month of Rajab and the Holy Prophet's ascending was on 27<sup>th</sup> night of this month. Muslim's all over the world celebrate this auspicious occasion in a befitting manner. We in Bangladesh also observe this occasion with due solemnity and fervour.

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