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## INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AGAINST RUSSIA: HISTORY, PRESENT, PROSPECTS

For people observing actions of western justice against Russia, publication by the International Criminal Court in The Hague of the so-called arrest warrant of the Russian President Putin and the Human Rights Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova did not come as a surprise. Long before the start of the special military operation in Ukraine, there was talk of “bringing Russia to justice” in the European Union, the United States, and their allied countries.

For the first time, the topic of the President Putin’s legal responsibility for the suffering of the civilian population allegedly caused by his actions was raised during the second entry of Russian troops into the territory of the Chechen Republic in 1999, and the subsequent period of terrorist activity by Islamists who had long maintained their bases in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan.

For example, back in 2004, the German magazine *Der Spiegel* titled the article about responsibility for the children’s deaths during the seizure of the school in Beslan by anti-Russian terrorists.

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“The hostage-taking of children in the Beslan school shakes the whole world. But Putin still does not want to give up the territory of Chechnya.”<sup>4</sup>

The logic of both the headline and the article by journalist Uwe Kluessman is clear: it is not the terrorists who seized the school and tortured the children under the slogan “Freedom to Chechnya” that are blamed for the children’s deaths, but the Russian law enforcement officers who freed the children and the President Putin personally, who did not fulfill the key requirement of the terrorists who hid behind the children. The fact that if this requirement had been fulfilled, the terrorist state, capable of dozens of such terrorist attacks as that in Beslan, would have arisen in the territory of Chechnya, the Western press did not care. And not only the journalist of *Der Spiegel*, but also the authors of 99% of articles about the Chechen war and subsequent conflicts, in which Russia participated, did not care too.

The theme of Russian leaders’ personal responsibility has become the leitmotif of the Western press for the next twenty years, and it is a pity that Russia has been trying to explain something to such journalists as Uwe Kluessman or Pilar Bonnet, a correspondent of the Spanish newspaper *El País* in Moscow, who worked in Moscow, the Britisher Edward Lucas and the American Applebaum, who later turned out to be russophobes on the verge of mental normality. In the West or in any country of the “global South”, such people would be declared “ineligible” after their first publication on the topic “Your President and The Hague”.

<sup>4</sup> Klußmann U. Russisches Beben // Spiegel Panorama. 2004. 14 Dez. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/jahreschronik/a-331448.html> (accessed: 13.05.2023).

And only Russia – perhaps because of its historical ties with Europe and the respective illusions, – has been trying for many years to “cooperate” with such authors and explain something to them.

Western media once again raised the topic of the Russian leaders’ “personal responsibility”, when Russia came to the aid of the Syrian troops in September 2015 at the official request of the Syrian government, for the purpose of saving the Syrian civilian population from killings and torture actively used by Islamists who fought against the Syrian authorities.

It was then that the topic of Putin’s alleged personal responsibility for the deaths of people killed during bombing positions of “anti-Assad” militants in Aleppo, in the suburbs of Damascus and elsewhere in Syria, arises again. Western media actively raise this topic to this day, although since 2014, attempts to “bring Russia to justice” for allegedly violating rights of Ukrainian citizens have come to the fore. And this despite the fact that massive violation of the rights of Ukrainians began with the illegal and brutally ruthless “Maidan” riot, when 38 law enforcement officers were killed and hundreds were maimed during those 5 months of the illegal siege of the Verkhovna Rada and Yanukovich’s presidential residence in Kiev. (Western media have never raised the topic of the Maidan activists’ responsibility for these deaths and injuries.)

For the first time, the attempt to seriously appeal to the ICC by the Ukrainian authorities (supported and guided by the governments of the USA, Germany, France, etc.) was made on February 4, 2015. The accusation was “annexation” of the Crimea and Sevastopol and “occupation” of

Donbass, with establishment there the DPR and LPR allegedly “terrorist organizations”.

Russia should have immediately stopped any ties with the ICC even then, especially since the persecution of former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir by this organization showed lopsidedness and bias of the ICC verdicts: it followed from the verdict against the Sudanese leader that he alone was to blame for the separatist violence that had been going on in Sudan for many years. In these circumstances, it was foolish to hope for the “goodwill” of the ICC and continue to believe in “European justice and its high standards” as before we believed in “independent and objective European mass media.” But Russia did not withdraw its signature under the Rome Statute of the ICC of 1998 until 2023. We are lucky that the Russian parliament had no time to ratify this document.

Unfortunately, Russia had to wait until March 17, 2023, when the “arrest warrant” for Putin and Lvova-Belova was issued. Herewith, ridiculous accusations were made: Lvova-Belova, the mother of many children, was accused of “deporting Ukrainian children”, depriving them of their “Ukrainian identity” and separating them from their parents.

Deporting is the word given for saving the children from the bombing and the ongoing hostilities with their shelling. Depriving of identity is the phrase for cessation of russophobic propaganda, to which children in Ukraine have been subjected since elementary school.

But why have Russia’s eyes opened to the ICC so late? Why couldn’t we learn from the experience of at least Sudan? Unanswered questions.