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Nothing personal

Vladimir Platonenko

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The moderation of many Western politicians in putting pressure on Russia and their desire to sit on two chairs is usually explained either by their personal bribery or by their own timidity and indecision. There is even an anecdote: “If you make a Napoleon cake without eggs, it will be called Macron”. However, I don’t think it’s about ‘eggs’.

I’ll start with an example. There is a sugar factory in Kamenka, the district centre of Penza Oblast, which supplies sugar even to Moscow. It is controlled by the French company Sucden. Sugar beet is grown on nearby fields, which are also controlled by Sucden. It is said that the company has not had a very good reputation in these fields, as they use a lot of chemicals in the soil. Barley, wheat, sunflower and oilseed flax grow on the same fields. In the village of Fedorovka of the same district there is a flour mill, built before the revolution. Once it was prosperous, like the local state farm, and not only milled flour, but also baked bread. But in the turbulent 1990s the state farm went bankrupt and the factory is now used only as a storehouse for crops from the fields formerly owned by the state farm, now “Sucden”. Of course, it also belongs to Sucden. I have already mentioned where sugar beet goes from it, barley is

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used for beer, flax and sunflower seeds for oil, but I don't know who makes the beer and presses the oil. That's enough of what I know for now.

Now, pay attention! What can Sucden's defeat of the Russian Federation bring? Either nothing, or a change of Russian or local authorities, which is fraught with a redistribution of property. Does it need it? Sucden is not involved in any sanctions, by the way.

Kamensky District in Penza Oblast is just one of many districts in the Russian countryside. All those districts went down roughly the same path in the 90s: the local economy was devastated, plundered and partly taken over by foreigners who, unlike the new Russians, were not only capable of robbing and swindling, but also of running a decent farm. This means that there are a lot of companies like Sucden which own flour mills or brick mills all over Russia and none or at least almost none of them wants big changes which may be followed by a new redistribution of property. And they all press their Western powers to the best of their ability. And there are enough of them to make their pressure affect them. Even now.

They are certainly not enough to completely change the policies of their countries, but they can partially influence them. Which they do.