

STOP POKING THE BEAR

In the end of 2016, Robert W. Merry, the political editor of American website *The National Interest* supposed in his article under a noteworthy title “Stop Poking the Bear” that the United States and Russia would stop being enemies “tomorrow”. The hopes were associated with Donald Trump winning the US Presidential election. The author saw that as a signal to the world “to change shoes” quickly, and those who will not understand it, can regret it. The Russian community of political scientists had similar hopes, and the deputies to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly even raised glasses with champagne drinking to changes in the US White House.

Today, only lazybones do not speak ironically about that in the Russian liberal camp. And it’s not fully clear what inspires them so much. Political naivety, ingenuousness and simple-mindedness of people hoping that after D. Trump’s coming to power, relations between Russia and the United States will improve or their own insight that this was not to be.

I also demonstrated restrained optimism at the 2017 Likhachov Scientific Conference in connection with D. Trump’s being elected the President. I supposed that the United States and Russia would not become friends but the world would feel calmer if they stop being at odds with each other. Unfortunately, this did not happen. D. Trump did not drain “the Washington swamp” and no one had to “change shoes”. Neither in the United States, nor in the countries under their control. And what is more, the new US President became a natural part of that “swamp”, supporting its efforts in aggravating relations with Russia. Though when he was a candidate for Presidency, he did not exclude a possibility of their improvement.

Some small European countries, which only recently became NATO members, or are exerting all efforts to become such members, were especially happy with that. Their selfless devotion to Hillary Clinton declared by their authorities until the day the results of elections in America were announced, did

not become the basis for change of the United States' attitude to them. The new President pretended that he had not noticed their caustic remarks about him as a candidate for Presidency or political opponents had not given him a chance to see that. Critics of D. Trump also quickly forgot about that and now they started looking for favours from him.

The example of the Ukrainian President P. Poroshenko is especially demonstrative in this respect. Only "yesterday" he showered H. Clinton with compliments and saw only her as the US President, and now he is looking for every opportunity to shake the sovereign hand of D. Trump.

Unfortunately, the new US Administration did not listen to the advice given by the wise politician and statesman Henry Kissinger and did not choose the way for normalization of relations with Russia. Following Robert Merry's metaphors, one can say that the "Bear" is not just poked now but also set the dogs on. Just take the cynical exclusion of Russian sportsmen from the 2018 Olympic Games in South Korea without any arguments. This should be despicable for a civilized society. No matter the attitude of political elites of the collective West to the Russian authorities, it's a shame to vent their anger on the whole country and its people. Really, this brutal demonstration of force is its opposite. Revengefulness is always the lot of the weak.

It's surprising that young European allies of the United States that actually rave about the revenge for insults by Russia in the past, are the most inspired in this case as well. They regularly demand to impose new and new sanctions on Russia from the United States and the West, and not only economic but political as well. The Ukrainian political circles were rejoicing after the Russian Parliamentary delegation was deprived of the right to vote in the PACE. Timid attempts by the top officials of this authoritative organization to somehow correct the mistake made and return Russian parliamentarians to Strasburg, were decisively opposed. The head of the Ukrainian Parliamentary delegation said: "If Russia is returned to the PACE, then the Ukraine will leave it". Most likely, this threat would not have been brought into life, but the PACE officials have to take it into account.

The statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Ukraine P. Klimkin in the interview to the German newspaper *Rheinische Post* looks no less tactless: “Lifting sanctions imposed on Russia will lead to Europe’s split”, he said. Who could have thought it? He has not been taken into that Europe yet, and he already blackmails it with a possibility of a split. Surely, if P. Klimkin had no American supervisor at his back, he would have hardly had the courage for such mentoring in case of the leading European countries.

Such a position of the Ukrainian authorities seems counter-productive for me. It won’t bring anything serious except satisfaction of personal ambitions by realization that Russia was humiliated. It won’t solve the problems between the Ukraine and Russia accumulated over the four years. Russia’s non-participation in the PACE operation practically excludes any influence of this organization’s on the position of Russia. And if we take into account the Law “On Reintegration of Donbass”, adopting which the Ukraine in essence refused from the Minsk Agreements, the possibilities for the Ukrainian-Russian relations’ getting out of deep crisis turned out to be zero.

Construction of a military base by Americans in Ochakovo will become a big obstacle on that way. As if for the Ukraine but really for themselves. In the way it already happened in Romania and Bulgaria. The Ukrainian authorities are enthusiastic about that as about deliveries of lethal weapons to the Ukraine. At the same time, they emphasize all the time that the Ukraine protects not only itself but also the whole democratic Europe from Russian aggression. Surely, virtual as there is no real yet and most likely there won’t be.

I don’t know if today’s leaders of the Ukraine understand that such statements are nothing else but acknowledgement that they are the tool for alien policy and alien for the Ukrainian people interests. Here-and-now profits in the form of credits obtained from the United States, International Monetary Fund, some European structures don’t compensate even to a little extent for the Ukrainian losses because of breaking economic relations with Russia. And this is not a theory but the sad reality. Ukrainian citizens are rapidly being reduced to

poverty. Their numbers decrease threateningly. More than 10 mln died, at least 5 mln left for Russia and European countries to work.

The sad certification of the Ukrainian economic well-being and the standard of living of its population is the fact that, according to the survey conducted by the International Institute of Sociology, the results of which were published in January, 2018, 45.2 % of the Ukrainians do not see their future in the Ukraine and would like to leave for a foreign country. Unfortunately, this reality is not fully recognized by most Ukrainian people that go on believing the President's optimistic statements about the bright European future of the Ukraine.

It's well-known that other post-Soviet countries have not found the Paradise on Earth – Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia that are already members of the European Union and have obligingly provided their territories for placement of the US military forces and bases. Their population, which was not numerous originally, is also steadily reducing. I don't know if common Estonians feel satisfaction from the fact that American fighter aircrafts and bombers based on their territory can reach St. Petersburg in 16 minutes. If yes, then it's deep self-deceit. God forbid an armed conflict, but they may not take off at all. And their tragic fate will be shared by small Estonia.

If you listen to Polish political scientists actively taking part in shows on the Russian TV, you involuntarily get an impression that they completely lost the sense of reality. The relations with the United States as military allies give them the feeling of euphoria. They say with delight that Americans sent their troops, 3.5 thousand men with 80 tanks and armoured vehicles, to protect them. And though there is nothing showing that Russia intends to attack Poland, the Russian threat bugaboo is the best sold commodity in Poland.

These “young Europeans” hardly believe that Russia has malicious plans to conquer them, but the bugaboos and scare stories about the Russian threat bring them good dividends from the rich West. First of all, from the USA. Surely, this is deception, but the one enjoyed by Americans themselves, because they to a certain extent make placement of military infrastructure legitimate by the borders of

Russia. Thus, some post-Soviet and post-people's-democratic countries in the person of their political authorities suffer from historical complexes and find themselves on the front line of the global confrontation of the United States and Russia.

And surely, Poland plays a special role here, becoming a kind of temporary charge d'affairs of the United States in Europe. It was the first of the European countries honoured to receive D. Trump. The President of Poland Andrzej Duda welcomed expansion of the US sanctions against Russia when he met Rex Tillerson in Davos and said that he was sure in their strengthening. The US Secretary of State in his turn visited the strategic partner after Davos and supported Poland in its opposition to Russian and German plans to build the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline.

The unconditional following in the wake of American dominating policy and confrontation with Russia by Poland, the Ukraine, South Baltic states and some other East European states certifies not only the lack of these states authorities' responsibility for the European future but also the lack of the elementary instinct of self-preservation. If you tease the bear all the time, the bear may snap at you. And then not only imaginary but real reasons for new offenses may originate in case of the above-mentioned countries. It's impossible to live with Russophobia all the time. It's a dead-end and a dangerous way.

The old Europe went along it for a long time, trying to expand the so-called "territory of freedom", not taking the interests of Russia into account. And often bringing damage to Russia. And that was done and is still being done not by drawing Russia into the European free economic space and demonstrating advantages of Western economic development models, but with the help of armed forces, NATO strengthening, drawing new members into this organization. Probably, this gives Western countries assurance and they feel more secure from their point of view. But at the same time, it deprives Russia of a similar assurance. It generates mutual distrust and new mutual fears.

It seemed that after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and breaking up of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, the need in NATO should be eliminated by itself. It became an anachronism in the new life. This was even mentioned by D. Trump in his speeches during the election campaign. But no, the anachronism goes on living and strengthening. And for some reason it does not come to mind of civilized Europeans that a challenge always generates an adequate answer. And no one will feel calmer because of it.

Recently, there is an understanding originating in old European countries that it is impossible to live in the environment of the confrontation thrust upon the world by the USA – military, economic, ideological. The economic sanctions imposed on Russia negatively affect not only Russia but European countries as well. According to the conclusion by the Institute of World Economics, published in December, 2017, Germany loses Euro 618 million every month because of its own sanctions. Several Prime Ministers of German federal states said fairly definitely that it was necessary to lift them. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Sigmar Gabriel emphasized that it was an internal affair of Germany when he answered the opponents of the Nord Stream 2.

The Federal Chancellor A. Merkel started sharing such sentiments and presented several important thoughts at the World Economic Forum in Davos. “We think that we should cooperate and that protectionism is a wrong way. Controversial issues should be settled, taking into account the opinions of various parties and not unilaterally”. But it seemed that her main political message was the statement: “We should take our fate into our own hands”.

One should think that “we” are Germany and other European countries. Thoughts about the necessity to end the confrontational policy of sanctions were also expressed in some of them. They said about that in the Belgian Parliament, in the House of Lords in the UK. The President of the Czech Republic Miloš Zeman, the Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Belgium Charles Michel spoke on the subject fairly definitely. They are tied by corporate behavioral rules as members of the European Union, but they fairly well

understand the absurdity of the American domineering policy based on armed coercion, thrust upon the world by the United States.

The contours of the future, outlined in the American nuclear strategy, making provisions for use of nuclear weapons in the environment of a common military conflict as well as appointment of Russia, China, Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the role of the United States' enemies, should not satisfy the international community. These are apocalyptic contours. The future of the whole planet cannot be determined by one country. The time has come when all nations of the world and their governments should recognize their responsibilities to the future and say decisively after Mrs. Merkel about their wish "to take their fate into their own hands".