



As Russia points out, it was Ukraine i.e. NATO that mined The Black Sea, and the EU that sanctioned wheat and fertilisers.

Description

RUSSIA/UKRAINE: On June 3, Russian President Vladimir Putin met with the President of Senegal, the head of the African Union, Mackie Sall, and the head of the union's commission, Faki Mahamat. Kommersant's special correspondent **Andrei Kolesnikov** intended to find out why Africans came to sunny Sochi. But to do this, it turned out, it was necessary to listen carefully to Vladimir Putin's evening explanations about numerous schemes to overcome the impending world famine.

Vladimir Putin's interlocutors in Sochi sat very close to him, foot to foot, which left no doubt: both of those who arrived did PCR tests before the meeting, which are still mandatory for meetings with people like Mr. Putin, and two interpreters, no doubt, rested in a ten-day quarantine, although before that, of course, they were not tired.

"At the beginning of the meeting, I would like to note," Mr. Putin said, "that we remember and also pay attention to significant events: africa Day was recently celebrated, a week ago.

More often this day, May 25, is called Africa Liberation Day. Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritania, Comoros... All these fascinating names of self-sufficient tourists and freedom-loving businessmen once again emphasize that according to the UN decision of 1963, there is no alternative to self-determination, especially in countries "fighting for freedom, independence and equality."

So the meeting in Sochi, although it is unlikely that any of its participants dug so deep, turned out to correspond to all these parameters, and in general to the idea of a military special operation, which on this day also celebrated the date of 100 days. As she noted, it is difficult for a civilian to even imagine, but the Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics, if they were in Africa (and maybe it would be even better for everyone in a sense), could definitely claim a full-fledged celebration of this day together with the Cayman islands and Bermuda.

"In this regard, I would like to recall that our country has always been on the side of Africa, has always supported Africa in its fight against colonialism," the Russian president added.

Developing Africa will never forget that. After all, thanks to this, it remained developing. Although she announced the day of her release just in case, just in case, just in 1963.

And all this was still the little of the legacy of the Soviet Union that could be cherished, since it, although not much (however, it was not cheap), even now could be suitable for the latest Russian reality for its speedy and further monetization.

“I am very glad to see you here, to meet you in Sochi, in this beautiful Black Sea city. And against this international background, I am especially glad to see you,” the President of Senegal added for some reason.

He was happy to see Vladimir Putin against a backdrop that an enemy (that is, formerly the Ukrainian armed forces of Ukraine) would not want.

“And indeed,” said the President of Senegal, “Russia played a huge role in the independence of the African continent, which the African continent will never be able to forget, and it is in the name of this friendship that I am included here.

And it was like an excuse to someone that he was meeting with Vladimir Putin. But according to Kommersant, McKee Sall himself asked for this meeting. He was interested in grain and fertilizers.

But at first, it seemed to me, there were excuses:

“As you know,” the President of Senegal sighed, “a number of countries voted in favor of resolutions within the framework of the United Nations, and it should be noted that the position of the African continent is very heterogeneous and, despite great pressure, many countries still did not condemn the position of Russia.

However, let's be blunt: only one country voted against the condemnation: Eritrea. Senegal abstained. And here, for example, the countries that voted for: Benin, Botswana, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Zambia, Cape Verde (Natalia Poklonskaya did the right thing, or rather, spoke), Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya (Libya! – **A. K.**), Mauritius, Mauritania, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia (thank you also for everything. – **A. K.**), Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Chad.

They forbade Russia, so to speak, to pick its nose. And now they naturally turned out to be a starving Africa.

“Now we do not have access to grain from Russia, especially wheat from Russia,” McKee Sall finally turned to the case. – And most importantly, we do not have access to fertilizers, because the situation was already difficult, and now it is even more complicated, and this entails consequences for food security in Africa.

I was literally talking this morning with my colleague from the African Union Commission, and I told him that there are two main problems — the crisis and the sanctions. We need to work together to resolve these two problems so that food products, in particular grain, and fertilizers are removed from sanctions.

It was obvious what sanctions the head of the African Union was talking about: Russian ships are not insured and not allowed into the ports where they must go to transport grain or fertilizers. And, for example, if Andrei Melnichenko, a former non-executive director and extremely executive owner of EuroChem, who has long been under sanctions, and wanted to somehow help starving, as it was (and will be) said, Africa, then it is unlikely that he would want to do it even in a simple human way: on this day, even his own wife fell under the sanctions of the European Union, that is, European ports were closed to her.

The interlocutors discussed the topic of grain and fertilizers, according to Kommersant, for three and a half hours, first in the hall with a fireplace, then at lunch. And the conversation seemed to Mr. Putin, apparently, so principled, and he so wanted to be understood, and most importantly, it turned out that there is something to say and at the same time look more or less convincing and even advantageous, that in the evening of this day the President of Russia essentially retold what he said to the president, the head of the African Union and the prime minister of the government of this union, the VGTRK film crew led by Pavel Zarubin. keeping a long or even indefinite quarantine in Sochi.

“Yes, of course,” mr. Putin said, and it was clear that he had not yet cooled down from the lunchtime conversation with McKee Sall, “we are now seeing attempts to shift responsibility for what is happening on the world food market, the emerging problems in this market to Russia. I must say that this is an attempt, as people say in our country, to shift these problems from a sick head to a healthy one.

And he explained why, and just as patiently as McKee Sall:

– Because, firstly, the unfavorable situation on the world food market began to develop not yesterday and not even from the moment of the beginning of Russia’s special military operation in the Donbas, in Ukraine. It began to take shape in February 2020 in the process of combating the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, when the world economy, the world economy sat down, and it was necessary to restore the world economy.

The financial and economic authorities found nothing better in the United States than to follow the path of injecting large sums of money to support the population, to support individual enterprises and sectors of the economy.

Did Vladimir Putin offer Russia something different?

“In general, we did about the same thing,” he agreed, “but I dare to assure you, and the result is obvious, obvious: we did it much more carefully, we did it point-by-point, achieved the desired result without all these actions affecting macroeconomic indicators, including the immeasurable growth of inflation!..

In two years, incomplete two years, from February 2020 to the end of 2021, the money supply in the United States grew by 5.9 trillion! This is unprecedented work of the printing press. The total money supply grew by 38.6%!

Everything now had to be paid for by the United States. Vladimir Putin has an impeccable reason to pay them off:

– Apparently, the financial authorities of the United States proceeded from the fact that the dollar is a world currency, and it, as usual, as in previous times, will dissolve throughout the world economy, and in the States it will be imperceptible. It turned out that this was not the case! Strictly speaking, people are decent, and in the States there are also such people (and this was a surprise – **A. K.**), the Minister of Finance recently said that they made a mistake. So this is a mistake of the financial and economic authorities of the United States, it has nothing to do with Russia's actions in Ukraine, in any way. And this was the first step, a very serious step towards the development of an unfavorable situation in the food market, because first of all, food prices went up, went uphill. That's the first thing.

The European countries could not but be blamed, this was also suffered by Mr. Putin, and it became increasingly clear why he decided to speak out loud on this topic: his version of the impending world famine seemed to him impeccable, and he, in fact, now wanted to be heard with it.

The story with biological laboratories, for example, does not work very well, especially since it is not so large-scale, no matter how hard everyone tries, and here everything is grandiose and there is simply nothing to object to:

– The second reason is the short-sighted policy of European countries, and first of all the European Commission, in the energy sector. We see what's going on there... Everything seems to be fine, but it is not good only when unqualified, groundless recommendations are given on what needs to be done in the energy sector, the possibilities of alternative types of energy are overestimated: solar, wind, I don't know, any other, hydrogen – this is a prospect, probably, but today this is not in the proper volume, proper quality and at the right prices. And at the same time, they began to belittle the importance of traditional types of energy, including, and above all, hydrocarbons.

In general, the situation became unpromising long before the start of the special operation:

– Banks have stopped giving loans, because they are under pressure. Insurance companies have ceased to insure the relevant transactions. Local authorities stopped issuing plots of land to expand production, reduced the construction of specialized transport, including pipeline. All this has led to underinvestment in the global energy sector, and as a result, higher prices. Please, last year there was not enough wind load, the wind is not what was expected, the winter dragged on – and immediately the prices flew up!

This was a topic on which Vladimir Putin spoke with pleasure. He was all in it, all over:

“Among other things, the Europeans did not listen to our urgent requests to preserve long-term contracts for the supply of the same natural gas to European countries, they also began to cover them. Many are still working, but have begun to cover up. But this had a negative impact on the European energy market: prices crept up. Russia has absolutely nothing to do with it!

It was time to move on to Russian and Ukrainian grain, and to fertilizers:

– But as soon as gas prices, say, crept up, the prices for fertilizers immediately increased, because some of these fertilizers are produced, including at the expense of gas. Everything is interconnected! As soon as fertilizer prices began to creep up, many enterprises, including in European countries, became unprofitable, began to close altogether – and the volume of fertilizers on the world market fell

sharply, and prices, respectively, rose, and prices rose dramatically, one might say, completely unexpectedly for many European politicians.

All this made sense to discuss, however, until February 24.

“But the next step,” Mr. Putin continued, “when our operation began, the European, American partners of the so-called began to take steps that exacerbated the situation in this sector – both in the food and in the fertilizer production sector.

That was clearer.

– By the way, Russia occupies 25% of the world market for fertilizers, and for example, for potash fertilizers, as Alexander Grigoryevich Lukashenko told me, we need to check, of course (Vladimir Putin is trained, apparently, to check everything that the President of Belarus says. – **A. K.**), but I think that this is true – for potash fertilizers, Russia and Belarus are 45% of the world market! That’s a huge amount!

Then everything was like clockwork (primarily sunflower, but also vegetable too):

– And the yield depends on the amount of fertilizers invested in the soil. As soon as it became clear that there would be no fertilizers on the world market, prices immediately crept up for both fertilizers and food, because if there are no fertilizers, there is no necessary volume of agricultural products.

Vladimir Putin, indeed, apparently intended to prove that the shortage of grain and fertilizers is associated with the military special operation in general in the last place.

But so far, I haven’t proven everything.

“One clings to the other,” he said, “and Russia has absolutely nothing to do with it. Our partners themselves made a lot of mistakes, and now they are looking for someone to blame, and, of course, in this sense, the most convenient candidate for this is Russia... The British, then the Americans... Anglo-Saxons (to generalize in time is also a great skill. – **A. K.**) !.. imposed sanctions on our fertilizers! Then, realizing what was happening, the Americans lifted the sanctions, but the Europeans did not. They themselves say in contacts with me: yes, yes, we need to think about it, we need to do something about it, and today they only exacerbated this situation!

The theoretical part of the review was coming to an end:

– This will worsen the situation on the world fertilizer markets, which means that the prospects for the harvest will be much more modest, which means that prices will only go up – that’s all! This is an absolutely short-sighted, erroneous, I would say, just stupid policy that leads to a dead end!

In the practical part, I would like to hear about the fact that Russia is waiting for the lifting of sanctions on the insurance of its ships for their calls at European ports in order to carry grain, for which there are no sanctions, since it is recognized as a product of prime necessity, but the Russian president, apparently, believed that this is already clear and that this will not happen anyway.

But he spoke in detail about what he thinks about the blocked Ukrainian grain:

– The world produces about 800 million tons of grain and wheat per year. Now we are told that Ukraine is ready to export 20 million tons. 20 million tons compared to what is produced in the world – 800 million tons, which is 2.5%. But if we proceed from the fact that in the total volume of food in the world, wheat is only 20%, and this is so, this is not our data, this is the data of the UN ... This means that these 20 million tons of Ukrainian wheat are 0.5%. Nothing! That's the first thing.

There were other arguments:

– Secondly, 20 million tons of Ukrainian wheat is a potential export. To date, U.S. officials have said that Ukraine could export 6 million tons of wheat today. According to our Ministry of Agriculture, this is not 6, it is about 5 million tons... even, let's say, 6... and, this is the data of our Ministry of Agriculture, 7 million tons of corn. We understand that this is not much. In the current agricultural year, 2021-2022 – we will export 37 million, and in 2022-2023, I think that we will raise these exports to 50 million tons. But it is so – apropos, by the way ... – Mr. Putin shrugged.

He shared his ideas on how to export Ukrainian grain:

“We're not preventing that. And there are several ways to export grain. First. Please can be exported through ports that are under the control of Ukraine, primarily the Black Sea basin – Odessa and nearby ports.

It was not we who mined the approaches to the port – it was Ukraine that mined! I have already said many times to all our colleagues: let them clear mines and, please, let the ships loaded with grain leave the ports. We guarantee their peaceful passage without any problems into international waters. No problem please!

Yes, they will clear the mines, and then like all the interesting ships there will go without stopping ... Not from there...

“They must clear mines and raise from the bottom of the Black Sea ships that were deliberately sunk,” the Russian president continued, “in order to complicate the entrance to these ports in the south of Ukraine ... There is another possibility: the ports of the Sea of Azov – Berdyansk, Mariupol – are under our control, we are ready to ensure the trouble-free export of Ukrainian grain through these ports. You are welcome!

He understood, of course, that in wartime conditions no one would make such contacts. And in conditions of peace, it is difficult to imagine.

“We have already carried out, we are finishing the work on mine clearance,” the Ukrainian troops once mined it in three layers, “the work is coming to an end,” said Mr. Putin. Please, we will. That's the second thing.

The President of Russia simply sprinkled with opportunities:

– Third. It is possible to export grain from Ukraine through the Danube and through Romania.

And here's another one, please:

– Fourth. You can go through Hungary.

But it is clear that now no compositions with grain will go anywhere.

However, nevertheless:

– Fifth. You can go through Poland! Yes, there are certain technical problems there, because the track is different, it is necessary to change the wagon bogies. But it's just a few hours, and that's it.

Although, of course, it's strange to start this way because of half a percent of the world's wheat...

"Finally, the simplest thing is export through the territory of Belarus," the Russian president stated. – The easiest and cheapest, because from there immediately to the ports of the Baltic States, to the Baltic Sea and further – to anywhere in the world!

Although in fact it was, perhaps, the most difficult. Vladimir Putin himself said about this:

"But for this it is necessary to lift sanctions from Belarus! But that's not our question. In any case, President of Belarus Alexander Grigoryevich (Mr. Lukashenko – **A. K.**) puts the question exactly like this: if someone wants to solve the problem, if it exists at all, the export of Ukrainian grain, please, the easiest way is through Belarus. No one bothers! So there is no problem with the export of grain from Ukraine!

In fact, after all these exhaustive explanations, it became finally clear that in the near future no one will take anything out of nowhere.

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