

Personalization Clout in Modern Politics – Phenomenon of Political Will and Dictator’s Dilemma

Marina Glaser (Kukartseva), Professor, D.Sc. (Political Philosophy)

Diplomatic Academy of Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs// National Research University Higher School of Economics, Faculty of World Economics and World Politics, Faculty Member. E-mail- mkukartseva@gmail.com

Introduction: Political Representation and National Unity

Not for the first time political studies deliberate on personal responsibility of leaders for their political decisions. The historical retrospective aside, we can mention the works of H. Arendt [1951, 1958, 2003, 1972] and C. Schmitt, [1921, 2004, 2010]. Systemic research of their views on dictatorship, emergency state, legality and legitimacy of power, parliamentarianism crisis, etc. reveals not only the basic difference in their positions on democracy. It helps to pinpoint the core of contemporary problems in the discussions of the reasons for permanently growing number of authoritarian regimes in the world, which level of authoritarianism can vary; of the balance between the political weight of a particular powerful subject, the policy he pursues, its outcomes; and accountability of political elites.

H. Arendt assumed that as politics is a product of unrestricted decisions, a person who implements them, bears responsibility even when he executes other’s orders. C Schmitt, on the other hand, dwells on political unity of a nation as an absolute value. His study of a nation-state reports that there are two ways to achieve and preserve the political unity of a nation: political identity and political representation. [Schmitt, 2010:41]. The identity means that the nation is a reality, it bases on the unity of internal (people – legislative power) and external (fixed geographical borders) factors. However the identity can’t always reveal the desired political identity directly, hence it must be presented or embodied in someone’s personality, i.e. “be represented by individuals personally... Identity and representation don’t exclude each other, but are two diverse markers for a certain political unity to be formed. No matter which outweighs in any state, both are coupled with political existence of a nation.” [Schmitt, 2010: 41-42]

The clue in political representation is the specific political life in a state which politicians constantly refer to, with which they match (or have to match) every decision they make. Political representation is being formed in an ascending as well as descending logics: in the first case, power comes from God, in the second - from people. [Magun, 2011] In the modern world the role of the descending logic in shaping the political representation becomes practically absolute due to IT continually penetrating a society, and opens exciting possibilities for competing political marketing as well as for sleazy political methods. In the post-Soviet states the specific political life coupled with the descending logic to form the political representation has resulted in particular political phenomena. They range from relative personification of politics, when personal authority of a leader is a starting point for discussions of political interpretations and estimates, to absolute personification, when a leader turns into “a dictator” and halts any discussion.

“Dictator’s Dilemma”

However “a dictator” never knows definitely who amid his entourage is truly loyal, and who may work on a conspiracy plan. “A dictator” making turnarounds among various groups of political elites (PE) must balance between, on the one hand, authoritarian ruling, hard supreme power (*imperium*), right to dominancy (*jura dominationis*), which endorse a capacity to depart from the common law (*jus commune*), to maintain public order and preserve a state under emergency. On the other hand, a dictator must ensure his own political survival, control over a society, and prosperity of a state. Thus, “a dictator” is in a grip of instrumental interpretation of power: he must find the ruling means giving the appearance of free decision-making, which are needed to reach his goals. These means include “power secrets” (*arcana imperii*) to keep people quiet (freedom of speech, freedom of mass media, participation in elective bodies, etc.), *arcana*

dominationis to protect a leader during political crises (concessions to opposition followed by termination of granted privileges, dictatorship); numerous technical arcana which, in fact, are a set of versatile political technologies, ex. declaration of a short victorious war (*dictatura rei gerendae*), repression of an uprising in a country (*dictatura seditionis sedandae*), or less massive actions, ex. a referendum. Opposite to the rights of power and domination, arcana can be mastered by or passed on to a successor.

Based on skillful combination of different arcana a dictator develops strategies to control elites and society, which present the second set of ruling means in the hands of “a dictator”. Among such strategies is a strategy of repressions in the form of hard line, bashing of opponents, and demonstrable forceful crackdown. Here, first and foremost, is the sufficiency of repressive potential; secondly, the art of not going too far and, instead of obedience, causing an upheaval or revolution under the obvious approval of elite. Another strategy is co-option as bribery of counter-elite, opposition, and public figures to provide for their loyalty in exchange for status-quo backup. Co-option may be executed through selective support of certain initiatives, their incorporation in decision-making, though playing supporting roles. The task is primarily to correctly choose the co-optants; secondly, to identify adequately the co-option potential as you can’t bribe everyone. The last strategy is organizational buildup. In this case a dictator allows for new governmental, political, and public institutions to be set up, thus serving as a leading organizer open to changes. With these institutions, maintaining the power and shrugging off responsibility he pursues the desired policy, ex. exposes the corrupted elite, lowers taxes or finances social projects (in excess of economically effective level), thus gaining the majority support and reducing the popularity of opposition. At this stage the key problem is to keep new institutions down, not to turn them into “sleeping” which under the weakened control will live their own life and, finally, bury “a dictator”.

Dictator’s dilemma is how to clearly identify friends and enemies not to make a wrong choice of a set of ruling tools? M. Olson believed that such identification criteria can be only ideology/economic interest formed strictly vertically. [Olson, 1971] This implies elite’s purges in order to prevent bureaucracy plots.

Key research question of the article: do the excessive personification of politics and “a dictator’s dilemma” emerged in the post-Soviet states rather provoke a threat to a *socium* (feeling insecure) or facilitate its security?

Empirical material for our research is the political elites of Russia.

Research Methodology

It is based on the analysis of classical political literature: the ideas of R. Michels on «organization logic» and «iron law of oligarchy»; Michels R., (1915); M. Olson on the logic of collective actions (Olson, 1971); Schmitt C. (1921, 2004, 2010) and Arendt H.(1951, 1958, 2003, 1972) and on the nature of politics and the responsibility of political elites; on broad search of the sources with Yandex and Google (key words: authoritarianism, post-Soviet states, elites, etc.) which revealed basic web-sites and interest groups. The requests were made only in Russian.

Russian PE Generations

Three prominent historic periods of political elites’ formation can be summed up in the history of modern Russia: generations of Gorbachev, Eltzin, and Putin.

Gorbachev’s PE is a so-called “old elite”, actually Soviet partocracy marked by gerontocracy stamp and a mixture of “Soviet ethos” under shy stigma of official Soviet ideology alongside. Under Eltzin, the system of former values was demolished completely. Individualism and material success came to the fore. Eltzin’s PE is “new” Russian elite; broadly speaking, the same political bosses having added property to power, turned businessmen and, in some way, bandits. Its typical characteristics are religious propaganda and praise of market economy, excitement over social and material inequality as a base for further development as well as related fascination with neoliberalism. Putin’s PE is bureaucrats forming a new establishment in Russia which is described by intolerance to competition. Putin’s PE was shaped under the “iron

law of oligarchy”, commercialization of education, with a segment therein created especially to self-reproduce PE.

To examine the configurations of elite circles around the president, the inner structure of Russian political elites must be reviewed. It is rather simple. PE falls into the so-called systemic and non-systemic fractions. [Stanovaya , 2017]

Inner structure of Russian PE – Systemic Elite

It is a legitimate vertical with bureaucrats and deputies which is molded by three factors. Firstly, technocratism. During the Medvedev’s presidency technocrats started shaping it as a depoliticized and non-ideological “power of specialists”, who lacked personal political experience, however, excelled in neutral diligence. The specialists were tested in the regions or CEO positions of state-owned companies, deputy heads of ministries and agencies. In good time new technocrats, military elite including, filled in the power ranks from bottom upwards enforcing it vertically.

Another factor of elites’ renewal is the age, ridding of “old guard”. Anton Vaino, for example, despite his young age and traditional affiliation with Chemezov’s group, becomes one of the most trusted persons of the president and gradually builds up informal influence and staffer’s experience. The third factor is a preserved link with one of the clans, though the promotion is granted exclusively by the president. This entails children, bureaucrats playing second fiddle, “neighborhood” mates.

For example, Dmitry Patrushev, a son of Sovbez secretary Nickolay Patrushev, was appointed Minister of Agriculture in 2018. Before, for 8 years he had headed the state-owned Rossel’khozbank , i.e. was in charge of strategic investments in national projects of agribusiness industry, which loan portfolio has in two years substantially exceeded the bank’s equity. In spring 2018 the delinquent loan data were classified by 2-nd Department in “K” Directorate of ESS FSB, which stewards counterintelligence of credit and financial state system, and supervises Central bank.

At first Patrushev was actively proposed to the position of “Gasprom” Chairman of the Board (causing concerns among the elite), then a position for him was shopped around the renovated Promsvyaz’bank, which finally went to another “son” – Petr Fradkov (his farther headed the Government, and later the SVR, Foreign Intelligence Service). Only in early spring this year Patrushev was agreed for the position of agricultural minister. Accounting for the 50% increase of food demand worldwide at 30% population growth in the near 20 years, according to the forecast of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the agricultural production will grow by half; consequently, Patrushev Jr in the government will have a chance to take on the role of a leader of the Russian economy.

Among the relatively experienced but young leaders Dmitri Kobylkin stands out, who informally supervises Stavropol krai alongside with his region, as well as Andrei Vorob’ev who was the first to transform successfully the image of “a prince” into the one of “a technocrat”. [Politbyuro 2.0, 2017] Minister of Emergency Situations Evgeny Zinichev worked FSB deputy director; in 2016 for two months was an acting governor of Kaliningrad oblast, however before that he had served at FSO (Federal Guards Service) in the position of an adjunct to the president.

Regarding the changes in the political PE block we can mention the increased ideological and informal influence of bishop Tikhon (Shevkunov) which takes place amid decreased weight of parliamentary opposition parties (CPRF, LDPR, SR). Bishop Tikhon for Pskov and Porkhov (Shevkunov) was elevated to the rank of metropolitan by Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Kirill on May 17 at the service in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. “Putin’s confessor” took a step towards gaining the rank of patriarch in future.

Systemic elite being a weak subject at the moment as a whole satisfies the political leadership, it doesn’t offer distinctive expectations, and isn’t overactive drawing negative. Where negative is excessive, ex. in sports or science, the rotation takes place to be seen as learning lessons from conflicts.

Inner Structure of Russian PE – Non-systemic Elite

It closes on Vladimir Putin personally constituting the so-called “deep state”. It embraces Putin’s “cronies”, who received the control over huge pieces of state property with no official positions.

That said, unclear is the degree of the presidential cronies’ involvement into decision-making. Obvious is the fact that they participate in the process sidestepping the formal governmental procedures later used only to legitimize the decisions made. The powerful personas distancing from formal bodies symbolize the crisis of responsibility which brings us back to the H. Arendt’s idea that politics is a product of free decisions. Eminence obliges to take political responsibility however the non-systemic elite sheers away from it, thus big-league politics incorporates “little people” known to a few before.

“Race of Successors” and Strategies of Non-systemic Elite

Prior to 2014 the internal competition of elite groups enforced the role of Vladimir Putin as a moderator and referee of the competition. The Ukrainian crisis brought “the race of successors” to an end. Reintegration of the Crimea with Russia and humanitarian aid for the pro-Russian fighters in the south-east of Ukraine made the rating of the president soar in the country and fused the elite around the figure of its undisputable leader. However, with the “race of successors” stopped, it doesn’t mean that the operation “Successor” is cancelled. The power transit process in the country is inevitable, and its outcome will, no doubt, be of global importance. The people of non-systemic elite realize it. Their task is not only to survive, but to predetermine the operation results. It is achievable, if three key strategies are observed, which must be correctly fixed on and competently followed [Stanovaya, 2017]

The first strategy – to get informally built-in in the administrative vertical saturating ministries with one’s people so that the decisions are completely in line with corporate interests as well as the state, ex. Sergei Chemezov heading “Rostekh”. The rearming program (VPK group) till 2021 is his responsibility; he will inevitably be one of the key elite actors.

The second strategy – to redistribute the assets between the formal state and the non-systemic elite, ex. Igor Sechin heading “Rosneft”. Failing to gain unambiguous Putin’s support for the Bashneft deal, he had to press it through the cabinet of ministers, which resulted in the arrest of Aleksei Ulyukaev, Economic Development minister. This happening is the implication of the crisis in the relations of partially non-systemic elite with the systemic elite which didn’t yield to the degree Igor Ivanovich wanted. Sechin’s vigor and wants to usurp the oil industry unites a broad elite coalition against him, including such players as “Lukoil”, “Gaspromneft”, “Tatneft”. For example, when without consultations with the Kremlin “Rosneft” launched the shelf drilling close to the Vietnamese coast which China considers its own territory that triggered its strong protests, the President didn’t back him.

The third strategy is to gain agreements with each other as well as with the chief referee on urgent issues as they emerge. This is the strategy of Rotenberg and Koval’chuk brothers, Gennadi Timchenko and Shamalov. However underestimation of systemic PE and national interests may become the cause of their fall. “With Putin yet keeping fit (which is highly probable) the issue of a successor will be practically discussed only during the 2021 parliamentary pre-electoral process, as the next parliament will become a relevant element of transit. After president Putin leaves his position his special status is likely to be looked for (Russian ayatollah). [Politbyuro 2.0, 2017] Much will rest in the hands of the West: poor relations will ignite conflicts along the Russia’s perimeter and call for elite’s mobilization.

Elite’s Inner system of Checks and Balances: “Friends” and “Foes”

CPSU and KGB were the founding fathers of such system in the USSR; the ones in Russia are systemic and non-systemic elites. It acquired its final shape in 2012, Prime Minister Medvedev, a bit later Sergey Ivanov, the head of presidential administration, and his first deputy Vyacheslav Volodin, Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyenin turned up in one party; the other party constituted heads of “Rosneft” and “Rostekh” Igor Sechin and Sergei Chemezov, businessmen Gennady Timchenko and Urii Koval’chuk. Ideologically, after the 2018 presidential election in Russia “two broad PE coalitions were formed – mobilizational (Defence ministry + siloviki,

which core is Chemezov – Chaiki – Zolotov – Shaigu) and modernizational (liberal block of the government, private business, potential participants are Medvedev – Koval’chuks – Sobyenin – Kudrin – Gref”. [Politbyuro 2.0, 2017]

Consequently, nobody can definitely say what/who is a more meaningful support for the president as the supreme power, what determines real political constellation in Russia – his informal environment or the people officially/formally in the chain of authority. Who is “a friend” and who is “a foe” among them? If we abide by the Olson’s idea that the only criteria of friends’ identification can be ideology or economic interest, the answer is clear – today, as under President Eltzin, “the gigantic state is governed by the group of old mates at the picnic in the country-side. Forever.” [Pavlovskij 2018] It is exactly the meaning of the high-profile re-appointment of Eltzin’s son-in-law V. Yumashev to the position of an unpaid adviser to the Russian President. There were the opinions that “Yumashev is considered as a means of inner elite balance as well as a person who is used to forge relationships with the West.” [Chesnokova, 2018] Actually, Russia even now is ruled by “Club of the Nineties”, and Yumashev’s story proves it once again. [Pavlovskij, 2018] However if “plain power” happens to be in the zone of interests, the President becomes an inter-agent between true subjects of management initiatives and formal mechanism of state functioning.

President and Political Unity of a Nation

President strives to be the figure embodying the political unity of a nation. State identity - one side of the unity - exists for a long time; Russian nation is present within the fixed natural and legal borders: the people of Russia – its legislative power. The sameness is apparent in the principle of Russia’s nationhood. Institutional matrix of Russian statehood is foreign sovereignty and capacity to protect itself. Being interviewed by the Chinese media-corporation (June 6, 2018) President Putin said:” I assume that Russia will be sovereign, or it won’t exist at all. No doubt, the Russian people will always choose the first.” [Putin 2018] And Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov reiterated at the meeting with the representatives of Russian NGOs on June 5 that “Russia will provide for its sovereignty under any circumstances.” [Lavrov, 2018] However the political unity must be representative and personal; in our case - the figure of the President. According to the All-Russia Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) on 07.05.2018, right after the presidential election the majority approved his activity (82%), but alongside nearly 90% citizens stand for changes, the society requests changes even more. Almost 59% respondents speak for the changes in major spheres of public life, providing this share exceeds 50% in all social and demographic groups. [President Vladimir Putin: assessments of work ..., 2018] Around a third of Russians believe that the country needs changes only in certain spheres.

Most likely, because of this the presidential campaign was clear-cut anti-elite: “President united with the people against self-indulged bureaucrats”. It illustrates that, firstly, to separate friends from foes isn’t that easy; secondly, the political weight of the President has reached its maximum and influences in multiple (and ambiguous) ways the political process moving aside political groups and elites.

It has been translated in the new June opinion poll of “the big three” leading sociological research centers (“Levada-Centre”, FOM, VCIOM). “Levada-Center” recorded the approval ratings of the president lowered to 65%. His activity is “certainly” approved by 24% respondents, “rather” approved by 41%; according to VCIOM data – up to 72.1%, FOM data – 54%. [Hamraev, 2018] The reason is the pension reform which discussion the President has distanced from, because the discussion aims at final shaping of the position which can be easily changed. [Vladimir Putin still not engaged in...., 2018]

The process of Putin’s political representation is built on the descending logic through mass media, various talk shows, etc. They shape the opinion of rank and file public, who imitate what they see and read fixing the stereotypes and ethos of behaviour regarding the representative. How strong is the positive stereotype of the latter image perception tightly links with how sturdily fixed is the positive valence of his image and its fixation in the value system of the citizens. His behavior and decisions he takes are explained by the impacts of positive internal

(personal, subjective) and ambiguous external (situational, environmental) factors. Broad idea comes down to the following: today only the President can propose and pursue certain coherent policy; only he understands how a leader of a global state must behave – “he is a spiritual warrior”. 2 (TV channel "Russia 1" air, 2018) In this sense a worthy successor capable of embodying the political unity of people to the same extent, is unseen even in the medium-term perspective.

Means and Strategy to Govern Elites and Society

Modus operandi of the President is determined not only by his mental strategy but by the image of actual and appropriate (“fair”, “correct”) reality formed by his PE being translated to the public.

In the book “Political Representation” F. Ankersmith identified two forms of Machiavellism: *arcana imperii* и *raison d’etat*. [Ankersmit, 2012: 32-47] The typical feature of the first is secrecy and political evil, which is inevitable, because it promotes stronger public order. The second form, *raison d’etat*, is the realization of state interests with permissible and acceptable means. Here, a certain fraction of *arcana imperii* policy is allowed, when no other way out exists. Evil can be openly granted only within the marked limits. The Machiavellism reference excluded from this idea, we can state that the means of ruling which the President follows is the *raison d’etat* principle. In the modern Russia basic mechanisms of contemporary policy do function – freedom of speech, freedom of press related with the *arcana* of power.

It is a natural mode of free and boundless exchange of information. In Russia these mechanisms sometimes stumble, but one can’t speak about censorship introduced and information flow interrupted. “Censorship is a tool of distinction between public and non-public.” [Ushakov, Kravchuk 2010: 45] Public dissemination of different information is always estimated (this or that way) in the terms of national interests. Elementary censorship (political considerations) exists in Russia, however special; predictable one doesn’t. But the society itself can serve a censor (it would be good to ban abortions), “a too diligent worker”. The phenomenon of self-censorship exists as well, which can be explained both by contract provisions between a worker (ex. SI) and an employer and by the fear. The people engaged in the intellectual sphere want to feel safe, to work successfully, to take care of their family. They know that criticism may lead to punishment, and are unaware of the idea for which they would agree to suffer. Self-censorship displays passivity aspect of the power.

In 2016 the President of Russia touched on censorship matter in his annual address to the Federal Assembly: “Nobody can ban anyone to think without restraint and openly express his position in the spheres of culture, politics, mass media, public life, discussing economic issues. We are against any monopoly, be it exclusiveness claims, or attempts to devise the rules of international trade as one sees fit, to limit freedom of speech, in fact to introduce censorship in the global informational space”. [Message of the President to the Federal Assembly, 2016] Basic aim of the power is to exclude excessive transparency of a society in the form of uncontrolled communication of ideas. Excessiveness ruins the culture of trust and nurtures the culture of suspicion. [Byung-Chul Han, 2012] Russian laws are quite in line with the German ones in this sense: “A new German law introduced state censorship on social media platforms on October 1, 2017. The new law requires social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to censor their users on behalf of the German state. Social media companies are to delete or block any online "criminal offenses" such as libel, slander, defamation or incitement, within 24 hours of receipt of a user complaint -- regardless of whether the content is accurate or not. Social media companies receive seven days for more complicated cases. If they fail to do so, the German government can fine them up to 50 million Euros for failing to comply with the law”. [Bergman, 2017]

Strategies of governance are chosen according to the *raison d’etat* principle as well. It is safe to say that the repressive strategy is secondary; however the opposition and counter-elite deny it, ex., on June 10, 2018 the concerted action “For Free Russia without Repressions and Tyranny” took place in Sakharov prospect, Moscow. Ten thousand people were declared to

come, but the journalists from “Dozhd” reported on only around thousand participants. [The color of mood - Russia", 2018]

The co-option strategy doesn't work at all; the non-systemic opposition renouncing the available political system of the state and in word seeking its dismantlement is excluded from the state institutions. Only the systemic opposition has representation there – in the frames of “the established political system” – however the degree of its political independence is low.

The third type of strategy – institutional building - successfully works in Russia. To resign to it, a leader must possess a strong political will, as “sleeping institutions” are extremely dangerous. Nevertheless at Putin's initiative in 2003-2004 the Public Chamber was set up as an all-Russian institution of public representation. In 2011 All-Russian People's Front was established at the inter-regional conference of “United Russia” party, which got involved in war on corruption and promotion of the programs to implement the presidential “May Decree”; in 2018 the agreement was reached between the People's Front and Russian Audit Chamber to exchange information and on consultative assistance. The same year the procedure of political party registration was pruned down that has spurred numerous new parties of various kinds. However, sometimes the proposed institutions do not function as they were supposed to, ex. the institution of presidential plenipotentiary (polpredstvo), which was aimed at regional development. The ex-mayor of Ekaterinburg Evgeny Roizman thinks that “the institution of polpredstvo is devalued today, it is an extra bureaucratic inert superstructure, which is useless; it is an ineffective sinecure. New appointments do not speak for its strengthening, rather vice versa.”[Torop, 2018] There are, however, few success stories: S. Kirienko who served the presidential plenipotentiary in Privolzhski Federal District (2000-2005), then headed Rosatom, in 2016 was appointed the first deputy head of RF presidential administration. Less successful is the example of Igor Kholmansky, presidential plenipotentiary in Ural Federal District (2012-2018). He worked an assembly manager at “Uralvagonzavod” in Nizhni Tagil, coming into spotlight thanks to his proposal during the TV link-up with Putin to break up rallies of white-ribboners arriving in Moscow with ‘muzhiki’. As a rule, polpreds are unconnected with local elite, so their capacities are limited.

Conclusion

Answering the key research question of the article - if in post-Soviet states the excessive personification of politics and appearance of “dictator's dilemma” provoke threats to socium (feeling insecure) or rather facilitate for its security - we can definitely say the following. Political paternalism inherited from the Soviet past and the model of a social state make the personalized policy a guarantor of political stability of these states, consequently their security. In post-Soviet states the H. Arendt's principle, which lies in the fact that politics is a product of free decisions, doesn't work. C. Schmitt's principle reigns there: the political unity of people embodied in a certain person is an absolute value. The specifics of political life, political culture and political elite of these states dictate the need of such political representation, namely. Thus, rather silly is to hope for the implementation of Davis curve in Russia and to expect a change of the regime. By and large the Russian president managed to avoid absolute personification of politics, and to remain open for discussions, to escape the traps of political narcissism, political capsulation, political somnambulism; to find the optimal style of political governance of elites and societies. Worth is naming this style the *raison d'état* style. To follow it the political will is “a must” as it becomes a decisive determinant of political survival, in gaining the target of state prosperity under the concurrent control over the society. The political will, *inter alia*, gives a chance for a leader to follow the ethics of responsibility, not the ethics of conviction.

A politician who stubbornly follows his moral principles, regardless of the results that result, - the fact that Weber once called the ethic of conviction (*gesinnungs-ethik*), can do more harm than the one who practices the ethics of responsibility (*verantwortungs-ethik*). The latter implies a specific situation to be accounted, politics orientation, primarily, to the consequences, to historical responsibility of political elites for the results of their actions. Ethics of responsibility is merely a sober perception of politics.

Notes

1. K. Schmitt lists and considers the key types of arcana in the second chapter of "Dictatorship" based on the Tacitus's second book "Annals", where certain arcana imperii are mentioned in passing, and in the medieval treatise by A. Clapmar.

2. "Russia 1" TV channel air (2018), Vladimir Solov'ev talk-show on the Kemerovo tragedy. "I would like to express condolences and support to our leader Valdimir Putin. For him it is a stab in the back, it is a stunning blow!.. Because what he does today for Russia – unbelievable things - protecting Russia at the external arena, undertaking inner reforms of unbelievable force...Quite of a sudden – so incompetently! Behind his back! And he has no time to keep looking back at getting done what he resolves by breaking through the walls. But he needs our support as well!" – Senator Elena Mizulina // <https://varlamov.ru/2851643.html>. (access - 12 06 2018)

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