

Kremlin Beating People to a Pulp

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President Vladimir Putin's regime is clearly going through hard times. Russia hasn't seen anything close to the massive anti-Putin rallies of the past six months since he came to power in 2000. Nor has it seen round-the-clock opposition camps that, like the monster in "Terminator 2," have the frightening ability to reassemble themselves no matter how many pieces they are broken into.

Under such circumstances, it would be reasonable to expect the government to grow more cautious in its actions, or, at the very least, create the impression that it is listening to the people. But is that happening?

On Thursday, the Mozhaisky City Court found the Zorin brothers, Anton and Andrei, guilty of assaulting United Russia member Igor Aranson and his son. Andrei Zorin was sentenced to three months in prison, but the judge refused to consider a [video](#) clearly showing Aranson and his son — both experienced boxers — kicking and beating the Zorin brothers to a pulp.

What was the reason they were beaten? While crossing the street along a pedestrian crosswalk, the Zorin brothers refused to yield to Aranson's oncoming car.

Two weeks ago, the son of the Adygeya republic's traffic police chief killed two people in a car crash. And that was not the first time that the 18-year-old had been involved in a fatal car accident.

On Friday, Gazprombank demanded that criminal charges be filed against blogger Svetlana Robenkova, who wrote in her blog that a car owned by the bank's first vice president, Alexander Schmidt, struck a child. The blogger claimed that after the driver jumped out of the car and rushed toward the child, Schmidt cried: "Leave them! Let's go!" Fellow bloggers who also posted comments on the incident may be named as co-defendants in the case.

Although Schmidt maintained his innocence by placing photos on his website taken from the scene of the accident, we, the ordinary citizens, can also draw our own conclusions about who is telling the truth and who is lying.

According to the child's parents, the 2-year-old boy unexpectedly ran out into the street and was hit by the car as it braked to a halt. The driver was in the process of getting out of the car when he was ordered back in by a passenger and then drove away. The mother immediately called an ambulance and police. Hospital workers diagnosed the child with "stomach trauma and a bruised left kidney."

Unfortunately, Schmidt's explanation that the child simply fell for no apparent reason in front of his car as his driver slammed on the brakes does not correspond with the nature of the boy's injuries, and his claim that the mother "refused help" does not correspond with the fact that she immediately called an ambulance and traffic police after his car left the scene of the accident.

Someone high up in the Kremlin needs to call Schmidt and Aranson and explain to them that it is a serious crime to drive away after hitting a 2-year-old child, and — at the very least — that they should not make matters worse by bringing criminal charges against their victims. But for some reason, the government does nothing.

The government does not want to stop all of the Schmidts and Aransons because the country's officials and bureaucrats are cut from the same cloth.

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