

# Said “I won’t go” and Waved His Hand

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Politics

Unofficial Translation

Diplomacy. How the boycott of the Victory parade shows the incompetence of the world's politicians

It is already frightening to watch the game "I will not go to Moscow for the parade — delegate to someone else, which now the popular policy approach of leaders around the world. The infantilism of some world leaders and the helplessness of others is worrisome: with these qualities troubles seem at the doorstep.

On the Boycott

Here is my personal opinion on any boycott (which I don't ask anyone agree with): a boycott is always ugly and funny. Even if the boycott initiators believe that the side against which they are boycotting fully deserves it. Even if most people think that their cause is just.

First, complete adherence is almost impossible to achieve, and any violator of the boycott, even if he will be branded a traitor and pariah, compromises the entire effort. Secondly, elements of society will inevitably come to believe (even if irrationally) that the boycott degrades to bullying and is ethically and morally unacceptable. Thirdly, a boycott always points to the inability of the majority to solve the problem by other means. Finally, it nearly always appears childish from out of the movie "Scarecrow" (Soviet film on juvenile bullying).

With this in mind, I harbor no resentment towards Western and other leaders who refused to come to Moscow for the May 9 Victory Day parade. At least listening to the rationale of their declines: some due to "busy schedules", others took shelter behind undefined "diplomatic reasons", more often the grounds for refusal were simply unspecified. Just as well that the disease diagnosis not further alarm. There were, however, those who directly linked their refusals to attend to the situation in Ukraine, but with them all has long been clear. In short, no offence taken, but the bitterness lingers. And not just with me.

It is worth noting that on the eve of the parade in two foreign Newspapers — the British “The Independent” and the American “Financial Times” — two very similar articles were published condemning the "refuseniks" for their decision.

The Independent, in particular, suggested the boycott of the Victory Day parade actually deprives the West the chance to understand Russia and to establish a relationship with her. "Every year on May 9, Russia celebrates the Victory over Nazi Germany, but also mourns the 20 million killed in the war, writes columnist Mary Dejevsky. — "She again honors the idea of her personal suffering for the salvation of Europe." According to the journalist, the Russians are asking themselves, does the West understand the sacrifice borne by Russia, and will it ever come to be appreciated? But Western countries, highly attentive to their own holiday celebrations, showed a disregard for those of others, and can now hardly count on massive support of their ideas inside Russia.

The Financial Times is also lacking on this point: If you don't like Putin, fine, but what does that have to do with ignoring the heroism of an entire people?

#### A Voice of Reason

Sensible voices in the West, and they are not singular, come not only from the lips of journalists renegades and politicians or "freaks" as many often try to suggest. One of the consistent supporters of establishing constructive relations with the Russian Federation is the President of the Council for U.S.-Russia Relations and Executive Director of the Russian-American Pacific partnership (RAPP) Derek Norberg.

He, by the way, is no "Kremlin yes-man" and never advances an exclusively Pro-Russian position, you may disagree with him, but in his statements there is always an attempt to find a logic in the actions of policy makers, and to get beyond the notorious double standards. In one of his interviews he said "regardless of political views, the majority of people do not like secret military operations carried out by "little green men" in unmarked uniforms, or the "voluntary" participation of military personnel in a war on foreign soil". And added that "as an American citizen he does not support covert operations by the USA, or the arrest in third countries of persons suspected of crimes with unlawful extradition to the United States".

Norberg is certain the main problem in American policy is the unwillingness to consider the interests of Russia in Ukraine — the US position is "an extremely principled and insufficiently pragmatic". In his opinion, the political standoff has already gone well beyond the original intentions of our leaders – be that the border dispute over sovereignty of Ukraine, the rights of the citizens of Donbass, or the intention of Kiev to join NATO. Ultimately, together with the damage to East-Ukrainian cities, we are degrading established diplomatic practices and norms of international relations conduct. And that is not the fault of the Russian Federation. "In fact, Russia was practically set-up to act inappropriately, and she did," suggests Norberg.

In another interview he explicitly warned that in the States, "no one should rejoice economic hardships in Russia", as the deepening crisis of the Russian economy will have a negative impact on the EU and then, by consequence, on the United States. Here, too, there is a need to find compromise, to negotiate common ground, but so far, this is not working well. It just is not happening.

The Simple is Always Complicated

Importance, significance, hardness, inflexibility are synonyms of the word "integrity". They are all different, but more and more, uncompromising displaces the other. No compromises. Without them there is no being.

Nikolai Leonov won't give in to his neighbors and continues to smoke in common areas. Vadik, even though the son of the respected Antonina Sergeevna, continues to park his car between the trees, despite gardener's complaints. Marina Valentinovna remains deaf to the pleas of her neighbors not to feed the cats on the apartment landing hallway. And each evening watching the TV, all these good people wonder why the politicians can't agree. It seems after all so necessary and obvious!

Necessary. Obvious. Yes. But it would be more correct and more honest to say: not that they don't want to, but rather they can't. The ability to negotiate agreement — it is, unfortunately, very rare. A gift from God, which is often confused with scrambled eggs.

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