

## RUSSIAN SCORCHED EARTH POLICY AGAINST THE CHECHANS DUPLICATES TACTICS USED IN THE 1850'S

The Russians scorched earth tactics in destroying Chechen cities are similar to the tactics employed for hundreds of years.

Leo Tolstoy was a captain of artillery for the Russians in 1853 and 1854 when they carried out joint military operations with the Cossacks against the Chechens. Tolstoy described his experiences in such stories as *The Cossacks*, *The Raid*, *The Wood-Felling and Hadji Murad*. Describing the scene after the Chechens had been routed, Tolstoy wrote, " 'Well, how about it, Colonel?' said the general. 'Let them loot. I see they are terribly anxious to,' pointing to the Cossacks. . . . A moment later, dragoons, Cossacks, and infantry spread with eminent delight through the crooked lanes and in an instant the empty village was animated again. Here a roof crashes, an ax rings against the hard wood of a door that is being forced open, here a stack of hay, a fence, a hut, is set on fire, and a pillar of thick smock rises up in the clear air. Here is a cossack dragging along a sack of flour and a carpet. There a soldier, with a delighted look on his face brings a tin basin out of a hut. Another is trying, with outstretched arms to catch two hens that struggle and cackle besides a fence. A third has somewhere discovered an enormous pot of milk, and after drinking some of it throw the rest of it on the ground with a loud laugh."

Describing the surrounding woods after the raid, Tolstoy wrote: "Two miles of forest had been cut down and the place so cleared as to be unrecognizable. Instead of the thick outskirts of the forest, you saw before you a large plane covered with smoking fires and cavalry and infantry reaching back to camp."

Tolstoy concluded in describing the war in which he was engaged,

"Who will doubt that in the war of the Russians against the mountain tribes, justice is on our side? Were it not for this war, what would secure the neighboring rich and cultured Russian territories from robbery, murder, and raids by warlike tribes? But consider two private persons, on whose side is the feeling of justice? Is it on the side of this ragamuffin who snatches down his old gun from the wall and on seeing that the Russians advance, approaching the fields that he has sown, which they will trod down and his hut which they will burn, and the

ravine where his mother, his wife, and his children have hidden themselves, shaking with fear, seeing that he will be deprived of all that constitutes his happiness, in impotent anger and a cry of despair, tears off his tattered jacket, flings down his gun, and drawing his sheepskin cap over his eyes, sings his death song and flings himself headlong onto the Russian bayonets with only a dagger in his hand? Is justice on his side or that of this officer on the general's staff who is singing French chansonettes so well as just as he rides past us? He has a family in Russia, relations, friends, and serfs, and obligations toward them, but has no reason or desire to be at enmity with the hillsmen and has come to the Caucasus just by chance and to show his courage?"

For centuries the Russians employed the Cossacks to do their dirty work, promising them *carte blanche* to rape, loot, and murder, in exchange for military assistance. The Cossacks have almost been exterminated, but Russian tactics remain the same. • • •

### WHAT IS THE INTEREST OF CIVIC MINDED PEOPLE?

The Novak-Buchanan ilk constantly argue that we have no interest in Yugoslavia and Kosovo despite the ghastly suffering observed on TV that our timely bombing brought to a halt. We are put to mind of a letter written by Abraham Lincoln to Robert Speed, his former partner, in reply to Speed's argument that since Lincoln owned no slaves, he had no real interest in the problem of slavery. Lincoln wrote back, in part: "In 1841, you and I had, together, a trip on a steamboat from Louisville to St. Louis. From St. Louis to the mouth of the Ohio, there were on board a dozen slaves shackled together with irons. That sight was of continued torment to me, and I see something like it every time I touch the slave border. It is not fair for you to assume that I have no interest in a thing that has and continually exercises the power of making me miserable."

*Insights* suggests that it is impossible to be a true follower of Henry George, unless you share with George (and with Lincoln) continued torment every time you see poverty, degradation, or unjust treatment for any persons on this planet. • • • • •