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Reflections on Russia Train Bombing

By OOTOMI Akira

On November 27, 2009, a bomb exploded in a train travelling between Moscow to St. Petersburg and 26 people were officially reported to have been killed. According to news release on December 2nd, a statement was posted on Kavkazcenter.com, a website linked to Chechen separatists that the train bombing was carried out in the name of Doku Umarov, a pro-independence field commander and the Emir of the "Caucasus Emirate." On the other hand, however, it has also been pointed out that Commander Umarov does not have operational units to carry out large scale terrorist attacks, nor is he powerful enough to cooperate with other armed organizations.

In retrospect, virtually no cases of major terrorist attacks that have taken place in Russia have been brought to trial, and virtually no Chechens have been convicted. Nur-Pashi Kulayev, one of those militants who participated in the Beslan school hostage seizure, was taken alive on the spot but afterwards went missing during the trial, and even the investigation committee of Russia's lower house has lost his whereabouts. In fact, there was only a limited number of cases planned and committed by Chechen separatists. Besides, it was highly possible that the Russian apartment bombings in 1999, which resulted in the Second Chechen war, were a false flag operation coordinated by the Russian government itself.

The reason why Commander Umarov, the Russian government or intelligence agencies needed a "terrorist attack" this time is not clear, as they must have their own reasons to do so. The case would most probably be smothered up after mere perfunctory investigation, without revealing the whole truth of it. However, the worldwide broadcast of this case by carrying a headline "Chechen rebels claim Russia train bombing" has, as usual, advertizing effects.

The number of those killed in "Terrorist attacks" attributed to Chechens is estimated roughly at 1,000, whereas that of those killed in Russian military incursions in Chechnya since 1994 is estimated at as many as 200,000. Even though terrorism is far from approvable, given that so much of injustice is left untouched in Chechnya, it is no wonder that terrorism does happen outside Chechnya. While there is little media coverage on those killed in Chechnya, so many headlines are being made on the cases merely "attributed" to Chechens. Thus, Chechens have been stigmatized as a terrorist nation.

Needless to say, train bombings should be disapproved of and homicide should be denied. If so, strafé against a convoy of Chechen refugees by the Russian warplanes should also be condemned. The mass media should be suspected of forgetting this point. While the killing of Ahmed Kadirov, who was obedient to Moscow, was labeled "terrorism," the killing of Aslan Maskhadov, a Chechen moderate politician, was not considered "terrorism." Besides, the deaths of Natalia

Estmirova and Anna Politkovskaya, who fell victim to the political power, have been neglected.

It seems that the mass media take for granted the scheme that terrorism are attributes associated with Chechens and the Russian suppression of Chechnya is a neccesitated police action and not to be considered terrorism. In order not to be misled by such a scheme and to understand those incidents in a neutral and fair manner, we should first of all sharpen our perspectives on what is going on out there.

(This is the English translation of an article written by OOTOMI Akira, Editor in Chief, Chechen News, which originally appeared on the BBS “Giron-Hyakushutsu” of GFJ on December 4, 2009.)