

Most of us probably watched the horrific scenes of naked, wounded and terrified children fleeing their school in northern Ossetia on Friday and not one of us can understand how so-called human beings can calmly prepare bombs full of nails and screws with intent to kill and maim children. These terrorists are indeed vile, savages.

But where was President Putin? Why was he not immediately at the scene, or perhaps, better still, addressing the nation on TV to explain what was happening outlining what he proposed to do and apologising for the debacle?

He was, after all, supposed to be in charge. That this siege was allowed to descend into chaos and carnage is unbelievable. He certainly has a lot of questions to answer.

Why, for instance, were the special forces and the army apparently so undisciplined and allowed to act unilaterally? Why were the intrusive press and TV crews and cameras allowed into the compound and hinder the rescue of the hostages and those despatched to hospital? Why were the parents and the public allowed to do likewise?

There are more.

Like, why ambulances by the score were not lined up ready from day one. Why a field hospital was not established. Why doctors and nurses were not on 24-hour standby at the school.

The terrorists are responsible for the deaths and injuries, of course. But proper action on the part of the authorities could have minimised them. Heads should roll for their incompetence.

Although it is tempting, Russia must not resort to revenge. Instead, it needs to ask itself what it is doing in Chechnya, and whether it should be there at all. Above all, whilst not giving into blackmail, Russia has to solve the problem of Chechnya. Perhaps the United Nations should prepare to hold a referendum on independence. If Chechnya is indeed a nation, if the people wish to govern themselves, they should be allowed to. It is as simple as that.

[326 words]