



Dr. Doctorow's Struggles with Realities

When we first took a critical look at Gilbert Doctorow's analyses a good two weeks ago, it didn't go down well. Now he is attacking his colleagues in the most despicable way. By doing so, he is also harming Russia – is that what he wants?

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Dr. Doctorow from Brussels is not just anyone. He describes himself as an expert on Russia, having spent almost his entire professional life in the Soviet Union.

Everyone has their own experiences and opinions based on them. But when he went so far as to compare President Putin to Gorbachev and claim that the “elites”—*nota bene*, without describing them—were preparing to remove Putin from office, we intervened to set the record straight. This is what happened in our article “[When an ‘expert’ loses his footing.](#)”

Cheap Shots Against His Colleagues

Gilbert Doctorow was the first commentator on our article, so he certainly took note of it. However, he responded in his own way, not in a factual and collegial manner. Not only did he attack the author—which I can live with—but he also accused Larry Johnson and Scott Ritter by name of not even speaking Russian and of getting their “insider perspectives” from RT, the Russian Foreign Ministry, and retired Russian generals, thus parroting Russian propaganda and insinuating that they had been bought. These allegations are all inaccurate.

I know Larry Johnson and Scott Ritter personally, and we meet regularly when they are in Moscow or elsewhere. I have seen Scott Ritter, who is currently spending over two weeks in Russia, twice in the last few days. We met Russian entrepreneurs, publishers, frontline soldiers, Spetsnaz, journalists, bloggers, etc. Yesterday, Scott Ritter presented his new book, “[Highway to Hell](#),” in its Russian version, “[Дорога в Ад](#).” Scott Ritter's producer manages him on a contract basis, which she bills Ritter for. Scott Ritter is thus completely independent, has no ties to the state or other third parties, and pays all his travel expenses out of his own pocket; he is supported exclusively by the readers of his blog.

He has an enviable network throughout Russia and is respected by Russians as an American patriot who seeks and promotes relations with Russia. His Russian isn't great, but he communicates perfectly well with his producer, who in turn speaks virtually no English.

One gets the impression that Gilbert Doctorow simply envies his colleagues and attacks them—unsavory.

Surprisingly Little Comprehension of the Russian Soul

Surprisingly, Gilbert Doctorow himself has no analytically relevant connections in Russia, and why should he? When he sits in Brussels or in his apartment in St. Petersburg, watches Russian television, dines with his old friends, and palavers with taxi drivers, the yield of significant information seems rather modest.

His repeated emphasis on television as a primary source of his insights backfires on him. Programs such as 60 Minutes, Solovyov Live, and others serve to entertain the Russian people—with clear guidelines from the Kremlin. The millions of people who watch these programs take the information they are given with Russian

skepticism—something Gilbert Doctorow lacks. He may speak Russian, but the misinterpretations we criticize suggest a lack of understanding of the Russian mentality and soul.

Doctorow Accuses Russia of Xenophobia Against His Better Judgment

After spending almost three weeks traveling in Russia, Dr. Doctorow posted something on his blog that leaves one stunned. He describes security measures in the Russian telecommunications sector as a xenophobic gust of wind and—as evidence of alleged Russian xenophobia—falsely claims that foreigners without permanent residence in Russia are no longer allowed to own a Russian SIM card.

In his [travel report](#), he shared the following with the public on November 6, 2025:

"Yesterday I transferred to my Russian wife the MTS SIM card and ownership of the local telephone number which has been mine since 2009. Why? Because a new law or more likely a new administrative instruction from the FSB bars foreigners who are not permanent residents from owning a Russian telephone number. This is not tragic even for those who do not have Russian relatives to help them out. But it tells you which way the wind is blowing: it is a xenophobic gust."

GILBERT DOCTOROW, 6 NOVEMBER 2025

As already mentioned, Gilbert Doctorow speaks fluent Russian. So it should have been easy for him to find and understand the relevant regulations of the Russian state, e.g. here https://www.gosuslugi.ru/landing/sim_migrant. For travelers to Russia who do not speak Russian, the situation is somewhat more difficult, but by no means unsolvable, as Russians are generally very helpful in such cases and travelers will be able to obtain a SIM card.

If someone wants to purchase a SIM card in Germany or Switzerland, they can do so at any store belonging to a telephone provider or one of its contractual partners. This problem can also be solved online, but only if the person concerned identifies themselves with their passport. Only then will they be able to obtain a SIM card.

The same applied in Russia. Until the beginning of 2025, foreigners in Russia were also able to purchase an unlimited number of SIM cards.

Then, in June 2025, came Operation Spiderweb, which we reported on: [“Operation Spiderweb: Ukraine and NATO attack Russia: A new Pearl Harbor? Full escalation? Are the fanatics back? Facts and analysis.”](#).

The Russian security agencies—the military, police, and security services—determined that the Ukrainian drones were equipped with Russian SIM cards that could dial into the Russian telephone network as “Russians” and “navigate” to their intended targets with the help of the Russian navigation system. Investigations into attacks also revealed that Russian telephone numbers were involved, whose connection to specific individuals was difficult or impossible to prove.

So, large quantities of Russian SIM cards were purchased and brought into Ukraine, and thereby Russians were killed.

The new conditions for the purchase or registration of existing SIM cards for foreigners, which have been in force since 2025, are intended to help solve this problem.

We are somewhat concerned that Dr. Doctorow was unable—or unwilling?—to make the obvious connection between terrorism and measures to combat it. His conclusion is surprising when he writes:

“But it tells you which way the wind is blowing: it is a xenophobic gust.”

GILBERT DOCTOROW, 6. NOVEMBER 2025

Conclusion

Admittedly, it is a battle for interpretational sovereignty. This battle can be fought in a spirit of friendly competition, with contrarian views being expressed. Or it can be fought by resorting to means that are objectively disingenuous, by attacking colleagues with false claims or accusing the Russian government and Russian society of xenophobia where none exists.

We fondly remember Gilbert Doctorow's valuable analyses in the past.

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