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## How the fuck is that possible?!

Alexei Stoev

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These are words from a recent song by one of the vocalists of the band Kasta Vladi. The phrase, after 10 months of full-scale war in Ukraine, continues to be almost the main question of Russian society. How is it that from being very “great” nation, Russians have suddenly become outcasts all over the planet? Yet many continue to ignore the great-power chauvinism that brought us here.

The invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and the subsequent full-scale war earlier this year are not the only massacres the Russian government has engaged in. Take, for example, the war in Chechnya. Recall a bit of history – when the USSR collapsed, part of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR seceded into the Chechen Republic, out of the control of Moscow’s elites. For dreams of independence the Kremlin drowned Chechnya in blood, killing up to 100 thousand civilians according to various estimates. The dead Russian soldiers were counted then as now, but thanks to the work of the Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers it is known that at least 14,000 soldiers died in the first Chechen war alone.

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Grozny was razed to the ground then, just as many Ukrainian cities are destroyed now. Then Russian society responded moderately to the military action against the independent republic, and in the presidential elections 81% of the population voted for the Russian empire: 52% for Putin and 29% for Zyuganov. We all know how the war in Chechnya ended for the Chechen people. The Russian Federation was able to hold Chechnya and thus sent a signal to all the other peoples who found themselves under Moscow's boot – we will drown the uprising for independence in blood and we are ready for any losses.

Next was South Ossetia and the silence of Russian cities against Moscow's imperial policies. The occupation of Crimea and the introduction of troops into eastern Ukraine were not a serious threat to Putin's political power in the Kremlin either.

In 2015, the Moscow regime sent its troops to Syria to support the dictator Bashar al-Assad, against whom the local population rebelled back in 2011. The actions of the Russian military in Syria are one reason why the deaths of Russian officers are celebrated across the planet. At least half a million people have died in the country's civil war, and some of those people were killed by Russian troops.

What was the reaction of Russian society to this? None. Xenophobia and racism, such important components of great-power chauvinism, helped not just to justify inaction, but also to make Syrians once again "savages" who did not deserve freedom (as it had been done to Chechens, Georgians, Dagestanians, and others).

And now we are asked "how is it fucking possible" after three decades of imperial policy of the Russian Federation (and before that the USSR and the Russian Empire) that the soldiers of the new empire march into neighboring countries to conquer new territories and enslave new peoples? How is it fucking possible that during a bloody war you care more about closing McDonald's than you do about the health and safety of

your neighbors? How is it fucking possible that Russians tell the whole world about Putin's bloody regime, but many in their entire lives have never once tried to fight the regime. How is it fucking possible that in a country of 144 million people only several dozen thousands (at best) come out to protest?

That's how it's possible that while you're sleeping and dreaming about the great Russian state, that state becomes a reality and not everyone likes the look of it anymore. Don't try to make excuses for your inaction all these years. Much more important is what you are doing now. And without risk you can't stop Putin and his horde. So think about whether you should move to Germany or France or try to fight and stop whining about the "good" Russians.