

WHO CAN RESIST VLADIMIR PUTIN?

Thursday 28 September, 4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m. - Plenary room



Evgenia Kara-Murza, Natalia Pouzyreff, Antoine Arjakovsky and Olga Prokopenko

Giving Russian civil society the courage to rise up

The moderator, Antoine Arjakovsky, director of research at the Collège des Bernardins and co-organiser of the debate, explained that a press release had been drawn up following the seminar and would shortly be published on the Normandy region website. The aim of the meeting was for the anti-war leaders, gathered in Caen, to agree on a strategy for democratic transition in Russia. Antoine Arjakovsky outlined the five main points, which should help to *'build a civic, humanitarian and political*

MODERATOR:

Antoine Arjakovsky, director of research at the Collège des Bernardins

SPEAKERS:

Evgenia Kara-Murza, director of advocacy at the Free Russia Foundation

Garry Kasparov, 13th world chess champion, President of the Human Rights Foundation

Natalia Pouzyreff, French MP, President of the France-Russia group

Olga Prokopenko, Franco-Russian activist, spokesperson for the association, Russie-Libertés

opposition' to Vladimir Putin: *'The war in Ukraine must be condemned, Vladimir Putin's regime is illegitimate, Ukraine must regain its borders, we must work towards the necessary democratisation of Russia and finally, Ukraine must absolutely regain its borders.'*

A number of participants who were present at the closed-door meeting were brought together for this debate. Garry Kasparov, 13th world chess champion and president of the Human Rights Foundation, took part via video conference. Antoine Arjakovsky asked about the need to unite the Russian opposition around the five points mentioned. For Garry Kasparov, the things that unite us are reflected in these objectives. He pointed out that Putin's war was not just a territorial conflict, but the war of a dictator against people defending their freedom. *'We must come to their aid, because Vladimir Putin is a threat to Europe and to the world'*, he insisted. He believes that only a victory for Ukraine



Evgenia Kara-Murza, Natalia Pouzyreff and Antoine Arjakovsky

could bring Russia back into the community of free nations. *'The Ukrainian flag must fly over Sevastopol'*, said Garry Kasparov.

Asked what we can expect from the European and French governments in this fight against Putin's Russia, the chess champion lamented the blinkered positions of Emmanuel Macron in France and Joe Biden in the United States. In his view, the world needs to come up with a detailed, joint plan to *'de-Putinise'* Russia so that, at the end of the Putin era, the country has a chance of emerging from totalitarianism.

Evgenia Kara-Murza, director of advocacy at the Free Russia Foundation, was then asked about the usefulness of the closed-door meeting held in Caen. The anti-Putin campaigner began by saying that Russia's human rights violations were everyone's business. *'It's a common struggle for democracy, peace and freedom'*, she insisted. Evgenia Kara-Murza believes that the world is now paying for two decades of impunity, during which Putin was free to attack Crimea, Georgia, Syria and Chechnya without any international reaction.

The activist, whose husband is a vehement opponent of the Russian dictator, is saddened by the growing repression of civil society in Russia. Arrests are made every day: 7,000 criminal cases and 8,000 administrative cases have

been opened against people who have expressed their disagreement with the invasion of Ukraine. *'This means that many people are prepared to speak out, even though they risk prison and torture'*, she said. *'We must do everything we can to ensure that these voices are not suppressed.'* Evgenia Kara-Murza pointed out that her husband, who was sentenced to 25 years in prison, is being held in very difficult conditions. He has also survived two attempts to poison him. This fight for peace must succeed, so that Russia is no longer a danger either to itself or to the rest of the world.

We must work towards the necessary democratisation of Russia

Antoine Arjakovsky

It was the turn of Olga Prokopenko, a Franco-Russian activist and spokesperson for the association Russie-Libertés, to give her opinion on the work carried out the previous day at the Normandy World Peace Forum. She mentioned that Russia's most repressive laws date back to 2012 and that since then, civil society has been increasingly stifled. *'We absolutely must support it to give it the courage to act,'* Olga Prokopenko pro-

claimed. We can do this by organising demonstrations for Ukraine, making donations, talking about the war, etc. She reminded us that many Russians refuse to allow people to be killed in their name and that we must not forget them. She also pointed out that in the last presidential election, France almost elected a candidate who, until recently, officially supported Putin's government: Marine Le Pen.

Many Russians refuse to allow people to be killed in their name and that we must not forget them

Olga Prokopenko

Natalia Pouzyreff, French MP for the Renaissance group and chair of the France-Russia group stated that *'it is absolutely essential to support the emergence of a democratic proposal for Russia'*. She added that MEPs are working together to reach out to Russian opponents, so that they can determine which type of opposition should be set up in their country. *'Over there, young people want their country to evolve democratically. We need to come together to create a common strategy.'* The MP explained that the opposition had been asked to work on a post-Putin project; they would need political support to implement it.

The debate continued with a question on the possibilities for action for Western democracies. *'How can they support the Russian opposition and help Ukraine?'* asked the moderator. Evgenia Kara-Murza believes that the most important thing is to continue sending messages of support, because Vladimir Putin and his regime are doing everything they can to demoralise the country's citizens, who see so much



Natalia Pouzyreff

repression that they could become discouraged and stop trying to oppose it. The activist also explained that evidence of Russia's war crimes must be gathered, so that the international tribunal can do its work. This requires the support of journalists, activists and NGOs, who are doing this work despite the repression.

Antoine Arjakovsky then asked the speakers about the need for French President Emmanuel Macron to meet opposition members of Russian civil society. Natalia Pouzyreff felt that this would be a good thing and pointed out that members of parliament were already reaching out to these opposition figures. However, she expressed her regret that diplomatic relations with Russia have become virtually non-existent. Support for exiled Russian journalists, to secure their status, is essential if they are to continue their work. *'We have to give them the means to work, and the French media must also help them to produce content for the Russian-speaking public here and everywhere. It's one of the only ways of getting information across and it's one of our only links.'* The ball seems to be in the court of the democratic opposition, which must do everything it can to get organised. This is the starting point for the international community to help the Russians regain their freedom.



Watch the full debate on YouTube

ARE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS EFFECTIVE?

Thursday 28 September, 4:30 p.m. - 6 p.m., Auditorium



Lionel Fontagné, Pascal Boniface and Angelos Delivorias

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Sanctioning without being sanctioned

With the focus of the debate coming back to the war in Ukraine, should the question of the effectiveness of economic sanctions be understood *'as a substitute for war, a graduated response or worse, a step towards war?'* asked Lionel Fontagné in his introduction to the debate. The economist highlighted the difference *'between the economic approach and*

the political approach, which assess the damage to the economy on the one hand, and the more complex consequences on the other.' The Global Sanctions Database, which lists all sanctions from 1950 to 2022, shows *'a change in the nature of sanctions, initially fairly broad at country level, then more surgical after 11 September 2001, targeting individuals, companies and transactions instead, known as smart sanctions.'* The economist pointed out that *'sanctions are often accompanied by countersanctions from the targeted countries'* and that we need to *'look beyond the economic cost.'* In the case of the sanctions imposed on Russia after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Lionel Fontagné explained that *'through the oligarchs, 600,000 compa-*

MODERATOR:

Lionel Fontagné, economist and member of the Cercle des Économistes

SPEAKERS:

Pascal Boniface, director of IRIS

Angelos Delivorias, analyst at the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS)