

Will Russia invade Ukraine on Sunday night?

In 1976, after completing my studies at the Institute of Asian and African Countries at Moscow State University, I joined, as an intern, the Indian Department of the Novosti Press Agency (APN). At that time, interns were taken seriously at APN, and along with working in the editorial office, interns attended lectures delivered by leading APN journalists, who shared their knowledge and experience.

APN political commentator Heinrich Borovik, for example, spoke about how he managed to get an interview with Ernest Hemingway, impressing him with his ability to drink vodka from a bottle ...

However, now I want to tell readers about lecture by Boris Korolev that impressed me most.

Boris Korolev came on stage and just read us his last article titled "If Belgium Attacks the USSR on Thursday Night." That was the lecture that made all the interns laughing without stopping...

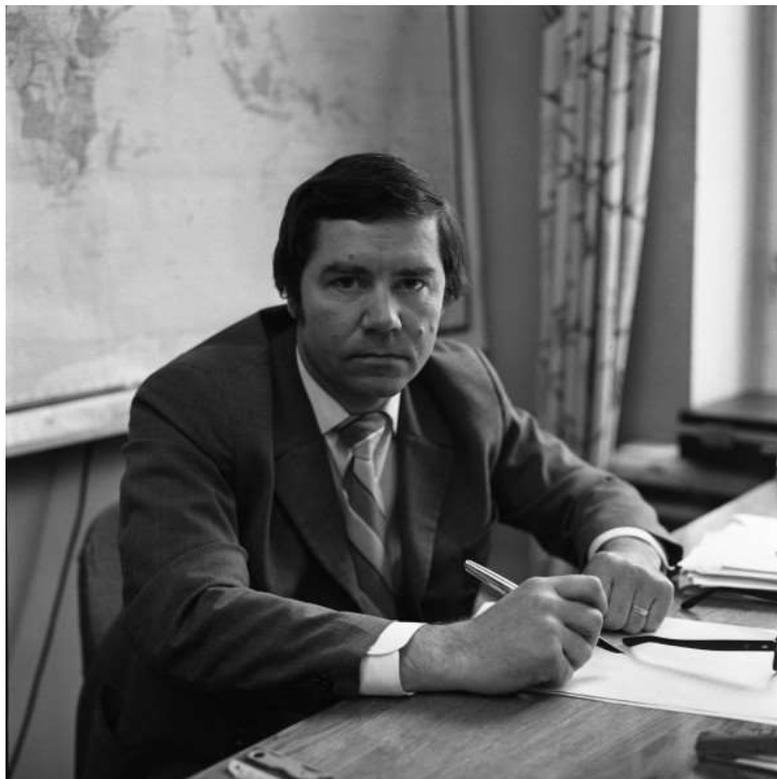


Photo: Boris Korolev

Korolev's article was a response to an article published in a Belgian newspaper, and the article was titled "If the USSR Attacks Belgium on Friday

Night." Of course, even we, trainees, immediately felt the intellectual weakness of the Belgian journalist, and Korolev did not just mock the Belgian journalist, but trampled him.

Korolev began his article by wondering at the time chosen by the Belgian journalist for the Soviet attack on little Belgium. Friday, evening... well, how much do you have to get away from reality to believe that the Russians will choose Friday evening for an invasion? The end of the working week, evening after work, when 90% of Russian men had a centuries-old tradition of drinking their bottle of vodka! It was impossible to imagine that the Russians were able to choose "Let us attack Belgium!" instead of "Let us have a drink!"

Then Korolev described his adventures... After reading the article in a Belgian newspaper, Korolev was shocked and had too much of drinking that Friday night. When on Saturday afternoon (now, I quote from my memory), "having put myself in order in a pub on Dorogomilovskaya Street, I appeared at home, I blocked the strike by my wife with air-to-ground rolling pin with the newspaper "The Brussels Times", folded in four, and tried to explain my absence by the fact that I spent the whole night in the trenches on the Belgian border. As evidence, I presented the article by that crazy Belgian..." Now, 45 years have passed, and I still remember that part of Korolev's article by heart!

I was reminded of this story, when I got a call from GBNews and was invited to participate in Arlene Foster's Sunday program on Ukraine. Michael Portillo also participated in that program. So, I asked about specific issues that they intend to discuss, and I was told the question that I would have to answer: "Will Russia attack Ukraine before the end of next week?" At that point, I remembered the article by "The Belgian Times" folded in four" and I agreed to participate in the discussion. I couldn't miss opportunity to answer that question...

Part of the Sunday show with my participation you can find by following the link - [Interview with Valery Morozov & Michael Portillo on 'NATO allies striking different postures' - YouTube](#).

However, on that GBNews show, and later, with Alastair Stewart, I did not have opportunity and time to analyze the topic in detail, so I decided to give detailed answer to it in a separate article.

So,

Two questions, two answers

It seems to me that the question "Will Russia attack Ukraine before the end of the week?" should be decomposed into two.

First: *What is the evidence that Russia will attack Ukraine this week?*

The answer to this question can be one: The evidence is the articles and reports of the American, European and other media, as well as statements by Western politicians, analysts and commentators ...

Second question: *Why won't Russia attack Ukraine before the Sunday evening?*

In response to this question, several facts can be given as a justification.

1. On February 4, 2022, the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing will be opened. Vladimir Putin is going to Beijing to be present at the opening of the Olympic Games and to meet and negotiate with Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and some other leaders.

The most serious issues will be discussed, including the joint actions by Russia, China, India and some other countries to change the architecture of international relations.

Of course, for many opponents of Russia and China, the conflict in Ukraine could become a serious and desirable "sneaker" not only to Moscow, but also to Beijing, but Putin understands this better than others, and he will do everything to prevent this, at least until the end of the Olympics in Beijing.

Suffice it to recall what happened during the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. Back then, in Ukraine, for example, coup d'état, overthrow of the Yanukovich government and an attempt to kill him were going full swing, and Putin kept silence, watched the Olympic competitions or pretended to watch, secretly sent GRU offices to save Yanukovich, who had already betrayed him and Russia several times, and waited for the Olympics to end, and the athletes and guests to go home. Only then he took the Crimea, and the separatists began to tear away the Donbass...

Thus, until February 28, the closing date of the Beijing Olympics, those who do not want Russian troops to enter Ukraine can live and sleep peacefully.

2. Serious preparations are usually made before war, and these preparations affect the economic and political ties between the aggressor and his victim.

However, in relations between Russia and Ukraine, we see a different picture. Russia and Belarus remain in the top five in terms of volume and the first in importance trading partners of Ukraine.

The turnover between Russia and Ukraine in 2021 increased by 21.3%. Russia remains Ukraine's third largest trading partner, with Belarus occupying fifth place.

Moreover, Russia is the only country that, on the one hand, buys industrial and technological products from Ukraine, supporting its industrial potential, and on the other hand, supplies Ukraine with strategic goods, including coal, which is necessary for heating, energy production and the metallurgical industry, including for the production of metals that Ukraine exports to Europe and China through Russian territory.

Russia and Belarus supply electricity and help Ukrainians survive the winter and avoid serious economic and social problems. Petroleum products and fuel from Russia and Belarus provide Ukrainian energy and transport, including military equipment. Russia's export of petroleum products to Ukraine has grown by 55% over the past year.

3. Western media and politicians estimate the number of Russian troops concentrated along the Ukrainian border at 100,000 troops. The number is significant, and it is being presented as the main proof of Moscow's intentions to invade Ukraine.

However, everything is known in comparison, or as Albert Einstein said, everything is relative. The length of the Russian-Ukrainian border is 2,250 km. This is the distance between London and Moscow. The length of the Belarusian-Ukrainian border is 1,100 km, that is 200 km more than the distance from London to Berlin. Thus, 100,000 Russian troops are concentrated along the border with a length of 3,350 km. That gives 30 soldiers per one kilometer of the border.

At the same time, the calculation took into account all Russian army units that are located from the Ukrainian border on the territory of Russia at a depth of 400 kilometers. This means that Russia has amassed 30 soldiers on an area of 400 square kilometers to invade Ukraine!

In addition, it should be taken into account that the calculations take into account the Russian troops that are in the Crimea, that is, not along the land border, but at sea, on the peninsula, and these servicemen serve mainly in the navy. Thus, it is necessary either to take into account the sea border, which is another 1500 kilometers, or to reduce the number of Russian troops along the border with Ukraine by 30 thousand troops.

According to the calculations of the Ukrainian military, Russia will need at least 800,000 - 900,000 troops for the invasion of Ukraine and for the occupation of a significant part of the Ukrainian territory.

4. The situation in Ukraine is one of the most critical compared to most other countries of the former USSR. The economy and the standard of living of the population have been falling constantly since Ukraine gained independence.

From the most industrialized republic with the standards of living highest in the USSR, Ukraine turned into a parody of Soviet Ukraine. Social stratification and the level of poverty, the division of society and the level of corruption and dissatisfaction with the regime in Kiev exceed significantly the same indicators in most other former republics of the USSR. For example, the standard of living in Ukraine is almost three times lower than in Russia.

Stopping the supply of electricity and fuel from Russia and Belarus will blow up Ukraine in the winter, when temperatures range from minus 5 to minus 20 degrees, and will create such problems that no invasion and no occupation will be needed for regime change.

The impending and even inevitable Russian invasion of Ukraine is being talked about by politicians in nearly all Western countries. At the same time, in the capitals of the participants in the possible war, in Moscow and Kiev, officials deny the possibility of any Russian invasion.

Moscow's statements about the lack of desire to invade Ukraine can be explained by the Kremlin's desire to hide Putin's true intentions. However, it seems extremely unlikely that that Ukraine leaders want to hide the true intentions of the Kremlin.

Since the Western media launched an information campaign accusing Russia of plans to invade and occupy Ukraine, Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine Oleksiy Danilov, a man who by his position is obliged to know best about the threat to Ukraine from Russia, has

officially stated at least five times that the Ukrainian leadership does not see a threat of invasion from Russia.

So, back in December 2021, in an interview with the Ukrainian agency UNIAN, Danilov said that the number of Russian soldiers on the border "does not pose a threat to Ukraine." He noted that for the past two months, reports have appeared in foreign media about "large movements" of Russian troops near the borders of Ukraine. "We haven't seen these big movements," he said. "The situation is under control... Today, the number of soldiers is not a threat to our country."

A week later, in another interview, Danilov said: "When on October 30, through The Washington Post, they began to inflate the situation, that there was a large concentration of military personnel, we have made it clear that we have the information. At that time, this (the accumulation of military) did not exist. Is there now an increase in the military presence on the borders with our territory? Yes. But it is not so critical that tomorrow they will start (the offensive). We clearly understand what is within a radius of 200 kilometers from our border to 400 kilometers from our border. We are aware of what these groups are, their number and understand what they are equipped with. We have all of that under control. Today we do not see such a danger."

On December 30, Alexei Danilov at a regular briefing returned to the issue of the threat of a Russian invasion. He said that Ukraine does not see a great danger and a large accumulation of military personnel near its borders, and also does not observe threats of "aggression" from Russia. "Today we do not see much danger at the borders ... Today we do not see any threats to open aggression from the Russian Federation," he said.

Gradually, the number of statements by Ukrainian leaders about the absence of a threat from Russia increased, and the level of persons who made such statements also rose to the highest level.

On January 24, 2022, the Minister of Defense of Ukraine Oleksiy Reznikov gave an assessment of the situation on the Russian-Ukrainian border. Speaking to reporters after a meeting at the Security Service of Ukraine, that was attended not only by the heads of special services, but also by the Ministry of Defense, as well as the President of Ukraine and members of parliament, Reznikov said that Kiev excludes the possibility of a Russian invasion of

Ukraine, that Russia has not created a single strike army group on the border with Ukraine.

After this meeting, Prime Minister Denis Shmygal assured that nothing threatens the Ukrainian economy. "There are no threats other than disinformation pressure," he said.

The result was summed up by the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky, who urged citizens to remain calm. "Everything is under control. There is no reason to panic," he said. A few days later, Zelensky accused the West of whipping up hysteria over Ukraine instead of "giving Ukraine \$5 billion in financial assistance that would stabilize the economic situation".

It should be noted here that by this time, the panic swept the foreign investors who threw away all ideas and plans to invest in the Ukrainian economy, the wealthy Ukrainians rushed to buy dollars and euros, to get rid of the Ukrainian currency, the hryvnia, which fell in price in January by 10%, and to transfer money to accounts in foreign banks. Ordinary citizens in Ukraine also rushed to spend their last money to buy food, salt and matches, waiting for war.

An information campaign accusing Russia of preparing for an imminent invasion of Ukraine has caused enormous damage to Ukraine's economy and finances. By the end of January, this became clear to all inside Ukraine.

However, if Russia does not want to attack and invade Ukraine, and Kiev does not see a real threat, then why was all this information campaign and diplomatic attack unleashed? Why is the tension around Ukraine only growing? Will the growth of tensions lead to war despite the fact that neither Russia, nor Ukraine are interested in this war at present moment? And what will happen, if provocation or uncontrolled tension does trigger a military clash in Ukraine involving Russia?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to pay attention to several important aspects of the "Ukrainian problem", as well as the processes that are taking place now, radically changing the balance of power in the world and forming a new architecture of international relations.

This may seem surprising to many, but the information war and the tensions escalating around Ukraine are not so much about Ukraine, but about Europe, primarily Western Europe. It is the Europe that colonized, owned and ruled most of the world, dominated in science and economic development, taught and led humanity for several centuries, became the object of politics and struggle of the modern superpowers that divide the world into zones of influence. And among these superpowers there are three former colonies ruled by the European empires and a former empire that was historically a political rival to Europe.

The other day, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called Ukraine an "ownerless territory" (exact translation from the Russian language of the word used by Lavrov is "without a master"), implying that states like Ukraine cannot and should not be left "ownerless." When they become ownerless, they only create problems to others and to their own people. They need a responsible "master", as the tsarist Russian Empire once was for Ukraine, and then the Soviet Union. By the way, in the Kremlin since Stalin's times, the "Master" is called the leader who heads Russia and rules in the Kremlin, so Lavrov's words have a special meaning.

However, much more important that ***Moscow and Beijing have come to understand that Europe is also becoming "ownerless."***

The White House also admits such a possibility. Playing the new "Great Game" that Joe Biden started himself and that involved Washington, Moscow and Beijing, the White House is trying to do everything so that Europe remains under the US control and does not become "ownerless", so that China and Russia cannot take control over Europe.

So, what is going on?

In the past few years, the processes that lead to weakening of the US influence in Europe, now made it possible that a new "Master" or "Masters" get Europe under their political and economic control. These are China and Russia.

Now it may seem like a strange fiction, but a new reality is already coming, and the facts confirm this.

Let's start with China.

China not only bypassed the United States and the EU in terms of GDP, but also became the main trading partner of the leading European countries, for example, Germany, whose trade turnover with China in 2021 exceeded 250 billion euros. German automobile companies sell up to 50% of their cars in China. For German manufacturers of modern machinery and equipment, the Chinese market became the main one, a few years ago pushing aside other markets, including the United States.

China has become a major investor in Germany and other major European countries, investing more than half of all investments in the European economy, buying up shares of banks, including Deutsche Bank, as well as the most advanced enterprises in the field of robotics, AI, machine tools, energy, automotive, biomedicine and other sectors of the "fourth technological revolution".

The United States tried to block China's absorption of advanced sectors of the European, including the German economy, and sometimes this worked, for example, with blocking the expansion of the presence of Huawei in the European market or with attempts by Chinese companies to absorb German semiconductor manufacturers, but the growth of China's influence could not be stopped. If Chinese corporations cannot get a controlling stake in German or other European companies, they buy minority stakes, and then, having access to technology, copy and use them to create production in China.

The coming to power in Germany of a new government led by Olaf Scholz, who from a young age, holding important positions in youth socialist organizations, had special ties with Chinese youth communist organizations, opened up new opportunities for Beijing. In the period from 2011 to 2018, when Olaf Scholz was the mayor of Hamburg, this city, as a separate federal state of Germany, became the main support center of China, the basis for the development of Sino-German relations and cooperation. Now China has direct access to the center of power in Berlin

The processes of economic absorption by China take place not only in Germany, the main technological center of Europe, but also in other countries and parts of Europe. France follows the path of Germany, as well as the countries of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe, including Italy. Chinese domination is growing within the framework of the projects "16 + 1", "One Belt - One Road", as well as the "Maritime Silk Road". Using its financial power,

China took control of the main ports of Italy, Greece and other European states.

In the UK, in 2012 – 2019, China made its record investments, buying up shares of banks and companies in the financial, energy, logistics, Internet, high-tech sectors, including the development of microprocessors, as well as in education and science. In 2005-2020, China bought shares of British companies for \$ 98.6 billion, and 2017 was a record year in terms of investments.

Chinese companies own shares in more than 13,000 British firms, several hundred of them are on the list of the largest companies in the United Kingdom and have a significant impact on British economy. In 2019, the revenue of the largest 800 British companies, in which Chinese investors own at least 50% of the capital, amounted to £ 91 billion, and the number of employees exceeded 71,000 people.

Some of the slowdown in China's takeover of British business since 2018, has been caused by political decisions by the UK government, including those initiated or supported by Washington. These decisions were aimed at blocking the growth of China's influence, but it was already impossible to stop the process.

Now let's move on to Russia.

If the situation with China and its interests in Europe is gradually becoming clear and visible to Europeans, the Russian capabilities, the place and role of Russia in the world are still hidden and incomprehensible to many in the West, and that is why Putin especially irritates European, including British, political elites.

There are reasons for that irritation. According to the calculations of the IMF or the World Bank, Russia occupies the 10th place in the list of states at par value of GDP, and 6th place in terms of purchasing power parity of GDP, that is behind Germany. Of course, many reasonable people have not had faith in those calculations for a long time, but still...

As many believed and still believe, including President Obama and British prime ministers, including Theresa May and Boris Johnson, as well as some other presidents, prime ministers and their advisers, as well as all sorts

of "Sovietologists", Russia is just a gas station with missiles that came from nowhere.

Only one question is confusing them: why and how has Russia built up such political and military power under Putin? With a military budget one and a half times inferior to the combined budget of France and Great Britain, Russia surpasses all NATO countries in the field of defense and striking force, excluding the US army, about as much as Russia surpasses Portugal in terms of territory, and even more. How did that come about?

It is possible to answer all these questions if we consider the situation in another sphere, which has also acquired strategic importance now, and this importance is growing day by day and is beginning to exceed the importance of the defense complex as a factor determining the influence of states in the modern world.

And that's Energy.

But not in the sense in which Obama, May, Johnson and others understand energy. This is not just energy and not just the possession of energy reserves, but – and this is the most important factor – the ability to provide economy and social sphere with energy and raw materials at minimum prices that ensure and guarantee strategic advantage over other countries, including political and economic competitors.

In recent years, there have been developments that have fundamentally changed the energy market. The cost of extraction of natural resources, their transportation and processing, including energy resources, as well as energy production has not changed much or has changed insignificantly. At the same time, the market prices in many countries and regions of the world have increased many times.

Thus, if earlier the costs of energy and fuels were considered primarily from the point of making profits by producers, now the strategic advantage has been given to countries that can provide their economy and social sphere with cheap energy, cheap raw materials and resources.

Cheap energy and the ability to control prices have become the basis and main factors shaping the efficiency and power of the economy, as well as improving standards and quality of living of the population.

The lower the price of energy, the greater the advantage gained by society and the economy as a whole.

Ten years ago, when I came to live in the UK, the difference in prices for consumers, for example, of electricity and gas in Russia and Europe was, by today's standards, "negligible" - two to five times. In the UK, the price was three times higher than the prices in Russia, and the largest gap was with Germany - 5 times.

Sanctions against Russia were weak at that time, Western companies exported to Russia almost all technical products and significant part of food and goods for the population. Western companies made high profits that flowed from Russia to the West and were invested into the development of the European economy and social sphere. This leveled, nullified Russia's advantage in the energy sector.

In 2016, electricity prices in the European countries exceeded prices in Russia from 3 to 7 times. In the UK, energy prices exceeded the Russian prices by 5 times, and in Germany by 7 times. During the same period, Russia was subjected to sanctions that, on the one hand, forced Russia to develop its own industry and agriculture, and on the other hand, sharply reduced the outflow of capital from Russia to Europe, primarily to its industrial sector. A significant part of the profits of Russian energy companies that previously flowed to European exporters, began to remain in the country, allowing the Kremlin to accelerate development of the military-industrial complex and civilian sectors of the economy.

By mid-2021, the prices of electricity in the UK exceeded the Russian prices on average, by 6 times, and in Germany by 8 times. At the end of 2021, prices in Europe jumped up, and the gap between prices in Russia and in European countries reached the levels from 10 to 20 times.

In January 2022, the flight of electricity and gas prices accelerated even more, the price booster was turned on. How many times do electricity and gas prices in Europe now exceed prices in Russia? 30 times? 35 times? And what will happen in a couple of months? Or in six months? A year from now? For example, I have already received notification from my electricity and gas supplier that prices in April will rise by 75% compared to January!

As a result of this flight of prices, the consumption of gas and electricity in Europe began to fall like an eagle that falls on a rabbit. Only in the third

quarter of 2021, that is, in three months, according to official data from the European Commission, gas consumption in the EU decreased by 10%, and electricity by 22%. This means that the European economy entered the stage of decline, saving resources, blocking development. By the end of 2021, 41 million Europeans, over 10% of Europe's population, could not pay their energy bills...

Did this fall hit Russia? Not at all. Vice versa. At the end of 2021, Russia increased exports to China by 30%, and rising gas prices allowed Gazprom to twice recoup the costs of building Nord Stream2 that has not yet started operating...

In the same period, in the third quarter of 2021, in the EU spot market, gas prices increased 6 times compared to the same period in 2020, and in the consumer market, prices rose by 50-100%. At the same time, most gas and electricity supply companies were forced, even at these prices, to work with huge losses. Those who could not stand it and could not get state aid, or this state aid was insufficient, went bankrupt. And the number of these bankrupts has already exceeded the number of survivors...

On the purchase of gas, the EU spent in the third quarter of 2021, for which the latest statistics are now available, 40 billion euros instead of 7 billion euros for the same period of 2020, that means the increase in costs by 462%. And this money flowed from other sectors of the European economy to Russia and other producers of electricity and gas. This flow of financial resources triggered rising prices, financial and structural inflation in all sectors of the European economy.

The EU and the UK have made every possible mistake in the last twenty years to drive themselves into the cage of economic inefficiency and political insanity. Green ideas, of course, are beautiful, and green technologies need to be developed, their time has come, but the time of nuclear energy, gas, oil, hydropower and even coal has not yet gone. Instead of improving the quality, efficiency and level of purification of energy industries that use traditional types of energy resources, Europe has taken the path of their destruction or degradation, starting the process of degradation of the entire economy, science, culture and social life.

And all these years, new sanctions were imposed against Russia, the supply of goods and equipment was reduced tremendously. That was the

supply that, before the imposition of sanctions, had been removing profits of Russian energy exporters and ensured the flow of these profits from Russia to Europe. All these years in Russia, under the pressure of sanctions, import substitution developed, more and more goods and equipment were produced locally. The economy gained an advantage at the expense of relatively low prices of energy and raw materials. And this made it possible to maintain low prices on average in the country and in all sectors of the economy. Of course, Russia's GDP grew slowly to satisfaction of the Europeans, Americans, World Bank and International Monetary Fund officials, Obama, May and Jonson, but that growth was more real and important than any growth due to inflation and rising prices, or sale of the shares on Stock Exchange.

Of course, everything in the world is relative. The Russian population would like to further reduce prices and demand that the Kremlin curb corruption and greed of managers and shareholders of energy corporations. And the Kremlin is already forced to do this.

To illustrate the relativity of prices in the energy sector of different countries, we can cite as an example the recent events in Kazakhstan, where on January 2, 2022, there was a population revolt, which was caused by a doubling of the price of liquid gas for cars. A day after the insurgency began, the Kazakh government reversed the price increase and returned the price of gas to a pretentious level.

One should take into consideration that the standard of living of the population in Kazakhstan is much higher than the standard of living of the population in Ukraine. At the end of 2021, the price of gas in Kazakhstan was two times lower than the price in Russia and about 8-10 times lower than the price of gas in Ukraine, 30 times or more lower than prices in the UK and up to 35 -40 times lower than the price level in countries such as Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden ... That's Einstein's theory of relativity in modern life...

So, what is the purpose of waging an information war around Ukraine? What is at stake on the card table where the new "Great Game" is being played by Washington, Moscow and Beijing?

This will be discussed in my next article...

Valery Morozov

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