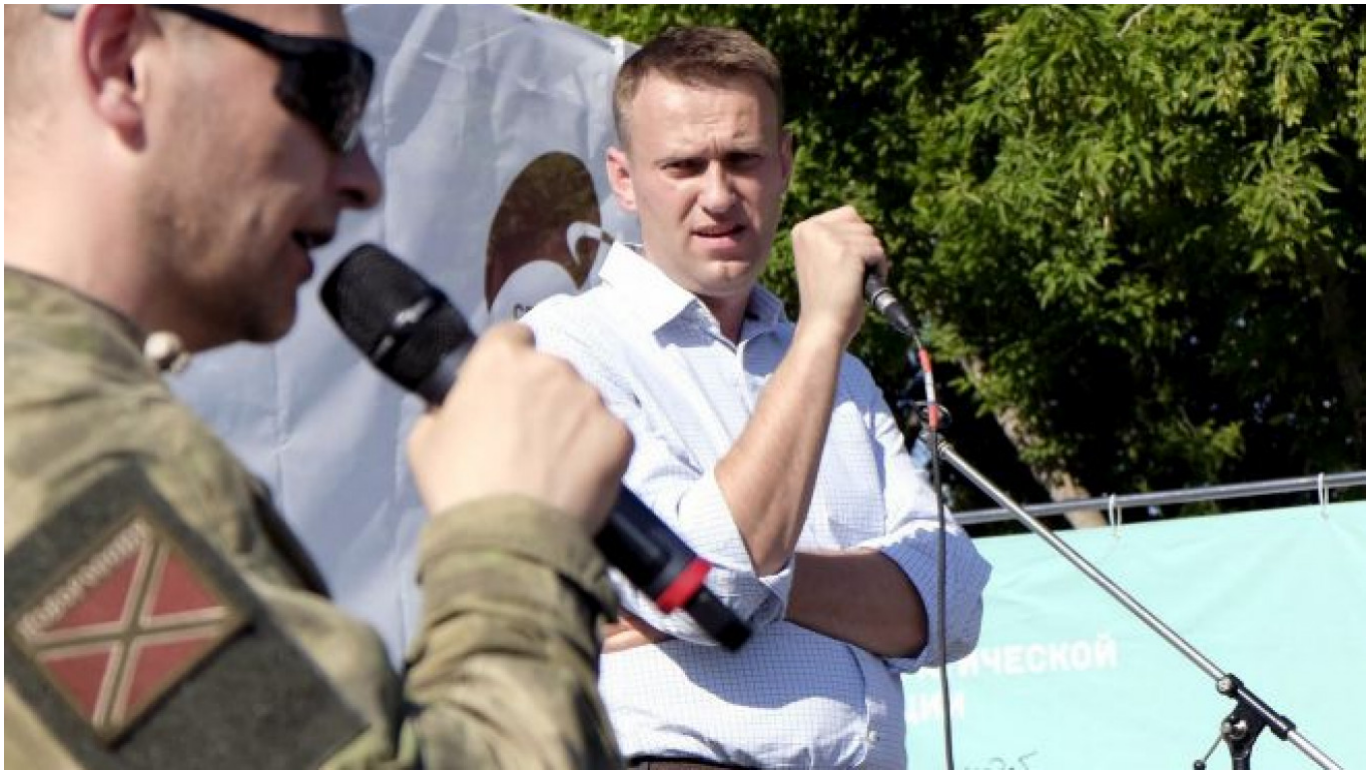
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Weekly Wrap: Princes, Students and Other Troublemakers

By Unfair Observer

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As U.S. President Barack Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel chugged Bavarian beer at the G7 meeting last week, lonely President Vladimir Putin — who was not invited — signed a law on capital amnesty in Russia. Some skeptics pointed out that any Russian businessman gullible enough to believe in the amnesty has likely already been fleeced, but officials can use it to whitewash their own little fortunes.

Even better, the amnesty is great cover for mafias worldwide to launder their money, so hopefully the profits from selling Vietnamese sex slaves, shipping cocaine across the Atlantic and illegal arms trade will flow to Russian banks and salvage the economy. In your face, sanctions.

But if the economy was saved, public peace was still far off. It was a week of troublemakers.

Jihadi Varvara

This is what higher education does to you.

Moscow State University student Varvara Karaulova, 19, disappeared from Moscow only to pop up later in Turkey, where she was busted trying to cross the border into territory held by the Islamic State in Syria.

Her dad says that now she is crying all the time and cannot explain why she did it.

Praise the Almighty for Varvara's salvation — but also note glaring discrimination here.

The whole nation was holding its breath for Varvara to be stopped before she reached Syria — but meanwhile, thousands of Russian men flock unperturbed to another war zone in the Donbass to join the pro-Russian uprising. Some go there alone, others in battalions, often with their military hardware — but the normally hawk-eyed, steel-taloned border guards fail to stop them.

The Donbass separatists are not jihadists, of course. They only fight for what they believe is right and even sacred.

Anyway, the Ukrainian insurgents do not destroy ancient landmarks or burn people alive — deliberately, at least. So it's not the same.

But maybe, if you want to save your children from war, that should apply to all children and all wars?

The Egg Warriors

The electoral season officially opened in Russia — the first eggs have been thrown.

The target was, predictably, opposition champion Alexei Navalny, who was pelted with eggs during a tour of Novosibirsk ahead of a local vote.

He blamed the ruling United Russia party, though it shied away from claiming the credit.

Eggs are a popular anti-liberal weapon in Russia.

Opposition head honchos Mikhail Kasyanov, Garry Kasparov and the late Boris Nemtsov have all been at the business end of a protein-laden projectile. We will surely see more of that during the Duma elections next year.

But Navalny is not the only candidate in the running. The iconic Donbass warlord-turned-Kremlin critic Igor Girkin, otherwise known as Igor Strelkov, for example, is already discussed as a potential nominee.

And while Navalny, a civilian, fends off the eggs thrown at him with irony, Girkin — who has led trained killers into battle — may not be that docile.

How do you stop a campaign if you don't dare throw eggs at it?

Lash the River

But the biggest troublemaker of the week was also the holiest.

Prince Vladimir the Great, who went from a rapist savage to sainthood by introducing Christianity to Russia, was due to be immortalized with a gigantic statue on the bank of the Moscow River.

Critics had argued that the statue would ruin an iconic landscape, but to no avail.

Kiev has a similar, but shorter statue by the Dnieper River, and it just had to be "my prince is bigger than your prince."

However, another argument cited for months sunk in eventually: The riverbank is so soft that the 330-ton prince would have inevitably capsized into the river from a great height. This news was no doubt received with much glee on the banks of the Dnieper.

So he will be moved, likely to the spot once held by a monument to KGB's founding father, the murderous (but not raping) Felix Dzerzhinsky.

This is an unprecedented capitulation of patriotic Russian officials before the laws of nature.

One might expect that they will punish it now — Persian King Xerxes once lashed the sea, but in these tolerant times, a fine for the impertinent river would do.

But who knows? Maybe it will, indeed, be a precedent.

Imagine how great it would be if Russian officialdom accepted the laws of the universe — not just in physics, but, say, in the economy, recognizing business as the cornerstone of a modern economy and not its personal cash cow.

Or even in the social sciences, giving up the hysterical micromanaging of public life.

Maybe they will even start supporting sciences, and maybe Putin will finally, after all these years, get online.

Maybe, maybe, maybe.I could say more, but I've got to go feed my leopards.

Unfair Observer is the pen name of a Russian journalist that The Moscow Times has invited to observe the most brain-dead weekly developments in Russia.

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