
Trolling Russia — Israel Shamir

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Israel Shamir is a Russian-born Jew and Israeli citizen. He often has interesting things to say.

Trolling Russia

By Israel Shamir

The edifice of world post-1991 order is collapsing right now before our eyes. President Putin's decision to give a miss to the Auschwitz pilgrimage, right after his absence in Paris at the Charlie festival, gave it the last shove. It was good clean fun to troll Russia, as long as it stayed the course. Not anymore. Russia broke the rules.

Until now, Russia, like a country bumpkin in Eton, tried to belong. It attended the gathering of the grandees where it was shunned, paid its dues to European bodies that condemned it, patiently suffered ceaseless hectoring of the great powers and irritating baiting of East European small-timers alike. But something broke down. The lad does not want to belong anymore; he picked up his stuff and went home – just when they needed him to kneel in Auschwitz.

Auschwitz gathering is an annual Canossa of Western leaders where they bewail their historic failure to protect the Jews and swear their perennial obedience to them. This is a more important religious rite of our times, the One Ring to rule them all, established in 2001, when the Judeo-American empire had reached the pinnacle of its power. The Russian leader had duly attended the events. This year, they will have to do without him. Israeli ministers already have expressed their deep dissatisfaction for this was Russia's Red Army that saved the Jews in Auschwitz, after all. Russia's absence will turn the Holocaust memorial day into a parochial, West-only, event. Worse, Russia's place will be taken by Ukraine, ruled by unrepentant heirs to Hitler's Bandera.

This comes after the French 'Charlie' demo, also spurned by Russia. The West

hinted that Russia's sins would be forgiven, up to a point, if she joined, first the demo, and later, the planned anti-terrorist coalition, but Russia did not take the bait. This was a visible change, for previously, Russian leaders eagerly participated in joint events and voted for West-sponsored resolutions. In 2001, Putin fully supported George Bush's War on Terrorism in the UN and on the ground. As recently as 2011, Russia agreed with sanctions against North Korea and Iran. As for coming for a demonstration, the Russians could always be relied upon. This time, the Russians did not come, except for the token presence of the foreign minister Mr. Lavrov. This indomitable successor of Mr. Nyet left the event almost immediately and went – to pray in the Russian church, in a counter-demonstration, of sorts, against Charlie. By going to the church, he declared that he is not Charlie.

For the Charlie Hebdo magazine was (and probably is) explicitly anti-Christian as well as anti-Muslim. One finds on its pages some very obnoxious cartoons offending the Virgin and Christ, as well as the pope and the Church. (They never offend Jews, somehow).

A Russian blogger who's been exposed to this magazine for the first time, wrote on his page: I am ashamed that the bastards were dealt with by Muslims, not by Christians. This was quite a common feeling in Moscow these days. The Russians could not believe that such smut could be published and defended as a right of free speech. People planned a demo against the Charlie, but City Hall forbade it. Remember, a few years ago, the Pussy Riot have profaned the St Saviour of Moscow like Femen did in some great European cathedrals, from Notre Dame de Paris to Strasbourg. The Russian government did not wait for vigilante justice to be meted upon the viragos, but sent them for up to two years of prison. At the same time, the Russian criminal law has been changed to include 'sacrilege' among ordinary crimes, by general consent. The Russians do feel about their faith more strongly than the EC rulers prescribe.

In Charlie's France, Hollande's regime frogmarched the unwilling people into a quite unnecessary gay marriage law, notwithstanding one-million-strong protest demonstrations by Catholics. Femen despoiling the churches were never punished; but a church warden who tried to prevent that, was heavily fined. France has a long anti-Christian tradition, usually described as "laic", and its grand anti-Church coalition of Atheists, Huguenots and Jews coalesced in Dreyfus Affair days. Thus Lavrov's escape to the church was a counter-demonstration, saying: Russia is for Christ, and

Russia is not against Muslims.

While the present western regime is anti-Christian and anti-Muslim, it is pro-Jewish to an extent that defies a rational explanation. France had sent thousands of soldiers and policemen to defend Jewish institutions, though this defence antagonises their neighbours. While Charlie are glorified for insulting Christians and Muslims, Dieudonné has been sent to jail (just for a day, but with great fanfare) for annoying Jews. Actually, Charlie Hebdo dismissed a journalist for one sentence allegedly disrespectful for Jews. This unfairness is a source of aggravation: Muslims were laughed out of court when they complained against particularly vile Charlie's cartoons, but Jews almost always win when they go to the court against their denigrators. (Full disclosure: I was also sued by LICRA, the French Jewish body, while my French publisher was devastated by their legal attacks).

The Russians don't comprehend the Western infatuation with Jews, for Russian Jews have been well assimilated and integrated in general society. The narrative of Holocaust is not popular in Russia for one simple reason: so many Russians from every ethnic background lost their lives in the war, that there is no reason to single out Jews as supreme victims. Millions died at the siege of Leningrad; Belarus lost a quarter of its population. More importantly, Russians feel no guilt regarding Jews: they treated them fairly and saved them from the Nazis. For them, the Holocaust is a Western narrative, as foreign as JeSuisCharlie. With drifting of Russia out of Western consensus, there is no reason to maintain it.

This does not mean the Jews are discriminated against. The Jews of Russia are doing very well, thank you, without Holocaust worship: they occupy the highest positions in the Forbes list of Russia's rich, with a combined capital of \$122 billion, while all rich ethnic Russians own only \$165 billion, according to the Jewish-owned source. Jews run the most celebrated media shows in prime time on the state TV; they publish newspapers; they have full and unlimited access to Putin and his ministers; they usually have their way when they want to get a plot of land for their communal purposes. And anti-Semitic propaganda is punishable by law – like anti-Christian or anti-Muslim abuse, but even more severely.

Still, it is impossible to imagine a Russian journalist getting sack like CNN anchor Jim Clancy or BBC's Tim Willcox for upsetting a Jew or speaking against Israel.

Russia preserves its plurality, diversity and freedom of opinion. The pro-Western Russian media – Novaya Gazeta of oligarch Lebedev, the owner of the British newspaper Independent – carries the JeSuis slogan and speaks of the Holocaust, as well as demands to restore Crimea to the Ukraine. But the vast majority of Russians do support their President, and his civilizational choice. He expressed it when he went to midnight Christmas mass in a small village church in far-away province, together with orphans and refugees from the Ukraine. And he expressed it by refusing to go to Auschwitz.

Neither willingly nor easily did Russia break ranks. Putin tried to take Western baiting in his stride: be it Olympic games, Syria confrontation, gender politics, Georgian border, even Crimea-related sanctions. The open economic warfare was a game-changer. Russia felt attacked by falling oil prices, by rouble trouble, by credit downgrading. These developments are considered an act of hostility, rather than the result of “the hidden hand of the market”.

Russians love conspiracia, as James Bond used to say. They do not believe in chance, coincidence nor natural occurrences, and are likely to consider a falling meteorite or an earthquake – a result of hostile American action, let alone a fall in the rouble/dollar exchange rate. They could be right, too, though it is hard to prove.

Regarding oil price fall, the jury is out. Some say this action by Saudis is aimed at American fracking companies, or alternatively it's a Saudi-American plot against Russia. However, the price of oil is not formed by supply-demand, but by financial instruments, futures and derivatives. This virtual demand-and-supply is much bigger than the real one. When hedge funds stopped to buy oil futures, price downturn became unavoidable, but were the funds directed by politicians, or did they act so as Quantitative Easing ended?

The steep fall of the rouble could be connected to oil price downturn, but not necessarily so. The rouble is not involved in oil price forming. It could be an action by a very big financial institution. Soros broke the back of British pound in 1991; Korean won, Thai bath and Malaysian ringgit suffered similar fate in 1998. In each case, the attacked country lost about 40% of its GDP. It is possible that Russia was attacked by financial weapons directed from New York.

The European punitive sanctions forbade long-term cheap credit to Russian companies. The Russian state does not need loans, but Russian companies do.

Combination of these factors put a squeeze on Russian pockets. The rating agencies kept downgrading Russian rating to almost junk level, for political reasons, I was told. As they were deprived of credit, state companies began to hoard dollars to pay later their debts, and they refrained from converting their huge profits to roubles, as they did until now. The rouble fell drastically, probably much lower than it had to.

This is not pinpoint sanctions aimed at Putin's friends. This is a full-blown war. If the initiators expected Russians to be mad at Putin, they miscalculated. The Russian public is angry with the American organisers of the economical warfare, not with its own government. The pro-Western opposition tried to demonstrate against Putin, but very few people joined them.

Ordinary Russians kept a stiff upper lip. They did not notice the sanctions until the rouble staggered, and even then they shopped like mad rather than protested. In the face of shrinking money, they did not buy salt and sugar, as their grandparents would have. Their battle cry against hogging was "Do not take more than two Lexus cars per family, leave something for others!"

Perhaps, the invisible financiers went too far. Instead of being cowed, the Russians are preparing for a real long war, as they and their ancestors have historically fought – and won. It is not like they have a choice: though Americans insist Russia should join their War-on-Terrorism-II, they do not intend to relinquish sanctions.

The Russians do not know how to deal with a financial attack. Without capital restrictions, Russia will be cleaned out. Russian Central bank and Treasury people are strict monetarists, capital restrictions are anathema for them. Putin, being a liberal himself, apparently trusts them. Capital flight has taken huge proportions. Unless Russia uses the measures successfully tried by Mohammad Mahathir of Malaysia, it will continue. At present, however, we do not see sign of change.

This could be the incentive for Putin to advance in Ukraine. If the Russians do not know how to shuffle futures and derivatives, they are expert in armour movements and tank battles. Kiev regime is also spoiling for a fight, apparently pushed by the American neocons. It is possible that the US will get more than what it bargained for in the Ukraine.

One can be certain that Russians will not support the Middle Eastern crusade of NATO, as this military action was prepared at the Charlie demo in Paris. It is far from clear who killed the cartoonists, but Paris and Washington intend to use it for reigniting war in the Middle East. This time, Russia will be in opposition, and probably will use it as an opportunity to change the uncomfortable standoff in the Ukraine. Thus supporters of peace in the Middle East have a good reason to back Russia.

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