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"Our people have been abandoned by the international community." **Riad Hijab**, former Syrian prime minister.

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59%
of Russians support the bombing campaign in Syria.

50
civilians died in missile attacks on Syrian hospitals and schools on Monday.



The OSCE this month reported an escalation in the conflict in Ukraine, despite a cease-fire.



MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev was sent to the 2016 Munich Security Conference to speak on Russia's behalf.



The Moscow Times

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Cover photo by Albina Shaimuratova

Talking Peace, Russian Style

The Moscow Times newsreporter@imedi.ru

Putin and Medvedev fight their way to the negotiating table.

When Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev took to the stage at the Munich security conference, he left no doubt as to who had sent him.

"Before coming to this conference, I met with President Putin," he said, looking down at his notes. With a nervous sweep of his arm he continued: "We talked about his speech in 2007 ... [about] ideological stereotypes, double standards and unilateral actions."

The hall fell silent. Those who had come to see the soft side of Russian diplomacy realized they might have been given the wrong briefing notes.

Putin's relations with the West have been fraught with tension ever since Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014. But in the month before Munich, there had been hope that Russia was looking to compromise with the West — forced to the negotiating table on

the back of plunging oil prices and a stalling domestic economy.

There were some promising signs. On Jan. 11, Putin unexpectedly sent his envoy Boris Gryzlov to Kiev to meet with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. Four days later, his special advisor on Ukraine, Vladislav Surkov met with the U.S. State Department's top European hand, Victoria Nuland. The subject of

Continued on Page 3 →

GLOBAL DIPLOMACY

Lessons From Munich: We Need Cooperation, Not Confrontation

By **Igor Ivanov**
President of the Russian International Affairs Council, Russian foreign minister from 1998 to 2004.



GALINA GUBCHENKO

Politicians and scholars from all over the world recently gathered at the Munich Security Conference (MSC) to discuss global security issues. Most of the attendees agreed that we have to work together to untie the tangled knot of current threats to peace and stability, with the bulk of responsibility falling on the shoulders of the leading global players — the United States, the European Union, Russia and China. However, we still seem incapable of presenting a collective response even to the most fundamental threats.

Regulars of the MSC remember President Vladimir Putin's famous Munich Speech of 2007 very well. Observers would then often refer to the speech as one manifesting a strategic turn in Russia's foreign policy and a challenge to the United States and the West.

I believe this interpretation of the Munich Speech to be deeply flawed. Nine years ago the Russian president was trying to warn Russia's partners of where we can find ourselves if we disregard fundamental norms of international law, rely on unilateral action and military force as a way of resolving issues instead of seeking political solutions, and let our leaders be irresponsible and arrogant.

All that is left for us to do today is lament the fact that Russia's voice was not heard: Many of the concerns expressed by the Russian leader have become a harsh reality. In the nine years since the Munich Speech, the world has not become a safer, more stable or just place. And this goes for the West as well, including the United States. Our will to work

together has not only weakened, it has sunk to a historical low.

The way Syria was discussed in Munich is a vivid example of this lack of trust and willingness to engage in joint action. Russian politicians and diplomats reiterated that Moscow considered its actions in Syria to be a contribution to the global effort to combat the existential threat of Islamic fundamentalism and an attempt to save Syrian statehood and prevent it from descending into chaos. But many of the American and European participants saw Russia's military operation as nothing more than a case of the Kremlin's imperial ambition and an attempt to keep in place a regime loyal to Moscow.

Discussions on Euro-Atlantic security were equally strained. Just like with Syria, Russia and the West are anything but united on the issue, and their positions continue to diverge. Instead of combining our efforts to combat common security threats (terrorism and other forms of extremism, migration, etc.) we have essentially entered a new phase of the arms race. It is not a giant leap, for example, to assume that once the United States has deployed its missile defense system in Poland, Russia will respond by deploying its own Iskander missile defense system in Kaliningrad.

We all remember the missile crisis of the mid-1980s, and many have the feeling that history is repeating itself. During the Cold War, however, we had various mechanisms for dialogue available. There was a common strategic culture of deterrence. We do not have any of that now, and that is why

any incident in Europe or elsewhere could give rise to a major conflict.

The Munich Security Conference participants were unanimous in seeing significant deterioration of the circumstances for discussing new initiatives for integrated Euro-Atlantic security. Most importantly, trust has been broken completely, and without trust, it is hardly possible to build a new security system. Rebuilding trust is a painstakingly difficult process, which even in the best-case scenario will take many years.

At the same time, neither Russia nor the West have the time to stall cooperation. Therefore, the most practical and productive thing to do right now would be to build cooperation around concrete issues where our interests overlap. And this is precisely what Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov talked about in Munich.

Combating international terrorism and preventing political extremism are just some of the possible areas of cooperation, as are managing migration flows and solving the refugee problem, strengthening cyber and food security, tackling environmental issues and coordinating positions on climate change.

At the latest Munich Security Conference, Russian politicians once again confirmed their willingness to engage in dialogue. And, as before, Russia called for dialogue among equal partners, partners who are ready to listen to one another and take the interests of all sides into account. This is the only approach that will make it possible to lay the foundations for long-term and stable cooperation. **TMT**

Looking Back



"The only thing that has changed about Mr. Putin's ambitions is that his appetite is growing with the eating."
John McCain, U.S. Senator.

February 18 – 24, 2016

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Ukrainian soldiers were killed on Monday.

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← Continued from Page 2

Ukraine had also long disappeared from the attack agendas of Russian state television.

The West offered clear prospects for a relaxation of the sanctions regime in July 2016. Speaking at the Davos summit on Jan. 22, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said it was "possible" that "in the next months ... [we will] get to a place where sanctions can be appropriately ... removed." French Prime Minister Manuel Valls even traveled to Moscow to discuss movement on sanctions.

Most onlookers assumed that the Russians were serious about demonstrating a "soft" side in exchange for sanctions relief. Putin's decision to send Medvedev to Munich, rather than more hawkish members of the Kremlin elite, was seen in this light.

In Munich, Medvedev issued a clear and contrary message. Russia would not be held hostage to the West's demands, he said: If sanctions were lifted, it would be because the West realized their mistake, not because Russia had stooped to its demands.

Kerry responded in kind, by reiterating there could be no talk of easing sanctions until Russia and its proxies played ball. "Russia has a simple choice: Fully implement Minsk or continue to face economically damaging sanctions," he said.

The situation on the ground suggests full implementation of the Minsk agreement will not happen soon. Since the new year, international monitors have recorded the regular use of heavy artillery by both sides, including "grad" missile systems.



MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

Meanwhile, in an interview to the Russian Profile magazine on Feb. 15, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin cast doubt on the prospect of returning Ukrainian control to its eastern border — another key condition of agreement.

Speaking to The Moscow Times, political analyst and former Kremlin staffer Alexei Chesnakov said that implementation of Minsk was already of the order of "complete fantasy."

Chesnakov claimed that Moscow's position on Ukraine had not, in fact, changed: "All the signals that Moscow has sent in recent times have been not about any softening of its position, but about widening the field for dialogue. Moscow has not signaled a readiness to make compromises, and its demands have remained unchanged. What we need are changes to the Constitution, leg-

islation on the special status of Donetsk and Luhansk, and legislation on elections. And we're at a dead end on all of these."

With Ukraine teetering on the brink of political collapse, President Petro Poroshenko is indeed unlikely to be able to deliver on any of these fronts.

The issue of constitutional changes, particularly controversial in Kiev, is for the time being a no-go. The last time it was discussed, four national guardsmen were killed outside parliament when a live grenade was thrown during disturbances. In January, Kiev introduced a thinly veiled holding tactic, referring the timing of the commitment to the country's Constitutional Court.

Fool Me Once

Any illusions about an accommodating attitude of Russian foreign policy were also shot down by assertive positions on Syria.

While The Moscow Times has learned that Medvedev changed the wording of Syria sections of his speech following the Munich agreement, there is little sign Russia is prepared to change its military operation in Syria.

In the weeks leading up to Munich, Russian bombers helped the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad launch an onslaught on the city of Aleppo and its suburbs, a former rebel stronghold. Panic spread as tens of thousands of civilians fled Syria's largest city toward the Turkish border.

Western leaders denounced the strikes amid concern it would exacerbate the humanitarian crisis and refugee flows to Europe. The deal brokered between the United States, Russia, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other countries on the eve of the Munich conference was hailed by Kerry as "ambitious." Others, such as U.S. Senator John McCain, suggested it was delusional.

For Russian international affairs expert Vladimir Frolov, the timing of the truce deal was no accident, and came at a time when Moscow's bargaining position on Syria was strong.

Russian aerial forces had helped the forces of Assad deliver a crushing blow to the opposition, weakening their bargaining power ahead of the talks. It also increased pressure on the West to accept Assad as part of the solution, rather than the problem.

Frolov says the Russian negotiating tactics reflect a "fight as you talk" arrangement. This approach shares many similarities with Ukraine, where Russia and its allies went into discussions from a position of military strength: first in September 2014, following crushing reverses for the Ukrainian side in Ilovaisk and elsewhere; and again in February 2015, when Ukrainian soldiers were essentially encircled in Debaltseve.

A Flawed Agreement

Critics have noted the amount of wriggle room contained within the Munich declaration, which, they argue, undermines the val-

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier speaking on a panel at the security conference in Munich.



MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

ue of any "ceasefire." The agreement, for example, exempts any action taken against "terrorists." But if the West targets terrorist groups — such as Islamic State and al-Nusra — Russia's definition of terrorists is much more flexible. It includes more moderate opposition groups that receive U.S. backing.

Further complicating matters, many of the warring factions have intermingled on the battlefield. That provides Russia with cover to continue its air campaigns, even under a cease-fire deal.

"They are all bandits and terrorists," Medvedev told Time magazine a day after the deal was announced. Those "who run around with automatic weapons" are fair targets, he added.

Few of those speaking at the Munich conference expressed confidence that the Syria deal would hold. Even before the officials left German soil, cautious optimism had given way to further distrust.

Lavrov said he thought there was a "49 percent" chance the Munich deal would be successful. His German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier put the odds at 51 percent. Britain's Philip Hammond quipped that, considering Lavrov's remarks, the success rate was more likely to be zero.

From Russia's perspective, what matters is not whether the cease-fire holds, but who is seen to be the bad guy if it fails.

"If Moscow is seen as the aggressor and antagonist, then there is some political cost," says security analyst Mark Galeotti. "If, however, the blame can be pinned on Turkey, or IS, then Moscow can fake dismay and resume its bombardments." It remains to be seen whether Russia's Syrian operations will continue to come at little cost to the Russian regime.

French political expert Marie Mendras says that the Syrian campaign is inherently much riskier than any previous operations in Ukraine. "There are more nasty players involved and the situation is much more uncontrollable and unpredictable than in eastern Ukraine," she said.

Galeotti agreed that there are few givens when it comes to Syria. Despite Russia's success in helping Assad regain some of his fighting power, outright military victory remained unlikely, he said.

At the same time, Russia has shown that it will follow what it sees as the military need, regardless of the political or economic cost. How long this can continue given its nose-diving economy is another question. **TMT**



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4 Looking Forward



"The definition of political activity for NGOs can't be applied to whatever authorities want."
Russian President **Vladimir Putin**.

The Moscow Times
No. 5742

120

NGOs are on the "foreign agents" list, as of Feb. 17.

500,000 rubles

The largest fine outlined by law for NGOs refusing to register as "foreign agents."



"Cancel the 'foreign agents' law! Don't suspect us of something we haven't done!" **Lyudmila Alexeyeva**, founder of the Helsinki Group NGO.



Putin's Pre-emptive Strike

By **Daria Litvinova** d.litvinova@imedia.ru | Illustration by **Evgeny Tonkonogoy**

Ahead of elections, the Kremlin has renewed a crackdown on the most "problematic" civil rights organizations.

Activist Pavel Chikov could react only with sarcasm when a court handed down a winding up order against his Agora legal advocacy association. "As the first NGO ever to have been liquidated in a Russian court, we are so proud," he wrote on Twitter.

The next day, another organization, the Golos Democracy Foundation, fell under the same spotlight when the Justice Ministry issued almost identical proceedings. Like Agora, Golos is a prominent and influential NGO, a thorn in the Kremlin's side. And like Agora, it has also been labeled a "foreign agent."

Co-chair of Golos Grigory Melkonyants, responded to the proceedings in a completely serious way. "It seems a new campaign has begun to shut down NGOs on the 'foreign agents' list," he wrote on Facebook. "Out of sight — out of mind."

In 2012, Vladimir Putin signed a law requiring NGOs to label themselves "foreign agents" if they receive foreign funding and are engaged in vaguely defined "political activity." Since then, hundreds of Russian NGOs have been locked in a battle with the Justice Ministry, unwilling to accept such a negatively-charged label. In the past four years, NGOs on the "foreign agents" list were subject to time-consuming prosecutorial inspections and six-figure fines. Some were unwilling to function under the label and deal with the scrutiny, and shut down.

At the time of signing the new law, Kremlin officials insisted the "foreign agent" label did not mean an organization should automatically close its doors. But the moves this month would seem to suggest that position is changing, and that more is to come. It is election year, and Russian authorities are looking to clear the road ahead: to ensure independent activists do not get in the way of important State Duma and gubernatorial votes.

Largest Ones Go First

Agora and Golos have been a nuisance for the Kremlin for many years.

Agora's sharp legal minds engaged in legal advocacy for the most high-profile, politically motivated cases. They defended those who participated in mass opposition rallies

over 2011-2012, including, in particular, those arrested during the May 2012 rally on Bolotnaya Square. They were instrumental in pushing for an investigation into the attack on journalist Oleg Kashin. They defended many other prominent figures sued by government officials.

Golos, meanwhile, acted as a hugely influential election monitor that exposed mass rigging during the 2011 State Duma elections. Its activists created a live map of voting violations. The resource was quickly shut down and it became clear that those in power don't welcome the NGO's efforts.

In a 2013 report to Putin, Prosecutor General Yuri Chaika singled out Golos and Agora, accusing them of using legal loopholes to avoid landing on the "foreign agents" list. Nevertheless, both NGOs wound up on the list in 2014.

Recent moves to wind up the legal entities of Agora and Golos were done on purely technocratic grounds. Agora was accused of "attempts to shape public opinion" by arguing its way off the "foreign agents" roster. A recent inspection into the Golos foundation meanwhile "revealed" it didn't have an office at the address listed.

Political analyst Gleb Pavlovsky told The Moscow Times that he was not surprised at the timing of the Kremlin crackdown. Agora and Golos are two of the country's largest NGOs, with infrastructure set up all over the country, he noted. During election year, this could easily turn into a broad network of civic involvement.

"Those in charge of domestic policy in the Kremlin consider them dangerous," said Pavlovsky, who himself used to work as an adviser in the presidential administration. "They are not confident at all the elections will run smoothly, which is why the mere existence of these organizations is an irritant."

Agora's Chikov agrees, adding that the new campaign looks like a last throw of the dice for the Kremlin. "Social activists are resourceful people, and they quickly learned to bypass certain restrictions," he said. "The only thing officials could do was push them out of the legal arena completely."

Both Chikov and Melkonyants say they formal liquidation

of legal entities will not affect their organizations' work. "We plan on continuing our work no matter what," Melkonyants told The Moscow Times.

Tightening Grip

Political analyst Pavlovsky says he believes the recent crackdown is no coincidence, and that more is to come. As regional governors come up for re-election, they will most likely bring up the issue of "fifth column" NGOs getting in the way. "The presidential administration will have to react to complaints from top-ranking officials," Pavlovsky told The Moscow Times. "That's how the system works."

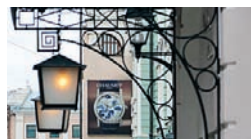
The Kremlin is expected to come down hard on those organizations that irritate it the most, says Chikov.

In addition to Agora and Golos, close scrutiny is likely to be extended to the Torture Prevention Committee and the Memorial human rights group. There have as yet been no formal attempts to liquidate these organizations. Indeed, some of their branch sub-units have even escaped the "foreign agents" roster. But their leaders believe it is only a matter of time before this changes.

"Two of our five branch organizations are currently on the list, and an hour ago I received a notification about another one," says Igor Kalyapin, founder of the Torture Prevention Committee. "Of course, we will take our chances in court — there's always hope that some judge would do the right thing."

Alexander Cherkasov, co-founder of Memorial, refused to talk about the NGO's future, but said that one thing was clear: The Kremlin will continue reinforcing its campaign against NGOs. "This the logic of this machine — that's how it works. It will keep running for as long as it has fuel," he said.

When contacted, the Justice Ministry said that they would continue to monitor NGO operations in Russia, and would take measures against all organizations found to violate legal regulations. The ministry did not specify whether other NGOs are in danger of court-mandated liquidation. **TMT**



Volume of free shopping space reached 25 percent in 2015 on Stoleshnikov Pereulok — where the most expensive rental rates can be found in Moscow.

33%

of street retail space is occupied by food services.



Europe's biggest shopping center Aviapark opened in Moscow in 2014, boasting a total of 228,500 square meters of retail space.

2,000

kiosks have been demolished over the past two years in Moscow.

When the Dust Has Settled

By **Anastasia Bazenkova** a.bazenkova@imedia.ru

Small business owners reassess property market in wake of City Hall's demolition push.

As Muscovites were recovering from the shock of the sudden demolition of street retail properties, launched overnight by Moscow authorities, and the wreckage was being cleared, the retail property market took stock of the situation and attempted to assess damages.

Around 100 kiosks, pavilions and small shopping centers, which according to Moscow officials had been constructed without permission, were demolished, predominantly around metro stations. Because demolished premises made up no more than 50,000 square meters of retail space altogether — slightly over 1 percent of Moscow retail space — one wouldn't expect a dramatic impact to the retail real estate market.

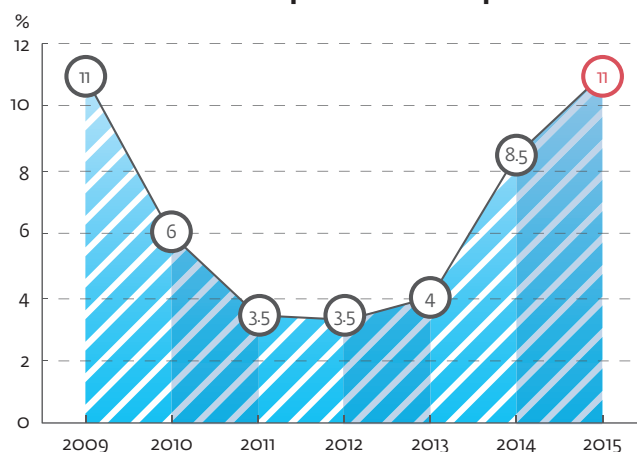
However, real estate experts told The Moscow Times that the wave of demolitions — set to be continued — will certainly reduce the number of small businesses in the retail industry and will result in an increase in rental rates near demolished pavilions, despite an overall plummeting demand for retail space in Moscow.

Displaced tenants will try to secure comparable retail space near their demolished premises. This will increase rental rates in these areas up to 10 percent, according to Ekaterina Podlesnykh, head of street retail at real estate agency Colliers International. Yulia Nazarova, the head of the street retail department at consultancy JLL, estimates that rental rates for premises less than 100 square meters will increase 20 percent.

This is not the first time this has happened in Moscow. Mayor Sergei Sobyannin began fighting street kiosks in 2010, and the street retail market responded to the razing of around 500 kiosks with an immediate rise of rental rates.

There is plenty of vacant retail space in Moscow nowadays. Retail real estate is in sharp decline due to sales resistance, which only shrank 10 percent last year. The total volume of free space in Moscow shopping centers reached 700,000 square meters — three times more than during the financial crisis of 2009 — and the vacancy rate grew to a re-

Moscow's Unoccupied Retail Space



Source: Colliers International

cord-breaking 13 percent, according to Knight Frank real estate agency.

Street retail has also suffered and hit a vacancy rate of 11 percent by the end of 2015. Toughening city-parking policies, affecting stores' traffic, added to its hardship.

The drop in demand resulted in drops to rental rates by up to 30 percent over the year, according to Podlesnykh, and the market adjusted. For instance, the city center saw rapid development of low-price food retail chains, that previously could not afford prime locations.

The migration of tenants could reduce Moscow's street retail vacancy rate by 1-2 points, said Podlesnykh. However, not all will be able to find new premises and survive, due to specifics of their businesses — usually occupying very narrow spaces of about 20-40 square meters and enjoying huge foot traffic, which garnered them profit despite high lease rates. Foot traffic

near metro stations reaches 10,000 daily, according to Nazarova.

But civilized ground-floor retail space offers mostly 50-square-meter premises and larger, with much lower foot traffic. Shopping malls might also not be the option. Offering 100-square-meter outlets on average, they prefer chain retailers to independent stores. Moreover, in some central areas there are no shopping malls.

So the effect will differ from one city area to another. Maryino in southeast Moscow — overloaded with small retail and a number of shopping centers — will hardly notice it at all, Viktoriya Kamliuk, head of street retail at Knight Frank said.

But even if the current crackdown on trade pavilions — whose tenants claim to have all necessary paperwork — won't seriously impact the market, the players may start worrying, especially those who fall into at risk groups.

"They started to demolish small shopping centers that had all necessary paperwork but were positioned on utility lines," Ilya Kuznetsov, deputy head of strategic consulting department at real estate agency Cushman & Wakefield, told The Moscow Times. But there certainly are other comparable retail properties in Moscow. Will they be demolished too? "Where is the limit for Moscow authorities' tolerance toward property rights?" Kuznetsov said.

Such concerns are also sparked by the news that the current demolition wave is just the beginning. The City Hall's initiative has been greeted warmly by the Kremlin and has already been copied in other Russian regions.

It's not only tenants who have been affected by demolition. The commercial insurance business will tread with greater care — taking into consideration the possibility of sudden demolition, Pavel Lipatov, head of property and liability insurance department at Evro-Polis, told The Moscow Times.

Furthermore, there is reason to wait for new products to appear on the insurance market, such as insurance to cover unforeseen demolitions. **TMT**

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"There are no psychics. There are mentalists — people with supersensitive intuition that read body language." **Lior Suchard**, famous mentalist.

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No. 5742

1 in 5

Russians went to a psychic at least once, a poll showed.

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James Randi's Foundation's reward to a psychic who proves paranormal abilities.



In 1998 the Russian Academy of Science founded a commission to tackle pseudoscience, and it's been functioning ever since.



SERGEI PATSYUK

Tatyana Ikayeva, who claims to read tarot cards, was proffered 10 photographs of people who had died, all in differing circumstances. She was tasked by the Houdini Award team with matching the photo with the mode of death. She failed to do so in all 10 instances. She was, therefore, unable to claim the 1 million ruble prize.

Standing Up for Reason

By **Daria Litvinova** d.litvinova@imedia.ru, Twitter: @dashalitvinovv

Pseudoscience of all persuasions is gaining traction in Russia, but a group of activists has begun the fight back.

A young woman named Nikol looks to the camera, wiping away what seem to be tears of happiness. She has reason to be happy, having navigated through to the next round of the Russian television show "Battle of the Psychics." Somehow, she had managed to select the one car out of 30 that contained a teenager inside the trunk.

Nikol, who says she has been a psychic for 15 years, made quite an impression on the teenager. Not only did she find his car in 10 minutes flat, she also told him that she could sense his father died "some time ago." The boy is shocked. "It's true — in 1998," he answers. "You're amazing."

"Battle of the Psychics" has captured the imaginations of millions of the watching Russian public. According to TNS Gallup, it was one of the top five most watched shows in December 2015 — success that can be put down to a more general blossoming of pseudoscience in Russia.

Pseudoscience was largely suppressed during Soviet times. The moment the system fell apart, however, a Pandora's box of iffy theories sprang open. "Slowly, but surely, it was allowed to make its way into the Russian public mainstream," says Alexander Sergeyev, a member of the Russian Academy of Science's commission on pseudoscience.

Pseudoscience has found a comfortable home in Russia's "anything goes" culture, and is routinely aided by propaganda and unscrupulous media outlets. But the scientific

community has begun to fight back, and is looking at inventive ways to debunk irrational beliefs, non-scientific myths and interpretations.

Prove It

In 2015, a young team of Moscow-based scientists led by Alexander Panchin and his friend Stanislav Nikolsky launched the Harry Houdini Award project. Their proposition was

that the extrasensory industry was bogus, and they called on magicians and psychics to prove them wrong.

Similar to "Battle of the Psychics," the Houdini Award gives magicians an opportunity to demonstrate otherworldly abilities in a series of experiments. They even offered a reward of 1 million rubles (\$12,900) to any person able to demonstrate such skills. Unlike "Battle of the Psychics," the Houdini Award experiments are strictly scientific, and have removed factors of luck and dishonesty from the contest.

The scientists say anyone who thinks they have paranormal abilities can take part in the Houdini Award contest. When applying, Houdini nominees are asked to list their paranormal talents, and after that the organizing committee designs an experiment to test the claims.

"We can only test supernatural abilities that we can model in the course of an experiment. For example, we can't test the ability to cure cancer or predict the future," Nikolsky, co-founder of the project, said.

To win 1 million rubles, a nominee has to successfully complete two experiments — a preliminary one conducted in front of the press, and a final experiment, carried out in front of the experts. In 2015, the Houdini Award team



YEGOR GAIDAR FUND

The Free Historic Society lectures and seminars are popular among those who seek a non-political approach to Russian history.

Continued on Page 11 →

Out & About



February 18 – 24, 2016

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Weekly round-up of all that's new, delicious and fun in Moscow.



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It's no wonder that Russians love sushi; love for raw fish is genetically programmed. Try the real thing at the cozy Stroganina Bar.

Try Cow on a Broomstick at Stroganina Bar

By **Andrei Muchnik** artsreporter@imedia.ru

Siberian delicacies served with shots of vodka and a big dose of humor

Stroganina is the new addition to the Expeditia family, which includes a chain of premium restaurants around Russia, souvenir shops and even hot baths. But while Expeditia's flagship restaurant in Moscow is almost a compulsory stop for affluent tourists to try Russian exotic dishes, prices at Stroganina Bar are much more accessible.

Stroganina is the Russian version of Japanese sashimi or Spanish ceviche. Russian culinary legend says that it originated in Siberia. The extremely cold temperatures and nomadic way of life resulted in a tradition

of keeping fish and game frozen, then serving them thinly sliced without thawing them. Flash-freezing kept the flavors fresh, and the cold kept bacteria from forming. This is Stroganina's main dish, although they serve other specialties from the far north as well.

We suggest trying stroganina from a rare Siberian white salmon called nelma (420 rubles). Muksun, another Northern fish, is also available as stroganina (380 rubles), as is deer (390 rubles). If you don't like the idea of raw fish, you can try it lightly salted. Apart from nelma or muksun, there is omul,

a fish only found in Lake Baikal, served with potatoes (300 rubles).

Chase down your stroganina with some of the homemade vodka infusions on offer at the bar, like khrenovukha that is made with horseradish (230 rubles per 50 ml). If that seems a bit too strong, they also offer lemon and herbal infusions. If you are more into long drinks, try a new take on the traditional Russian winter drink sbiten, made with taiga herbal tea and sweet vodka infusions (345 rubles).

For a main, you might order the humor-

ously named Tyolka na metyolke (Cow on a Broomstick) — thin veal strips as tender as duck served with baked apples (510 rubles), or be adventurous and go with the crucian carp from the Kobyaisky district of the republic of Sakha (490 rubles).

Located in a large basement, Stroganina Bar also features a store with fish and vegetable preserves and a delivery service.

+7 (499) 110 6845

stroganinabar.ru

19/1 Lubyansky Proyezd.

Metro Kitai-Gorod

NEWS & OPENINGS



BIGRIB

BigRib

Eat your meaty heart out

BigRib is a paradise for people who love meat and the only place in town specializing in ribs: beef, pork, lamb and veal prepared on the grill, bbq, stewed or smoked to perfection. If you fancy a burger or a rib-eye steak, you can get it, too. The restaurant is decorated like a late 19th century American town and has a proactive staff that gives you just the right amount of attention.

+7 (495) 268 1418

bigrib.ru

75 Sadovnicheskaya Naberezhnaya
Metro Paveletskaya



TABLE

Table

Home cooking that's worth the walk

Table is a new cafe that's less than a 10-minute walk from the Belorusskaya metro station. Table serves all-day breakfast, including sumptuous latkes with poached eggs and lox (380 rubles). Their coffees are good, too, with a flat white costing 220 rubles. There are also sandwiches — try salmon and cheese for 380 rubles — and salads, like a healthy avocado with shrimp that costs 400 rubles. Soon there will be lunch specials, too.

+7 (968) 393 8668

facebook.com/tablecafemoscw

45 Ulitsa Lesnaya. Metro Belorusskaya



KATUSHA

Katusha

Chic Russian sweet shop

Centrally located just round the corner from the bustle of Pushkin Square, this swanky sweet shop and restaurant has replaced the popular pâtisserie Hediard. On sale alongside French favorites such as macarons and éclairs are innovative pastries with a Russian twist. Special occasion approaching? Order a personalized cake or choose from a selection of chocolates and candied fruits.

+7 (495) 629 3288

facebook.com/hediardmoscow

23/1 Ulitsa Bolshaya Dmitrovka.

Metro Pushkinskaya, Tverskaya, Chekhovskaya



BRYUS BAR

Bryus Bar

Vintage-inspired cocktail bar

Walk through an unmarked doorway to enter this retro cocktail den. While Bryus bar has a core drinks menu, the expert mixologists will happily create something bespoke. Hundreds of whisky bottles line the walls, and while seating is scarce, there is a cozy anteroom offering more intimate tables. Order an Old Fashioned, perch at the bar and pretend you're an extra from Mad Men.

+7 (495) 969 7389

facebook.com/brucebar.ru

2/14 Bryusov Pereulok, Bldg. 1.

Metro Okhotny Ryad

Take it and go!

Four pages packed with the best places in Moscow to eat, drink, walk, shop, listen, watch, dance and sightsee. A new walking route and listings every week! **Take it, use it, save it!**



Elena Rusakova, Gagarin district municipal deputy

My favorite spot is the slope of **Sparrow Hills** covered by an old-growth forest that can't be built on due to the danger of landslides. Every now and then there's a plan to build something but it falls through, like last year with the plan to put up the monument to Prince Vladimir. It's best to tour the forest with an expert, who'll show you all the protected plants.



Anna Andreyeva, landscape designer, partner at Alphabet City

My favorite place is the **Moscow State University Botanical Garden**. There are several cool things there, but the best is the alpine garden built with granite from the dismantled Mannerheim line from the 1939-40 Winter War between Finland and the Soviet Union. In spring you can see the Georgian almond tree bloom there.

7. Botanical Gardens

As you stand with your back to the main university building facing the viewing platform, to your left is the "new section" of one of the oldest botanical gardens in Russia. Founded in 1706 in what is now the city center, these new gardens were established when the campus opened in 1953. It is a small oasis of winding paths that open onto a Japanese landscape or a traditional European rose garden, or lead to a hothouse full of tropical flowers. It holds many charms in any season.



Lomonosovsky Prospekt



7

6

5. Viewing Platform on Sparrow Hills

Assuming you make it out of the park, continue along Ulitsa Kosygina until you reach the viewing platform overlooking the city. Here, over 220 meters above a lazy bend in the Moscow River, you can see one of the best views of the city, from Luzhniki Stadium directly across the river and Novodevichy Convent to the left to the skyscrapers of Moscow City. You can also see newlyweds and their entourages posing in front of the view, along with skateboarders, bikers, tourists, flash-mobbers, buskers and families.

6. Moscow State University

After admiring the view of the city, turn around and admire the view behind you: the extraordinary main building of Moscow State University. Built from 1949-1953, this was tallest building outside New York City when it was built and remained the highest building in Europe until 1990. The central tower is 36 stories high, and the complex has more than 5,000 rooms linked by miles of corridors. Although the university has dozens of buildings spread across the campus, this main building has captured the imaginations and hearts of millions of students over the years. Wander around and see all the ornamentation, crests, clocks, and thermometers on the walls — and don't miss the statues of male and female students looking eternally hopefully into the future.

1 Universitetsky Prospekt

Ulitsa Kosygina

5

The Sparrow Hills Celebrate Childhood and Youth High Above the City

By Michele A. Berdy m.berdy@imedia.ru | Illustration by Evgeny Tonkonogy

See some (surprisingly) cool Soviet architecture, one of the tallest buildings in the world, and a mysterious monument in the woods.

1



The Sparrow Hills

5-hour walk

9



Artemy Troitsky, freelance journalist, music critic and DJ

One of the most interesting buildings is the former **Pioneer Palace**, their HQ in the Soviet Union. It's a brilliant example of early '60s Soviet architecture, built during the period of Khrushchev's thaw and space-travel euphoria, with mosaics depicting satellites and futuristic cities.



4. Monument to the Oath of Alexander Herzen and Nikolai Ogaryov

Turn left on Ulitsa Kosygina and cross Prospekt Vernadskogo. Ahead of you are the Sparrow Hills, one of the seven hills of Moscow. If you enter the parkland that slopes down to the river, you may stumble across an odd monument: a stone platform with a stone column divided in two. Here in 1827, on this very spot, the young writers-to-be Alexander Herzen and Nikolai Ogaryov watched the sun set over the city and vowed with the passion of adolescence to sacrifice their lives in the battle for a better life. In 1978 this monument was erected in honor of that vow. Since then, people have stumbled across it while not looking for it and never found when they are looking for it. It may be a portal to another world. Find it if you dare.



4



3. Moscow State Palace of Child and Youth Creativity

Continue to walk down Prospekt Vernadskogo, and on the other side of Universitetsky Prospekt is a vast park dominated by a huge mosaic-decorated building. This is the awkwardly named Moscow State Palace of Child and Youth Creativity. It is usually still known by its original name: the Palace of Young Pioneers. Built in 1962, it is a fine example of modern Soviet architecture — as if it had been designed by communist Mad Men. Walk around to see the mosaics, brickwork, and other mid-century ornamentation on the buildings. And it's still a great place for kids with over 1,000 sports, creative, scientific and other classes and groups.

Ulitsa Kosygina

3



Universitetsky Prospekt

Prospekt Vernadskogo

2. Natalia Sats Children's Musical Theater

Continue to walk away from the metro station. The next building is the Children's Musical Theater. The original theater was founded by a pioneer in children's theater, Natalia Sats, in 1921. In 1936, she asked composer Sergei Prokofiev to write music that would allow her to introduce children to all the instruments in the orchestra. He produced "Peter and the Wolf" and the two of them made musical history. Alas, a year later Sats was arrested for being the mistress of a purged army general and sent to labor camps for five years; she was rehabilitated only in 1953. This theater, built in 1979, was at the time a revolutionary space — designed for children in every way, playful, colorful and filled with birds, plants, aquariums and artwork, with actors who come out to play with the children before the show. It remains the finest children's musical theater in the country.

5 Prospekt Vernadskogo

1. Circus

This walk begins at the Universitet metro station. Cross Lomonosovsky Prospekt and head through a pleasant square towards the Big Top. This is the "new" building of the Moscow Circus, built in 1971 and recently newly restored and revitalized. It's bigger than the old circus in the city center, with magically changing rings made of earth, ice and water. If you are a circus fan, come and bring your kids for big cats, glitter, dancing dogs and horses, acrobats, aerial artists, clowns and much more. Stop by the ticket booth while you're here.

7 Prospekt Vernadskogo





Pauline Jacquemin Cuny, lawyer

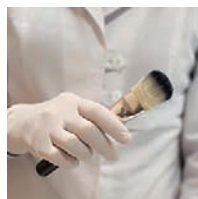
In the romantic Patriarch's Ponds neighborhood is **Calicano restaurant**. The relaxed atmosphere, nice hipster waiters and good American/Mexican food (special mention for the falafel burger) will make your time enjoyable for sure.



CHOP-CHOP

Get Your Groom On

Grooming shouldn't be a mundane chore, but an oasis of calm in an otherwise stressful city existence. An opportunity for the modern gentleman to take some me time. With Defender of the Fatherland Day nigh, we've picked out the top spots in Moscow that offer men a chance to get away from it all and pamper themselves.



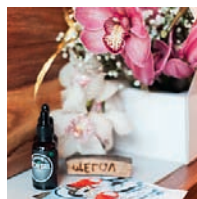
GB BARBERS

GB Barbers

For the discerning gentleman

GB Barbers is the perfect spot for the man who has everything except a clean shave. Decadently furnished to give the feel of an old-school British gentlemen's club, and you can practically smell pipe tobacco when you enter. Think green leather chairs, dark wooden furniture and expertly trained barbers. GB offers the full works, so if you fancy a shave, facial and even a shoeshine before that business meeting about your new property acquisition, this won't disappoint.

jpbars.ru
10 Ulitsa Vozdvizhenka.
Metro Arbatskaya



SCHEGOL

Schegol

Hipster hangout with polished service

Schegol is the kind of place adolescent boys dream of frequenting one day, when their voices have dropped and coolness is within reach. This is not just a barbershop, but a hipster community where you can drink complimentary whisky and shoot the breeze as you get your trim. Teak wooden mirrors, a mint green floor and inviting barber chairs create a welcoming but laid-back vibe. This leaves you free to luxuriate as your hair needs are tended to. Trainee cuts are also available at discounted prices.

schegol.co
9 Maly Kislovsky Pereulok.
Metro Arbatskaya



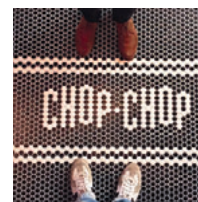
ALASKA

Alaska

No nonsense barbershop

The saying goes that if someone is approaching you with a razor, they'd better be a professional. This is certainly the case at Alaska, which offers slick haircuts and wet shaves in a no-frills setting. The industrial decor and exposed brick walls look like they'd draw in a rugged type of man, but they welcome everyone from 5-year-old boys and their banker dads to dancers with man buns. If you like looking groomed but don't enjoy being overly-cosseted, Alaska is for you.

alaskaman.ru
Various locations



CHOP-CHOP

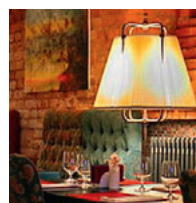
Chop-Chop

Traditional barber with a modern edge

Moscow-based barbershop Chop-Chop has proven so popular it now has franchises across Russia and beyond. Purportedly taking its original inspiration from Los Angeles barbershop Baxter Finley, U.S. influences are apparent in the vintage but clean-cut decor, California cool soundtrack and high-end grooming products. With its free Wi-Fi, unlimited back copies of GQ and a killer espresso machine, you might easily find yourself coming for a trim but staying for the afternoon.

chopchop.me/en/city/moscow
Various locations

4 Men's Night Out Destinations



WHISKY ROOMS

Whisky Rooms

Whisky-lover's paradise

A secluded spot in the city center entices drinkers with a remarkable whisky selection — over 200 varieties from a half dozen countries, to be enjoyed in several different rooms that are vaguely reminiscent of an English men's club: lots of exposed brick, comfy chairs, billiards and book-lined walls. Choose from a menu of delectable and hearty dishes made with whisky, complementing whisky, or satisfying a whisky-induced appetite. Or just drink great whisky.

+7 (495) 629 1737
whiskyrooms.ru
8 Leontyevsky Pereulok. Metro Tverskaya



BISON STEAK HOUSE

Bison Steak House

A (m)eatery for "real men"

There's a reason Bison is the top Moscow restaurant on TripAdvisor, and it's not trolls. Their five sites cook up close to 25,000 steaks a month, and their well-trained waitstaff will help you choose from a carefully selected range of cuts to suit your taste. Right now the chain has a special to cover all the bases — it's crab month. Snap Kamchatka crab legs while your meat-eating other enjoys a meaty feast.

bisonsteak.ru
Various locations



BOBBY DAZZLER

Bobby Dazzler

Friendly sports bar

Bobby Dazzler is Moscow's pretty good approximation of an English pub, where "football — aka soccer — is religion." Great brews, decent pub grub, sports on huge screens, live music and even Robert Burns Night complete with single malt and haggis. Relaxed, informal and decked out in all the attire of a real English gastropub, Bobby Dazzler is the place to go for an evening that will flash by in a blur of beer, hearty food and congenial company.

+7 (495) 608 0383
bobbydazzler.ru
7/13 Kostyansky Pereulok.
Metro Turgenevskaya, Chistiye Prudy,
Sretensky Bulvar



KUZNETSKY MOST 20

Kuznetsky Most 20

Eat, drink and play

If you've got a game-lover and clothing fanatic in the family, head over to Kuznetsky Most 20. Part of Moscow's hipster scene, this chic cafe and restaurant gives you the option of playing backgammon or chess while you eat. After dinner, play a game of ping pong. The vegetarian menu has been meticulously put together, offering energizing meals and juices to spur on your competitive streak. A white brick interior with driftwood furnishings makes Kuznetsky Most 20 an ideal spot for a relaxed daytime brunch or lively evening dinner.

+7 (495) 623 7888
facebook.com/Kuznetsky.Magazin.Moscow
20 Ulitsa Kuznetsky Most.
Metro Kuznetsky Most

The Moscow Times
CONFERENCES

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“In Russia 5% of cancer patients go to ‘magic healers’ instead of doctors.” **Valery Kuvakin**, Moscow State University professor.



43%

of Russians believed in the ability to predict the future in 1990, VTsIOM showed.

55%

of Russians now believe the future can be predicted.



In the 2000s, the State Duma almost allocated budget funds for Viktor Petrik’s water filters, which turned out to be a bogus invention.



← The Houdini Award team ensures that experiments designed to challenge psychics are scientifically accurate.

→ Iolanta Voronova wasn’t discouraged after failing her Houdini Award test, saying it failed to reflect her abilities.



← Continued from Page 6

tested five nominees. So far, unsurprisingly enough, no one has passed the preliminary stage.

Who Wants a Million?

In the three experiments The Moscow Times observed in late December, none of the nominees came close to success. Unanimously, however, they blamed everything but themselves for the failure.

In the first experiment, the self-proclaimed psychic Iolanta Voronova had claimed she could say who different objects belong to just by looking at them. An experiment was set up where she was asked to return 12 passports to their owners — male volunteers — without opening the documents. The volunteers were present during the experiment and wore the exact same T-shirts. Voronova, a flamboyant woman in her 40s, was allowed to touch both them and their passports.

She wasn’t right about a single passport, but Voronova had an excuse. “The participants were too similar and there were no drastic events in their lives,” she said.

Another two experiments dealt with death. The first nominee, a gloomy young woman named Zlata Dmitruk, claimed she was a medium and could see dead people; the second one, an abrupt lady in her 50s, Tatyana Ikayeva, said she could see the past and the future with her Tarot cards.

Both of them were offered pictures of 10 different people and a list of situations in which they died. The mediums were supposed to be right about at least five cases in order to successfully pass the experiment. Again, both of them failed, and were wrong about all 10 cases.

“The test was incorrect,” a disappointed Dmitruk said after the experiment. “How am I supposed to know whether a man hanged himself or shot himself? I just see suicide,” she said. Ikayeva said she agreed with Dmitruk.

Panchin has little time for such explanations. “The fact that these ‘psychics’ couldn’t win the million shows exactly why faith in paranormal abilities is groundless,” he said.

Scientific Standards

There are two categories of pseudoscience, says Sergeyev from the RAS’s commission. The first one is the one packaged and “sold to the public,” and includes psychics, “magical” medications and “supernatural” devices. The second involves the system of science itself. “A significant part of research in Russia is falsified or just delusional,” he said.

And here’s where the “Rooter” project comes in. Launched in 2008 by Mikhail Gelfand, a prominent biologist, Rooter tests standards at scientific journals. It started when Gelfand decided to send a bogus article, composed entirely by a computer program, to a scientific journal and see if they would publish it.

The benign experiment quickly evolved into a full-blown scandal. The scientific journal published the article with “minor corrections,” and failed to notice an all-too revealing dedication Gelfand had inserted in it. “The imaginary author of the article thanked myself, Mikhail Gelfand, for pointing out the problem of scientific magazines publishing random articles,” Gelfand said.

The scientific journal that published the article was soon

excluded from the Education Ministry-affiliated Supreme Review Board’s list of recommended magazines.

Gelfand says pseudoscience continues to be a serious problem in Russia. “It is prevalent in three areas: in sensationalist lies like belief in UFOs; in clerical teaching about evolution and so on; and within government, when the state bases engineering developments on bogus research.” All three areas are dangerous for the country, Gelfand says — “dangerous in different ways, but dangerous nonetheless.”

History Wars

On the governmental level, pseudoscience has infiltrated not only engineering developments, but the humanities as well. “Over the past decade the state tried to create its own history,” says historian Nikita Sokolov. He is one of the founders of the Free Historic Society, an organization advocating purely scientific approaches to Russian history.

“Politicians are now using history to push their own agenda,” Sokolov told The Moscow Times. “They are creating this image of Russia that has its own special path, that has always been a fortress under siege, surrounded by enemies.”

A siege mentality is useful to politicians, Sokolov says, since it helps establish political conformity and encourages people to give up their rights. From a historic point of view it is “bogus,” however: “Russia has never been a fortress, it has always collaborated with its neighbors, and to that end it is no different from any other country,” Sokolov said.

The attempt to rewrite Russia’s history by banning old schoolbooks and introducing new, ideological ones should have caused an uproar in the historical community, continues Sokolov. There was, however, nothing of the sort. At least part of the reason was that there “is no historical community” as such in Russia.

Sokolov is especially critical of the role played by Vladimir Medinsky, Russia’s culture minister and a historian by education.

In 2015 Medinsky declared that Russians should treat “epic Soviet heroes ... as canonized saints.” And anyone who expressed doubt was essentially in the business of “betraying the memory and deeds of ancestors.”



Medinsky’s words came in response to renewed questioning of the role of Panfilov’s “28 guardsmen” in the World War II defense of Moscow. Archivists have argued, however, that the episode was a fantasy of Soviet journalism, published for propaganda purposes.

Sokolov’s Free History Society issued its own statement, condemning Medinsky of being “unprofessional,” “full of managerial pride,” and “bureaucratic arrogance.” “It is a historian’s duty to establish the historic truth based on original sources, no matter what the political situation is,” the statement read.

The society, which emphasizes its apolitical nature, monitors history teaching and comments made by politicians and government officials. In addition to this, it produces numerous lectures and seminars.

“The demand for our lectures is very promising. Even if there are 30 people present at the lecture, we know that 2,000 people are watching it live on the Internet, and another 100,000 will watch it later on YouTube,” Sokolov said. “People long for high quality information these days. The television just doesn’t do it anymore.”

Whack-a-Mole?

There is no simple answer to the question of how to tackle pseudoscience most effectively, says Sergeyev from the RAS’s commission on pseudoscience. “We can’t just ban it,” he says. “To do that would be to infringe on freedom of speech and freedom of beliefs.”

Attempts to ban certain strands of pseudoscience would, in any case, probably cause them to re-emerge under another brand. “It would become an endless game of whack-a-mole,” Sergeyev added.

But scientists admit they face an uphill task in dissuading pseudoscience believers. In particular, the extrasensory believers surveyed by The Moscow Times suggested they were unlikely to be swayed by any argument.

“I knew a girl who could say exactly what someone was doing just by looking at a photo of them,” Yekaterina Zemina, a 27-year-old Muscovite, told The Moscow Times. “There are unexplored things in this world, and pretty much nothing can convince me otherwise,” she said.

Natalya Malinovskaya, a resident of St. Petersburg, said that it was only a matter of time before the mainstream would accept extrasensory abilities as fact. “People were once skeptical about a lot of things including the fact that the Earth was round and turned around the Sun,” she said. “Now this is a scientifically proven fact — and I’m positive extrasensory abilities will be too,” she said.

Despite the efforts of activists like Sergeyev, pseudoscience is playing a greater role than ever in the lives of Russians. A recent poll by state-run VTsIOM reported that 55 percent of Russians now believe in the ability to foresee the future — compared to 43 percent in 1990. 48 percent believe in magic in general, a full 11 percentage points more than in 1990. **TMT**

Mikhail Gelfand, a prominent Russian scientist, is concerned with the dangerous spread of pseudo-science throughout Russian society.



"The level of sport development here and in Europe is like in Zimbabwe."
Yury Kushnir, head of the Karelian Republic's football federation.

15

teams took part in Russia's 2015 football championship.

60,000

people make up Russia's American football audience, according to First&Goal.



Russia's "Moscow Patriots" won the children's and youth league Pop Warner Super Bowl competition in the United States in 2000.

THE WORD'S WORTH

He Who Speaks Bad, Stays Long

Суконный язык: wooden language



By **Michele A. Berdy**
Moscow-based translator and interpreter, author of "The Russian Word's Worth" (Glas), a collection of her columns.

How hard is Russian? Really hard. So hard that a kid who is гуманитарий (someone interested in the humanities) almost flunks his school Russian test. He now has репетитор по русскому (Russian language tutor). If this well-spoken, native Russian speaker is двоечник по русскому языку (a D-student in Russian), what does that make me?

There aren't enough letters in the alphabet to describe me.

But there are lots of ways in Russian to talk about someone who speaks badly. Sometimes in Russian there is no difference between poor diction and poor word choice. For example, плохо говорящий (literally, badly speaking) can refer to a child who is picking up language skills slowly, someone with poor diction, or someone who is inarticulate.

Невнятно (unintelligibly) might mean that someone with poor pronunciation: Стихи он читает с трудом, как будто воздуха ему не хватает, несколько согласных произносит совсем невнятно (He recites poetry badly, as if he was running out of breath, and he pronounces several consonants indistinctly.) Or it can refer to poor clarity of thought, like a boss who shouts: Я что, невнятно сказал? Находясь на работе, выполняйте указания генерального директора, я вам плачу за это! (Didn't I make myself clear? While you're at work, you carry out the boss's orders. That's what I pay you for!)

Another word for verbal stumbling is нечленораздельно, a mouthful of a word that aptly means "not making the syllables distinct." You might find this word in scholarly articles: Все другие гоминиды могли издавать лишь нечленораздельные звуки (All the other hominids can only utter inarticulate sounds.) Or in a romantic novel: Она рыдала, крепко меня обняв, и в промежутках между всхлипываниями нечленораздельно жаловалась. (She sobbed, hugging me tight, and in between weeping she mumbled complaints.)

To make it clear that someone has good diction but bad thought processes, you can use the phrase не может связать двух слов (can't put two words together). This may be temporary: От страха не могу связать двух слов (When I'm scared I can't put one word after the other.)

Stilted speech is суконный язык (literally, as stiff as heavy felt — сукно). Officials often speak in казённый язык — "government-issued language," aka bureaucratese.

Russians pay a lot of attention to how their leaders speak — are they косноязычный (inarticulate) or красноречивый (articulate)? These two extremes have a nice symmetry to them: косноязычный — speaking haltingly, being tongue-tied, from коснеть (to be slow or muddle along); красноречивый — speaking beautifully, from красный (beautiful).

A recent study of public figures in Russia showed: Самыми грамотными оказались федеральные министры, а самыми косноязычными — губернаторы. (The most grammatical were federal-level ministers, and the most inarticulate were governors.) But at even the top level: Они совершают одну ошибку за 10 минут, а главы регионов — у них ляпы каждые 2,5 минуты (They make a mistake every ten minutes, but regional heads make a gaffe every 2.5 minutes.)

Another scholar believes that the leaders who stay the longest speak the worst: Все "коснеющие" лидеры говорили плохо: Сталин, Хрущев, Брежнев (All the leaders who held onto their posts spoke badly — Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev.)

So if you want to have a fast turnover at the top, vote for the candidate who speaks the best. **TMT**



The offensive line of the Moscow Spartans, with their assistant coach Keary. The players work on tactical combinations at practice — improving their game strategy and teamwork. Most players joined out of curiosity and fell in love with the sport.

Meet Moscow's Quarterbacks

By **Vasily Kolotilov** v.kolotilov@imedia.ru | Photos by **Albina Shaimuratova**

The political situation has not hurt the game's popularity.

Huffing and puffing, half a dozen heavyside men in scratched helmets and battered protective gear sprint around, shouting buzzwords in heavily accented English. A thin, cleancut man in his early 20s stands out from the crowd. With an arm gesture, he stops play, takes hold of one of the biggest men, and begins to head-butt his chest. "Set!" he shouts — this causes the rest of the men to crouch down — "Now grab your opponent, smash him with your mask ... and HIT!"

The men bulldoze into each other. Some of them bounce off each other, some fall down. The coach is pleased, nods his head, and the game continues.

Keary Iarussi, 23, is assistant coach of the "Moscow Spartans," one of five American football teams based in Moscow. A former U.S. high school football player, Keary is the only American coach working full-time in the Russian game.

"It's wrong to compare the two countries' games," says Keary when we talk once the training session is over. "Football in the United States is 100 percent professional; Here it is 100 percent amateur."

It doesn't take an expert to notice the differences: the speed of play, tactical simplicity and the physical fitness of players. Keary enjoys sharing his football knowledge. "The

stocky guys are o-linemen, and you have to be heavy for that — I was fat myself when I was playing," he says.

The biggest difference between football in the United States and Russia is the game speed, he says. In Russia it's much slower due to a lack of strategic and tactical skills. "All this has nothing to do with players' attitude — they're very professional and enthusiastic" Keary adds.

Keary joined the team last November and has worked hard to instruct the players. He speaks good Russian, having studied it at university, but admits the language barrier sometimes interferes with communication.

"The players here have got their own slang, mixing English and Russian words, so we sometimes barely understand each other," Keary says. "When I say, for instance, 'pull' they just stare at me, blank-eyed."

When asked why he decided to coach the team, Keary says he "just loves the game," and does not intend to quit playing it while he's in Russia. He has been studying applied political studies at Moscow's Higher School of Economics since November, and plans to stay in the country for several years.

A gray-haired man passes to Keary, and shakes his hand. "How are my lads today?"

Ups and Touchdowns

Alexei Geets is head coach of the Spartans. A former track and field athlete, he started his American football career in 1990. At the start, few knew what they were doing, he says. There was a deficit of specialized equipment, so players made do with whatever they could find: motorcycle helmets and hockey protective gear were popular stop-gaps.

The following four years were the best for American football in Russia. "Businessmen appeared with lots of fast money to burn, and they could afford sponsoring a team," says Geets. But boom soon turned to bust, and the sport has survived without substantial sponsors or government support since 1994.

Though the Russian game is unashamedly



Keary Iarussi is working as the assistant coach of the "Moscow Spartans" while studying at Moscow's Higher School of Economics. He was a high school football player and wanted to remain involved in the sport.



"The biggest obstacle is that the sport is expensive and unrecognized by Russians." **Yevgeny Chekhov**, Russia's football federation CEO.

\$1M

offered to the NFL's Tim Tebow to play two games.



"Moscow Bears" were the first American football team in Russia — formed in 1989 of rugby players, wrestlers and track & field athletes.

1,000-2,500

Monthly entry fee, in rubles, for Russian football players.



The Moscow Spartans practice three times a week during the off-season on a soccer field. There are few available practice grounds in Moscow and the cost can be prohibitive, particularly as the players have to fund the sport themselves.

amateur, there have been notable successes for the national team. In 2002 Russia won a gold medal at the European American Football Championship, and in 2003 earned third place. These were the last victories on the international level, but American football in Russia has since continued to evolve at the club level.

There are 20 teams expected to compete in 2016 in the Federation of American Football, the top level of competition in Russia. A further dozen or so teams train at the lower levels.

The main problem for the sport today has not changed from 15 years ago — a lack of cash. Playing field hire, medical supplies, kit costs, balls, and other operational expenses all add up. On average, the cost of running an American football team in Russia is 100,000 rubles (\$1,300) a month. Even when sponsors are found, they rarely cover all of the costs; when the Moscow Spartans benefited from one, it covered no more than 10 percent of their yearly expenses.

As a result, the sport is almost entirely sponsored by the players themselves. Geets says he is not optimistic about the situation changing soon. "American football is not an Olympic sport," he says. "The bureaucrats will only spend money when they know it might win them a medal."

And in recent years, another problem has emerged — politics.

On the Defensive

In September 2013, an unusual letter appeared in the Russian media.

"Moscow isn't the right place for American cruelty," ran the headline. It continued: "Russia has always battled aggression and expansion from the West ... We don't want our children to be playing a game based on fanatical fury and destruction ... It's not too late to stop our patriotic, nation-oriented citizens turning into typical Americanized consumers, with their advanced avaricious reflexes and pointless aggression."

The letter was written in response to the decision to stage a semi-final of Russia's American football championship in one of Moscow's major stadiums. Some suspect that the letter was inspired by a soccer team that wanted to use the stadium instead. But it coincided with a time of general demonization of the United States in Russian society as a whole.

According to recent figures from the independent Levada Center pollster, some 73 percent of Russians now see the United States as a "hostile state." The shift in opinion has had an effect on various fields of Russian life, and the American football community is no exception.

Keary says he has experienced the change in the attitude firsthand. Even in the American football community,

people have become much more politicized, he says.

"Nobody offends me directly of course. But some really like to turn any conversation to politics. They try to catch me — by starting an argument about black rights, for example," he says. "It doesn't feel serious, but it's still quite unpleasant."

The icy relations between Russia and the United States have had organizational consequences too. Artemiy Rogov, 26, the team manager of the Moscow Spartans, is the man responsible for talking to bureaucrats every day. It's part of his job to look for training grounds and sponsors.

"Things have changed dramatically, he says: "Now, when a bureaucrat hears the word 'American,' for example, he is automatically inclined to say 'nyet.' And we see it on other levels too. Even ordinary Russians — they see us training and shout that we should be playing something more patriotic."

But for Rogov, the nationality of his favorite sport is clear — it's Russian. "Americans invented the game, but football is all about the spirit of the collective, a Russian concept, he says. "We sacrifice a lot to the game too, and what could be more Russian than sacrifice?"

"It's absurd to tie us to the United States and to politics just because of the word 'American,'" he continues. "I say 'f*ck politics, let's play football.'" **TMT**

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THE LAW ON PERSONAL DATA: WHAT HAPPENED AND HOW BUSINESS IS AFFECTED

KEY TOPICS

- Roskomnadzor on initiatives to improve Russian personal data protection legislation
- Protection of information stored and processed in the cloud. Functional solutions and their effectiveness
- The economic threat to business: the most common methods of fraud prevention and counteraction
- Payment systems and personal data. Localization of Russian billing for international merchants trading online

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Participation in the project

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Tips for Life

The Moscow Times
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enjoy Moscow.



GADGETS

Can I get English-language e-books in Moscow?

TMT: You mean, legally? Yes, in Moscow there are now several online bookstores that sell some. Ozon.ru has a few of them, mostly dictionaries and a few classics. Litres.ru also has a small selection, from "Pride and Prejudice" to "How to Make a Scientific Speech." And if you read in Russian or want dictionaries, the Moskva online bookshop has a great selection

of Russian-language books available in nearly a dozen formats for Haali and Sony Readers, iPhones, Windows mobile, Microsoft reader and even Kindle.

But the best place is the American Center in Moscow, which has a huge library of hundreds of titles that can be borrowed in formats for virtually any device. The books range from contemporary and classical literature and kid-lit to philosophy and business, and you can request books not yet available. Anyone who lives in Russia and signs up can borrow up to three books at a time for a period of three weeks; you can also renew them. The only caveat: Only works by American authors are available. For more information and a registration link, see amc.ru.



OFFICIALS

What's a pool spravka and how do I get one?

TMT: Remove the document and you remove the man, as it says in Bulgakov's "The Master and Margarita." If you're a newbie to Moscow you may yet be blissfully unaware of the cogs of bureaucracy that keep the country in motion.

A spravka is any kind of official document. To use most swimming pools in Russia, you will need a spravka to attest that you are dis-

ease-free and won't infect the pool and other swimmers. Do you need to see a doctor to attain this? Officially — yes, in reality — no. While some swimming pools allow you to obtain a spravka on site after a once-over by the pool doc, if you want to avoid lines, hassle and the wrath of the angry babushka you're holding up, there is a simple solution.

Pop onto one of the many online spravka sites like spbas.ru or cpravki.ru. Enter your e-mail address, phone number and passport details, then set a time and a place to meet the courier. Hand over your money (usually no more than 500 rubles) and receive your spravka. It's really as simple as that. If you're not a Russian speaker, ask a friend to help you out since most sites have limited English translation.

Classifieds

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The MIDAS Theatre presents Life, Rehearsed, a comico-tragedy by modern Australian playwright Peter Heavenheld. The show is focused on the life of Daniel Nash, a London-based actor who is married to two wives at the same time without them having an idea of each other's existence. Nash strives to fulfil his passion for proper tragic roles despite the whirlpool of circumstances he might or might not get out of. Written by Peter Heavenheld. Directed by Egor Gavrilin. Starring: Jonathan Be



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What's On

The Moscow Times
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See www.themoscowtimes.com
for more listings.



KIDZANIARU

KidZania, Where a Day's Work Is Child's Play

What do you want to be when you grow up? This is the question that KidZania, a lavishly realized indoor city for children, asks the miniature workers who enter its doors. A worldwide franchise, it has just opened its first Russian branch at Moscow's Aviapark shopping center.

KidZania provides an "educational entertainment experience" where children aged 4-14 can try their hand at professions ranging from hairdressing to television production, and everything in between.

The first branch in Russia looks every inch the Lilliputian counterpart of an upmarket Moscow. Children can visit the beauty salon, catch a show at a scaled-down replica of the Bolshoi Theater or buy an ice cream in the city square. Brands like LG, Baskin-Robbins and Russian supermarket chain Perekryostok have come on board as partners, offering children the chance to become secret agents, confectioners and cashiers respectively.

Katya, 5, has come to KidZania with her grandmother and older sister. "I really like it here. My favorite part was learning to pull out a tooth," she says enthusiastically. Other children have chosen to work as firefighters, and speed past in a miniature, but highly realistic, fire engine. Later this year

a space center will open with the support of the Russian Space Agency so kids can experience life as an astronaut.

KidZania aims to be inclusive for those with special needs, and worked with the Naked Hearts Foundation to design an accessible and safe area for children to enjoy. Supervisors who facilitate role-play in the city have also received training to enable them to accommodate children with special needs into the KidZania experience.

Parents with children under seven years old must stay onsite but are welcome to relax in the mezzanine parents' lounge. Those with children over seven and are free to leave them with the KidZania staff and visit the shops in Aviapark. There are several KidZania sessions daily which last four hours, with prices ranging from 1,200 rubles on a weekday to 1,500 rubles at the weekend.

KidZania is already hugely popular with children and adults around the world. If the enthusiastic smiles of those in the Aviapark franchise are anything to go by, the Moscow branch will be no different.

kidzania.ru

Aviapark, 4 Khodyn'sky Bulvar

For an expanded version, see themoscowtimes.com.

Long Weekend Entertainment



BRONEBOT.RU

EVENT Robot Wars Battle of the machines

What better way to spend your evening than watching incredible hulks of metal battle annihilate one another? Bronebot season will kick off on Sunday with a much anticipated robot-battle between Britain and Russia. The international competition is judged by an independent panel on criteria such as the robots' aggression, damage to the enemy and overall strategy. The 3-day event will feature over 30 battles and expects to attract 40,000 spectators.

Olimpiyskiy Sports Complex
bronebot.ru
16 Olimpiyskiy Prospekt, Bldg. 1.
Metro Prospekt Mira
Feb. 21-23



SEBASTIAO SALGADO

EXHIBITION Sebastião Salgado Uncharted territory

"Genesis" is the latest project from internationally-renowned photographer Sebastião Salgado. He has spent the last eight years traveling the world and documenting the wildlife and landscapes he encounters. The exhibition, which showcases remote regions as yet untouched by humankind, aims to highlight the environmental issues we are currently facing as a planet. The black and white images have already toured widely and are currently on display at Moscow's Mouravieff-Apostol Museum.

Mouravieff-Apostol House and Museum
ma-housemuseum.ru
23/9 Staraya Basmanaya Ulitsa, Bldg. 1
Metro Kurskaya
Until May 17.



GABRIADZE

THEATER Ramona Locomotive love

Ramona, like all of the best romances, tells the story of two star-crossed lovers. The twist? They are steam engines. Prepare to be dazzled by the innovative and logic-defying effects of the skillful puppeteers in this charming marionette performance at the Museum of Moscow. A wonderful evening of alternative theater from Rezo Gabriadze's puppet theatre.

Museum of Moscow
mosmuseum.ru
2 Zubov'sky Bulvar. Metro Park Kultury
Feb. 18-21



GABRIADZE

THEATER Stalingrad Thrilling puppetry

A second offering from Gabriadze. Stalingrad is not so much a dramatization of the battle but a sweeping tale of life's eccentricities told by an astounding lineup of puppets. Surreal to the extreme, we wouldn't recommend attending if you're a stickler for historical accuracy. A unique interpretation of events brought to life by a dazzling production.

Museum of Moscow
mosmuseum.ru
2 Zubov'sky Bulvar.
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Feb. 22-28.

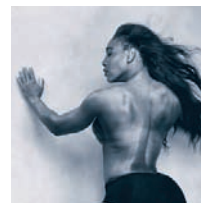


BATTLE SANI VK

EVENT Sledding Tournament A celebration of the weird and the wonderful

On Tuesday Sokolniki Park will play host to its fourth annual Battle of the Sleds. The event celebrates the wacky creations of sledding enthusiasts, allowing them to put their innovative designs to the test. Although it's too late to enter, you can enjoy watching participants slide down the run on their inventions at breakneck speed. The icing on the cake? This year's competition is intergalactic-themed.

Sokolniki Park
park.sokolniki.com
1/1 Sokolnichesky Val.
Metro Sokolniki
Feb. 23.



ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

EXHIBITION Photo Biennale See the world anew

The Multimedia Art Museum (MAMM) just kicked off the 2016 Moscow Biennale of Photography. The event will be taking place over the next seven months with dozens of shows at various locations throughout the city. Over the weekend, check out three shows that span the centuries at MAMM. Start with works by William Carrick and John MacGregor, pioneers in ethnographic photography, whose pictures are collected here in "The Russian Empire: 1860-1870." Next, see life under the Bolsheviks in a show of Mikhail Smodor's works, called "A Regional Town of Galich: 1900-1930." And end your day at the exhibition of the 43rd Pirelli calendar, this year an unexpected series portraits of powerful women done by Annie Leibovitz.

MAMM
mamm-mdf.ru
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