



By: The Editorial Board

Garry Kasparov's voice - an alarm that many did not want to hear



For more than a decade, Garry Kasparov has been one of the most distinguished and consistent critics of Putin's regime. He left Moscow in 2013 after Putin's repressive machine started making significant moves towards him.

It was only two years before Boris Nemtsov, Kasparov's close friend and opposition co-thinker was assassinated near the Kremlin.

Since that time, Kasparov has been living in the US and trying to raise awareness in America and the West in general, explaining that Putin's Russia is destined to commit horrific and unimaginable evil.

By early 2022 the world finally realised what the real Russia is all about. Before February 24, 2022, Garry Kasparov and other warning voices were ignored by the Western community, or were even regarded as delusional or provocateurs.

In Kasparov's recent interview with Yury Dud, a Russian liberal journalist who became famous for his interviews with well-known Russian people, including representatives of the Russian opposition, Garry Kasparov mentioned a peculiar phenomenon that remained hidden from the eyes of most people in Russia and the globe, including those among Russian opposition sympathisers.

In that interview, Garry Kasparov said that all well-known Russian opposition leaders who remained public in Russia, particularly after Boris Nemtsov was assassinated, were not only sending the wrong messages to the West, but also enabled many subverted and corrupted Western politicians and businessmen to continue their work in Russia and with Russia.

An excuse to stay in business with Russia

The existence of those opposition representatives in Russia justified Western representatives' wishes and commitments to engage with the Kremlin, which enabled the Kremlin to continue influencing and infiltrating the Western political class.

Needless to say, large Western companies which had lucrative ventures in Russia ignored Kasparov and even tried to limit his public anti-Putin appearances in Western countries. As an excuse, all those Western companies and politicians had one common but wrong counter argument.

They all looked upon all those famous and well-known Russian opposition representatives who remained in Russia, remained public, and organised various protest events and/or anti-corruption investigations.

This enabled Western representatives to claim falsely that Russia was on the right track to having something resembling a democratic order.

Why was Putin angry with Blair

There was an interesting episode in the Russian-UK relationship which not only marked the beginning of the deterioration of Russian-UK relations but also demonstrated fundamental differences between Russian and UK societies and political culture, something which both Russian and Western representatives found hard to comprehend.

During the first half of the 2000s, Vladimir Putin asked Tony Blair a favour: to extradite Boris Berezovsky, who at that time lived in London and was Putin's main political foe, to Moscow. Tony Blair rejected Vladimir Putin's request, which Putin interpreted as a humiliation and a lack of Blair's interest in being friends with Putin. Blair could not possibly do that because had he engaged in such an attempt to facilitate the extradition of Boris Berezovsky, it would probably have been the end of his political career.

The overall Russian political disposition and cultural traditions are very different. The ruler of the country is the owner of the law, the judicial system, and the entire country.

Putin could neither believe nor understand that the British PM could not influence the decision of one judge who would decide on Boris Berezovsky's extradition.

Similarly, Western politicians and representatives of large companies could not understand that everything with any political significance and noticeable in Russia was happening or not happening purely because of the Kremlin or rejected by the Kremlin. Everything that was happening in Russia was permitted or allowed by the Kremlin.

Kremlin's guardsman

Since the early 2000s and thereafter, Russia has been gradually increasing its domestic grip and intensifying purges, oppressions, and repressions.

Stalinism has been gradually revived for more than a decade. Since then, the Kremlin has been successfully building a system which is naturally correlating with its own desires, made either public or relevant via completely controlled Russian mass media, or messages from the Kremlin sent in a more clandestine manner via various governmental institutions, police, agencies or even tax authorities.

The entire Russian system was operating as the Kremlin's guardians. An undesirable person or organisation would have found it difficult to exist in Russia. It would be difficult for such a person to renew their driver's license or passport. It would have been difficult for such a person or entity to open a bank account, and it would have been difficult even to sign a lease agreement or, for example, be granted a health certificate.

Most people and particularly legal entities in Russia wanted to avoid problems with the authorities because the authorities could do anything. Why, for example, would a landlord sign a rent agreement with an organisation which has been labelled as unfriendly or unpatriotic?

Does this landlord want to have problems with the police, tax authorities, or street thugs? The Kremlin had everything at its disposal, from intelligence to street gangs. Many average street protesters from the early 2000s were regularly beaten or had their

parental rights threatened. The Kremlin's thugs and loyalists have been the same and they were finally revealed in Ukraine.

The Russian ploy was successful

The Russian banking system is another story. All banks in Russia have security departments.

Apart from regular security activities and duties which are handled by those security departments and by ex-intelligence or interior Ministry officers working for Russian banks, all Russian banks interact with the various Russian intelligence agencies on a daily basis.

Background checks, collection, conflicts with government agencies, or competition - all these everyday matters involve the security departments of Russian banks. Therefore, one can be 100% certain that a bank would refuse to provide financial services to a person or legal entity not approved by its security department.

There were always lists of undesirable people and entities from the USSR days, with a slight and moderate softening during the 1990s. By around 2010 and after, these lists caused problems for many average Russian street protesters to find a job because they had been exposed during various opposition events.

This may seem unrealistic to someone living in a democracy, particularly if they see prominent Russian opposition representatives who travel abroad, open offices all around Russia, give interviews, and organise various opposition rallies.

But this is where the Kremlin's trick probably was. Kasparov and many others believe these opposition activities in Russia were intentionally permitted by the Kremlin. During the interview, Garry Kasparov mentioned some of the famous Russian opposition leaders and said that not only were they permitted to simulate opposition activities in Russia, but also, they ultimately prevented Kasparov and many others from explaining the true state of affairs in Russia to the Western world.

Why would the Western political class believe that Russia has long been a true manifestation of 1984 by Orwell, where everything was under the total control of intelligence or criminals loyal to the Kremlin, whilst anti-corruption investigations were being held in Russia - and constantly published - leading to the trashing not only of many public officials, but even of people very close to Putin or Putin himself?

Why didn't Putin eliminate the entire opposition?

Let's for a moment perceive Putin as a rational and calculated person, who manages a large system. Let's examine his proven and confirmed atrocities or acts of aggression.

Let's examine his footprints all the way from Alexander Litvinenko's poisoning and aggression against Georgia to 2016 meddling in the US elections and then a full-blown war in Ukraine with enormous amounts of casualties and horrific war crimes.

In between the aggression against Georgia and the war in Ukraine, Russia maintained a moderate level of domestic opposition and demonstrated the appearance of democratic qualities.

Russia appeared or in fact pretended to be on a democratic path, or as it liked to proclaim, on the track of a sovereign democracy.

Does anyone in the West until today sincerely believe that Putin and the people around him who sent their army to commit all those terrifying acts in Ukraine, could not also shoot down Russian domestic opposition movements or anti-corruption foundations in a matter of hours 5 or 10 years ago?

In the interview, Garry Kasparov said that Boris Nemtsov was a threat and a problem to Putin. Nemtsov was shot 8 years ago. There is no doubt Putin ordered the assassination of Nemtsov in 2015.

Let's take a look at Putin from a KGB officer's

standpoint. Let's view him as someone who could successfully deceive everyone in Yeltsin's entourage in 1999, who intentionally pretended to be weak and not self-confident, as someone who could be manipulated by those who surrounded Yeltsin.

Putin, crashed into Yeltsin's circle along with the Russian oligarchs, the people who succeeded in the 1990s, a vast majority of whom do not differ significantly from John Gotti. Putin skilfully started the penetration and subversion of the Western political class. He used money, sex, Christianity, and traditional values to find mutual ground with many conservatives around the globe, including those who supported Donald Trump.

Why would someone like Putin refrain from controlling his domestic opposition which enabled him not only to release some steam domestically and to stimulate much-needed domestic control of perpetual confrontation among the various clans. But these domestic manifestations of opposition enabled Putin to appear relatively humble and comprehensible in the eyes of the West.

Putin would not have become today's Putin if someone had listened to Garry Kasparov 5 or 10 years ago.

Imagine how many of today's problems and catastrophes we would have avoided if people like Garry Kasparov were perceived by the Western establishment as reliable. Boris Nemtsov would have been alive. Russian 2016 election meddling would not have been possible.

Most importantly, Russia would never have attacked Ukraine simply because the West would have known Russia's true face, and would have admitted Ukraine into NATO years ago.

So many innocent souls would have been saved. So many horrific acts of torture would have been avoided if only the Western political class had listened to people like Garry Kasparov and would not have bought Putin's false picture of Russian sovereign democracy.

Russia is the good old USSR, but smaller and more criminal-minded.