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## Navalny Goes Va Banque – Part II

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**“Время шло медленно. Все было тихо. В гостиной пробило двенадцать; по всем комнатам часы одни за другими прозвонили двенадцать, — все умолкло опять. Германн стоял, прислонясь к холодной печке. Он был спокоен; сердце его билось ровно, как у человека, решившегося на что-нибудь опасное, но необходимое.”**

*(“Time moved slowly. All was quiet. In the parlor the clock sounded midnight; in all the rooms the clocks one after the other sounded twelve, — and then all was quiet once again. Hermann stood, leaning against the cold stove. He was calm; his heart beat evenly, as in a man who has firmly decided to do something dangerous, but necessary.” — Pushkin, The Queen of Spades*

Dear Readers:

Continuing my review of [this piece](#) by reporter/analyst Petr Akopov. Please recall that I made an artistic decision to frame Navalny’s saga as a sort of parody of a parody of a badly-written term paper in Russian literature. Trying to connect the dots between Navalny and Pushkin’s story. In this analogy, Hermann is Navalny, Liza is Russia, and the Countess is Merkel. I guess. So,

where we left off, we saw that Navalny has finally dropped his mask and openly made his choice: **He punts for Europe over Russia.**



Hermann's fatal choice: The door on the left, or the door on the right?

Pushkin's heroine, the lonely and lowly and psychologically abused Lizaveta Ivanovna, gives Hermann, in her note, very precise instructions how to wend his way to her tiny bedroom at midnight: **“Come up the stairs and enter the hallway directly. From there, take a left, and continue all the way to the Countess' bedroom. In her bedroom, behind the [dressing] screens, you will see two small doors. The one on the right leads to an office, where the Countess never goes. The door on the left leads to a corridor, and from there to a narrow, twisting staircase. That leads directly to my room...”**

None of this has escaped the notice of literary critics over the ages, who marveled at Pushkin's clever tying together of several universal themes, and then connecting them with the card game *faro*, in which choices are made whether to place a card on the left, or on the right.

If Hermann had followed Liza's instructions and opened the door to the left, he would have found, no doubt, passionate love and

pleasure with this pretty young woman. Instead, he chose the door on the right, leading him to a terrible fate that could no longer be averted. But Hermann had no intention of loving Liza, to him she was just a means to an end: to the Countess and her secret of the three magical cards that can win a fortune.



“Je crains de lui parler la nuit, j’écoute trop tout ce qu’il dit. Il me dit: “je vois aime”, et je sens, malgré moi, je sens mon cœur qui bat, qui bat... et je ne sais pourquoi...”

When Tchaikovsky composed [his famous opera](#), based on Pushkin’s story, brother Modest Tchaikovsky radically altered the story line for the libretto. For starters, he had Hermann actually be in love with Liza, just torn between love and greed. Maybe this makes for a better opera, where audiences want to see at least the makings of a heterosexual romance; but I don’t know, I still think it would have been better if Modest had kept Hermann’s character the way it was. The very most emotion that Hermann can eke out, according to Pushkin, is when, from his hiding place in the office, he sees Liza return and go upstairs to her room (expecting him to be there, but she will be disappointed). According to Pushkin, Hermann feels at that moment a very slight tingling of his conscience. But obviously not enough to stop him from doing what he does.

And so too with Navalny, continuing with my clumsy analogy; who

has chosen the Door of No Return. The door that leads to the boudoir of the ancient Countess, the toast of Versailles; to Old Europe; to a world of wealth and intrigues. A door that leads, eventually, to loss and madness – woo!

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Earlier we saw that Navalny, in his **Spiegel** interview, appealed to the native anti-Russian emotions of the German burgher by postulating a Russian chemical weapons attack against the Berlin metro. And then he doubles down and brings up the true root cause of all of this, namely the pipeline: *“The surprisingly clear words of the German government, no doubt do not apply so much even to my person. More than likely this is a realization of the dangerous road being traveled by Russia. If the Kremlin is (actually) taking part in such operations, then what would stop them from poisoning some German politician who is coming out, for example, against North Stream Two?”*



And there you have it, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury. Navalny has just punted his first card, as whispered to him by the ghost of the dreadful old Countess! Well, it's a “3 of diamonds”, and I'm afraid I cannot make that fit into my analogy; if it had been a “2 of pipeline”, then... whatever....

Akopov notes: In spite of everything, Navalny did not actually call explicitly for the halting of the pipeline, even though that is clearly

the intent of this entire farce. Instead, he counsels Berlin to employ sanctions and “undertake measures against certain evil-doers.” Navalny is worried that *“nothing will change so long as the Russian (российская) elite are able to use Europe’s infrastructure. They will feel the pain once Europe finally closes its borders to them, confiscates their assets, and forbids them entry.”*

Believe it or not, a lot of ordinary Russians might actually agree with that sentiment, given that a portion of the “Russian” elite and oligarchy truly are in bed with Western imperialists and are more loyal to the West than to their own country. But the hysterically funny part of this, is that Navalny himself is a member of that Westernizing elite. And not just that, but an actual political agent of them, as he has shown so clearly. Despite that his previous shtick was to be a Greater Russian Nationalist, which generally means ideological Slavophile and not Westernizer. Oh, this is getting too confusing!

Akopov: According to Navalny, this Russian “elite”, which includes Putin of course, must be cut off from Europe, treated like the pariahs that they are.

Well, in actuality, Putin has been working quite hard over the years to “Russify” and “nationalize” the elite, including the oligarchs. And this has been going on long before the Crimean reunification. When he returned to the Kremlin in 2012 Putin set out to re-educate the elite from their dual loyalties; and after 2014 this process has only accelerated. Western sanctions have even helped this process of “nationalization” and inadvertently helped Putin (a case of unintended consequences); but that doesn’t mean that it’s okay for a Russian citizen to call for Western sanctions against his fellow citizens!



Hermann ends up in a madhouse; at least one where (apparently) they serve drinks.

Akopov, a Russian patriot himself, obviously believes that Russian “citizens” should be loyal to one another across class lines. Even an ordinary working-class Russian should not call for Western sanctions against his oligarch masters, given that they are all good Russian Christians together. Lenin would disagree with this sentiment, by the way. As does Navalny, but from the opposite side of the class line. Because Navalny himself is at least the servant of specific Oligarchs, if not an Oligarch himself. (He is a millionaire, but not a billionaire.) But for Navalny it has always been a case of “any means necessary” against the *other* group of Oligarchs. Who are murderers!

Akopov: Even before this happened, and for many years prior, Navalny has been busy de-humanizing his fellow Russians, and now he goes even further, announcing that “We are fighting against monstrous evil-doers, who are capable of committing any crime.” By “we” Navalny does not mean just himself, of course, but virtually all of the Russian people, who are ready, at a moment’s notice, to rise up against the tyrant. Same old fairy tales, now being spun to the Germans: “Putin’s fall from power is imminent.” “The system is fighting for life, is in its final agony...” etc. Further and deeper: “Something has changed within Putin’s

brain... European sanctions against these concrete evil-doers will be supported by 95% of the Russian citizens.”

In other words, Navalny is selling the Germans and the West in general, that same “reality” in which, for many years, our “fighters against the regime” have been living; at least in their own minds: Just hang on a bit more, and Putin will fall, especially with a little push from the West.

It goes without saying that Navalny’s wild accusations against President Putin aroused ire among the Russian political elite and governmental actors; there is a sense that Navalny, whom they indulged like a spoiled child for so many years, has finally crossed a certain line.

**[to be continued]**