



By: *The Editorial Board*

Who is a free man? Vladimir Kara-Murza



Who is Vladimir Kara-Murza? A warrior of light. An idealist who believes in a free and democratic Russia. An activist who helped Boris Nemtsov and Bill Browder to advance the Magnitsky Act. An anti-war human rights defender.

Unfortunately, Vladimir Kara-Murza is too pure and genuine for today's Russia, the country which currently identifies people like Yevgeny Prigozhin or Ramzan Kadyrov as its heroes, and distinguishes military brigades involved in war crimes.

Twenty-five years in prison is the maximum possible sentence. A sentence that echoes Stalin's purges.

Today's serial killers and mass murderers in Russia get more moderate sentences. Vladimir Kara-Murza was sentenced to 25 years in a Russian prison, which in Vladimir's case literally is the same as life imprisonment.

Vladimir understood whom he was up against. His friend and former patron, Boris Nemtsov, who brought him into Russian politics, was assassinated 500 metres from the Kremlin wall, possibly the most secure neighbourhood in Moscow, with cameras on every electric pole, which, as a standard, have intervals of 35-45 metres between them.

Vladimir Kara-Murza has not demonstrated such political ambitions as Alexei Navalny. His name is not known to the general public in Russia.

All he did was speak the truth about the Ukraine war in the presence of Western politicians, which enabled the Kremlin, in its current twisted reality, not only to accuse Vladimir Kara-Murza of spreading disinformation about the Russian army, but also to add charges of treason.

Needless to say, it is all fake. Just as everything else in today's Russia except the deep delirium in which Russia has been submerged, with Putin's alternative reality inspired by Ivan Ilyin, a Russian fascist philosopher and historian admired by Vladimir Putin.

What does the Kremlin want to achieve?

To understand what the Kremlin wants to achieve by such a draconian and unrealistic sentence for Vladimir Kara-Murza, one needs to understand the way the Kremlin thinks.

The 25-year sentence for Vladimir Kara-Murza is no different from the sledgehammer executions by the Wagner Group, or the beheading of a Ukrainian POW by Russian soldiers.

These are all the same acts of brutality intended to intimidate the enemy, scare domestic critics, and send a message to Western politicians, many of whom ironically are still trying to apply their political science skills while dealing with today's Russia, the country which alternatively requires Western counterparts to have deep knowledge of criminality and destruction in order to deal successfully with Putin and today's Russia.

By sentencing Vladimir Kara-Murza to a 25-year sentence, the Kremlin has captured a valuable hostage which the Kremlin can possibly use one day as a bargaining tool.

The Kremlin also sent a message to the elites and all critics that talking to Western governments and representatives can easily be classified as treason if, in the course of the discussion, something was mentioned which is disputed or objected to by the Kremlin.

Revenge for the Magnitsky Act

The Magnitsky Act was the first slap in the face to the Kremlin. Vladimir Kara-Murza contributed to that slap. It is not a coincidence that Sergei Podoprigrorov, the same judge who issued an arrest warrant on Sergei Magnitsky a few days ago, sentenced Vladimir Kara-Murza.

In 2018, Sergei Podoprigrorov hired an expensive British law firm, Herbert Smith Freehills, to help him file a petition to the US State Department requesting his removal from

the list of sanctioned persons under the Magnitsky Act.

Soviet writer and dissident Sergei Dovlatov once wrote: “we endlessly curse Comrade Stalin, and, of course, for the cause. And yet, I want to ask - who wrote the four million denunciations?”

Sergei Podoprigrorov or Maria Lvova-Belova, Putin's Commissioner for Children's Rights, accused of war crimes together with him, are today most infamous among millions of public servants in Russia who not only serve the regime, but are the pillars of the regime together with the national guard, police, and intelligence services.

Just like Stalinism in the past, Putinism has fundamentally impacted Russia and Russian society.

Russian judges are no different from Sergei Podoprigrorov. All Russian public servants and officials are like Maria Lvova-Belova.

Young post-Soviet executors of purges

What is frightening is that both Podoprigrorov and Lvova-Belova are relatively young people now, and were very young when the USSR collapsed. These two, like many others, have not revived their Soviet heritage, but have developed Soviet features from scratch.

During Putin's 20-year reign, he has succeeded in dehumanising Russian society. Pure people like Vladimir Kara-Murza are aliens in today's Russia.

Sergei Podoprigrorov was born in 1974. When Gorbachev's reforms began, he was 12 or 13 years old.

The USSR collapsed when he was 16 or 17. When Putin assumed power in 1999 Sergei Podoprigrorov was 25.

He spent his entire life in a relatively free

world. He studied law and became a judge in a country which had some democratic features and hopes.

No one in Russia between 1985 and 1999 was severely persecuted and purged. And yet, in 2008, Sergei Podoprigrorov helped kill Sergei Magnitsky while he was behind bars.

2008 was one year after Putin officially proclaimed his new Comintern in Munich against a free and democratic world. Since then, Russia has been slowly approaching the point of no return.

No one forced Sergei Podoprigrorov to take part in the purges or Maria Lvova-Belova to take part in war crimes.

Just like many other millions of people in Russia, each at their own level agreed to embrace Putinism and the lunacy of the Russki (Russian) world doctrine.

Among millions of judges and public officials, like Sergei Podoprigrorov or Maria Lvova-Belova, human rights defenders such as Vladimir Kara-Murza or the late Lyudmila Alexeyeva, stood out as an oasis in the desert.

Prison camps cannot be free

Vladimir Kara-Murza sincerely believed in a good and democratic future for the country, which was just one step away from the Bucha and Izyum massacres.

A country like Russia needs people like Vladimir Kara-Murza because these people passionately, and with no personal political gain, believe that Russia can be free and democratic.

But a prison camp cannot be free. In order for a prison camp to become free, all inmates must be released and all the guards and servants prosecuted. If Russia wants to be free, that country will no longer be the Russia we have known since 1917.

Russia needs to be satisfied to have people like

Vladimir Kara-Murza in the general swamp of misery, violence, and corruption.

People like Vladimir give hope that the natural selection started by Stalin and continued by Putin has not changed the Russian genetic code. Not all Russians are like Sergei Podoprigrorov or Maria Lvova-Belova. There is hope for all people and nationalities living in the Russian Federation so long as there are, figuratively speaking, saints like Vladimir Kara-Murza still living in Russia.

Vladimir Kara-Murza is not that physically strong. He will not be able to survive in a Russian prison.

The West must help Vladimir Kara-Murza simply because, just as with Ukraine, it is purely the fault of the Western world that Moscow was left unnoticed and appeased for so long.

The West must deploy its best counterterrorism and criminal units to give advice to delusional Western politicians on how to deal with serial killers and mass murderers, who unfortunately are in charge of the Russian Federation.