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It's a Brave New World

Pages 8-9

No Pardon for Sentsov

The Kremlin will not pardon jailed Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov, who has been on a hunger strike for 37 days seeking the release of what he says are more than 60 Ukrainian political prisoners held in Russia. Sentsov is serving a 20-year sentence in Russia on charges of plotting what Moscow says are terrorist attacks in Crimea after it was annexed by Russia in 2014. A number of high-profile figures including writer Stephen King have called on the Kremlin to release Sentsov. "Public resonance can in no way affect the court's decision which has already entered into force," Kremlin spokesman Dmitri

try Peskov was cited as saying by Interfax on Tuesday. Earlier this month Vladimir Putin said he had "not yet thought about" exchanging Sentsov for Russian citizens held in Ukraine. "You do know that there's a pardoning procedure initiated by the convict himself," Peskov added, suggesting that the request for a pardon had to come from Sentsov. Sentsov's lawyer Dmitry Dinze said he planned to visit the Crimean film director on Thursday to discuss asking Putin for clemency. "I don't know how he'll respond," he told the Govorit

Moskva radio station. According to Yekaterina Mtsiturdze, the head of Russia's Federal Agency on Culture and Cinematography and one of 12 signatories of a petition addressed to Putin for Sentsov's release, the request was based on humanitarian grounds. "Let this letter be interpreted as a humanitarian, rather than a political statement, which is intended to save a person's life," RBC cited her as saying. Meanwhile, four activists were detained on Monday for handing out English, French and Russian-language #FreeSentsov leaflets to World Cup fans near the Kremlin.




Iranian Women Take on Stadium Ban at World Cup

BY DAVID COX @DCWRITER89

Having last recorded a World Cup victory in 1998, the thousands of Iranian fans who have traveled to Russia to get behind their team are cheering more in hope than expectation. But for the Iranian women in their contingent, just being there holds a far greater significance. For them, simply taking their places inside the stadiums is worth as much as a victory itself. Football may be Iran's national sport, but you have to go back to the Tehran derby of Oct. 5, 1981, to find the last time the country's female supporters were allowed to watch it live. Ever since football began to gain popularity in Iran in the early 20th century, men and women had min-

gled freely on the terraces during Iranian league matches. But after the Iranian revolution of 1979, everything changed. "Since Iran became an Islamic state, there have been two important things for the government: opposing Israel, and enforcing restrictions on women such as the hijab and banning them from

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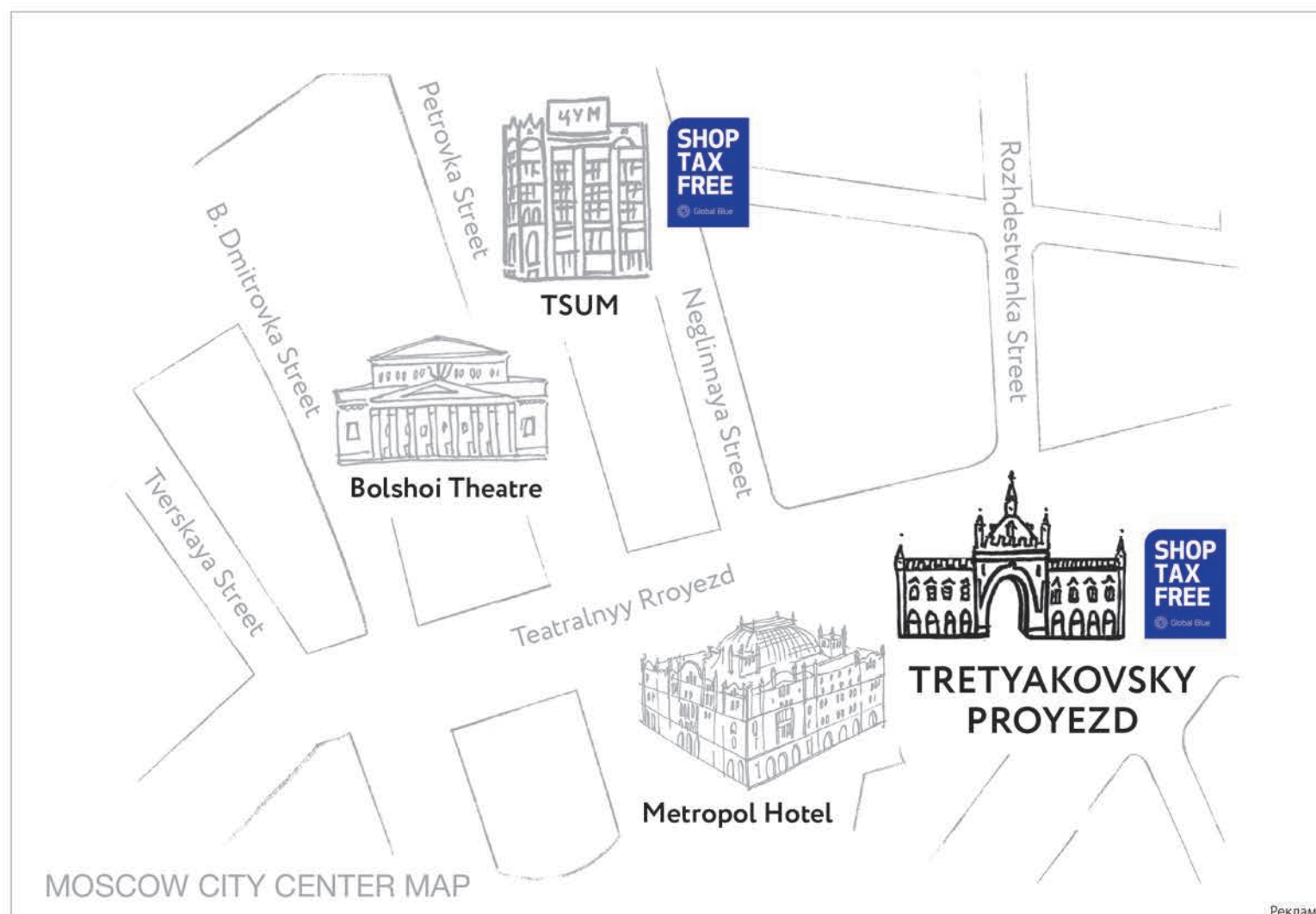
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OPINION

By Andrei Kolesnikov



For Putin, Sport Is a State Affair

The semifinal of the Davis Cup in 1971 was no ordinary tennis encounter. And for Jan Kodes, the coach of Czechoslovakia, defeat was not an option. His team was defending home turf, and the meeting in Prague pit Czechoslovakia against its archrival, the Soviet Union.

For Czechoslovak athletes and coaches at the time, any competition against Soviet athletes was a form of resistance to the invasion of Prague by Warsaw Pact troops three years earlier. Any defeat or victory was seen as a military defeat or victory.

Alexander Metreveli, the Soviet coach, would later recall that he could not understand why he was being held responsible for the Soviet tanks. On that occasion, too, Metreveli won, to deafening court-side silence in Prague. For Kodes, it was a tragedy. He had failed not only himself, but his country, and at a time

when it was under occupation.

And that was just tennis. The main confrontation between the countries was the long-running emotional standoff in hockey.

The puck hit by Czechoslovak defender Jan Suchy in the 33rd minute of the 1969 World Ice Hockey Championship match in Stockholm against the Soviet

Union in particular had symbolic meaning. It was the opening shot, politically speaking, across the bow — or in this case, the goal — of the occupiers. 1-0.

During the match, Czechoslovak player Vaclav Nedomansky, whose skill was infamous in the Soviet Union, gleefully hit Soviet goalie Viktor Zinger's posts hard enough to move them, having yelled something at the Soviet goalkeeper. Poor Zinger was taking the rap for the Soviet tanks and for the humiliation of the Czechoslovaks.

The tradition of sport acting as a kind of hybrid war has seamlessly continued into the post-Soviet period. Look no further than the 2014 doping scandal. Nothing has changed: It is victory at any cost, because victory has political significance. It's soft power, the face of the country, the image of an invincible nation ruled by a wise leader.

Soviet Olympic athletes were taught as much after World War II because the image of the Soviet empire rested on their medal count. It is no coincidence that the Soviet team didn't take part in the Summer Olympics until the Helsinki Games in 1952. They had to be sure their performance wouldn't tarnish Moscow's image. Likewise, the team only competed in the Winter Games in 1956 because the Soviet leadership was certain their hockey team could win. It did.

This attitude was again palpable when the Soviet Union agreed to the Super Series hockey matches against Canadian teams in the NHL only in 1972. Prior to that, the Soviet Union feared defeat.

It made a return at the hockey final of the 2018 Winter Olympics, when Russia nearly lost to Germany. The photomontage put together by one blogger said it all: In the iconic photo of Soviet soldiers raising their banner over the Reichstag in 1945, he replaced the Soviet flag with a hockey stick and a Russian flag.

Sport is a matter of state importance. It's one of the tenets of patriotism. Patriotic films about sporting events are all the rage in Russia. "Legend No. 17" about the 1970s hockey idol Valery Kharlamov and "Going Vertical" about the victory of the Soviet basketball team over the U.S. in the final match of the 1972 Olympics are just two. A lot of what happened was oversimplified and facts were distorted in these films, but they did awaken patriotic sentiment in Russia.

With the 2018 World Cup, perhaps, Russian President Vladimir Putin aims to improve Russia's image using soft power. But in the eyes of the West, his regime is so toxic that attitudes to the country are unlikely to be changed by the football tournament.

The best Putin can do now is to ensure flawless organization, logistics and security. To this end, he has undertaken unprecedented efforts — almost like the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow under Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. After all, that was also a matter of state importance.

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It's victory at any cost. Because victory has political significance. It's soft power, the face of a country.

Mind the Protest

Opposition against a controversial plan to increase the pension age is quickly snowballing, with opposition leader Alexei Navalny on Tuesday calling for protests to be held in 20 Russian cities.

In a post on Instagram, Navalny called the government proposal to delay retirement — from 60 to 65 for men and 55 to 63 for women — the "simple robbery of tens of millions of people under the guise of overdue reform."

"We will all die before reaching retirement," he said in a video alongside his post.

Rallies are scheduled to be held on July 1 in 20 cities across Russia — including Murmansk, Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk — but not in any of the 11 World Cup host cities, Navalny said.

In accordance with a presidential decree, all non-football related mass gatherings and one-man pickets are forbidden during the World Cup without a permit.

Far-left activist Sergei Udaltsov — who spent more than four years behind bars for organizing mass anti-Kremlin protests in 2012 — said on

Twitter he had applied for a permit to stage a separate protest in central Moscow on July 4. He said there would be no matches in the capital that day so the protest would "not disturb fans."

An online petition against the pension age proposal addressed to President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and several other top government figures had collected 2 million signatures by Tuesday.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said Putin "is not involved" in the bill, which is set to pass its first reading in the State Duma as early as July 19.

Even if it is rubber-stamped by the Duma Putin could still veto the bill, but appeals from Russians for him to interfere "are premature," Peskov said.

The Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia — a trade union umbrella organization with more than 20 million members — has also called upon its members to unite in protest of the proposal, the RBC business outlet reports.

Crimea Defiant

Crimean officials struck a defiant tone after the European Union extended its economic sanctions against the peninsula until mid-2019.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 after a disputed referendum, leading to EU and U.S. restrictions on investments, imports, tourist services and exports from the peninsula. The EU has since extended the measures in six-month increments.

On Monday, the Europe-

an Council ruled to extend "the restrictive measures in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by Russia until June 23, 2019."

Crimean politicians aligned with Moscow downplayed the latest move and said that the peninsula's economy would continue to grow despite the restrictions.

"Crimea has lived in these conditions since 2014, meanwhile recording annual economic growth in all sectors,"

Crimea's deputy prime minister Dmitry Polonsky was cited as saying by the RBC business outlet on Tuesday.

Polonsky went on to echo the Kremlin's claim that the punitive measures affect European countries most of all.

"They are in a situation in which they can't admit the ineffectiveness [of the sanctions], because they think that they'll lose face. Meanwhile, they themselves are suffering," he said.

More of the Same

Over half of those questioned for a recent poll by the independent Levada Center said they wanted Vladimir Putin to stay on as president after 2024.

Currently serving his fourth term, Putin has been in power since 2000. Staying on after 2024 would require changing the Constitution, but most Russians do not see any obvious successors.

The Levada poll found that 51 percent of surveyed Russians want to see Putin remain president after 2024. Twenty-seven percent expressed the opposite view.

"People are wary of politicians because they fear change," Lev Gudkov, the head of Levada, told the Vedomosti business daily. "But Putin is seen as someone who will preserve the status quo." Notably, the poll was conducted in late May, before the government announced its unpopular plan to raise the pension age.

Meanwhile, more than half of those questioned, 54 percent, said Russia's relations with the West — which have soured since the annexation of Crimea in 2014 — would improve during Putin's term.

Another 32 percent said they did not expect a thaw in the coming six years.



Football fans have come from far and wide.

Space Visit

Photos of a ghostly trail over the skies of northern Russia shared widely on social media led some local news outlets to report sightings of an "extraterrestrial flying saucer" on Monday.

Russia's Federal Space Agency, Roscosmos, later said it had been the trail of a military navigation satellite sent into space from the Plesetsk Cosmodrome early Sunday.

On Twitter, the Russian Embassy in Britain suggested an alien love of sports. "[M]aybe [the] UFO [is] coming to watch [the] World Cup. Why Not? We welcome all guests."

Driver Repents

The taxi driver who drove his car into a group of pedestrians in central Moscow will remain in detention until Aug. 16, pending trial.

The Kyrgyz man, Chingiz Anarbek, admitted his guilt to a Moscow court on Monday. He said he had been working a twenty-hour shift when he mixed up the accelerator and break pedals.

"I apologize for everything I've done. I had not slept for two days," he was cited as saying by the Interfax news agency. "I had to earn money for my family."

Eight people were injured in the incident, including two Mexican football fans.



Chingiz Anarbek faces two years in prison.

IRAN

Continued from Page 1

watching sporting matches involving men,” said Afsane, a 28-year-old from Isfahan with tickets to see Iran’s clash with Spain.

In the past few years, women’s access to football has increasingly become a highly charged political issue in Iran. Hundreds of female fans demonstrated outside stadiums during Iran’s World Cup qualifying matches and recent international friendlies, demanding that the law be changed, while women across the country have risked often brutal punishment by stealthily sneaking into stadiums disguised as men. Yet the Iranian regime has shown little sign of changing its stance.

“Many of the protesters have been sent to jail, while women caught watching football in disguise can be beaten,” said Sarvenaze, a 31-year-old from Tehran who is attending Iran’s matches against Spain and Portugal in Russia. “There is a popular football program on Iranian television every Thursday. And recently some journalists on the program commented that women should be allowed the right to watch football in the stadiums. Those journalists have never been seen on television since.”

Even though the World Cup is taking places thousands of kilometers from Iran, the mere presence of Iranian female fans in stadiums across Russia is a tense subject back home.

Four years ago, photos of Iranian women at the Brazilian World Cup not wearing the hijab sparked a furor when they went viral on social media, with Islamic hardliners expressing anger that they were clad in Western clothing.

Iranian women traveling to the World Cup this year were warned by parliamentary officials to avoid actions not deemed compatible with the values of the Islamic republic, while Iranian television coverage of the games is heavily censored.

“They will be extremely careful to censor the Iranian girls in the stands, and only show those wearing the hijab,” Afsane told The Moscow Times



Iranian women hope to draw international attention to Tehran’s ban on women in stadiums.

by phone ahead of the tournament. “And officials from the Iranian government who have traveled to Russia will warn us not to appear in public without it.”

In advance of the games, however, some Iranian female fans were secretly planning T-shirts and banners emblazoned with messages protesting against the stadium ban back home. And during Iran’s opening match against Morocco, some of the activists held signs against the policy. They hope the messages will attract international television coverage during Iran’s matches, and encourage FIFA to apply further pressure to the government to change its laws. Indeed, in March, FIFA president

Gianni Infantino directly appealed to Iranian president Hassan Rouhani to reverse the ban.

However, even the smallest of protests come with certain risks. The women are well aware that their presence in Russia is being closely monitored by the Iranian officials who have traveled there too.

“You have to remember that anything is possible in Iran,” Sarvenaze told The Moscow Times by phone. “Women who work for publicly owned companies back home could be punished for this by losing their jobs. The fear of the government is a very real thing. There are many girls who are too afraid even to upload photos of themselves on In-

stagram when they go abroad if they’re not wearing the hijab.”

But by being able to travel to Russia, Afsane and Sarvenaze say they are among the fortunate ones.

Married women in Iran are unable to travel abroad unless they receive their husband’s permission, while single women under 40 can have their passports taken away if their fathers object.

“We are lucky as we come from northern Iran where families are more liberal, but people here are not always so open-minded,” Sarvenaze said. “Many Iranians in the southern parts of the country still think, ‘Oh, sport is not for girls, why would they want to go watch football?’ During the last World Cup, the government even sent orders to cafes and restaurants in many cities to prevent them from screening the games live, to try to forbid men and women from mixing while watching football.”

While a handful of the Iranian female supporters in Russia have traveled outside the country to watch matches in the past, most are experiencing live football for the very first time.

Many are of a generation who were first introduced to the sport two decades ago through the France 1998 World Cup, Iran’s first appearance at the tournament since the 1970s, a spectacle that was celebrated throughout the nation.

But while their emotions are a mix of triumph and relief at finally being able to claim what they describe as a basic human right – holding a ticket to watch a sport that they love – there is a lingering sense of sadness that it’s taken so long to be able to watch the teams they grew up admiring.

As Afsane said, “I have many vivid memories growing up of the times teams like Germany would come to Iran for international matches. My father and brothers would always immediately get tickets, but I could never join them. It was just a dream. Instead, I would watch alone on television. Finally being here is both a sweet and bitter moment for me.”

Feed the Hungry

Regional culture and tourism minister Andrei Yermak on Monday criticized businesses in Kaliningrad for failing to service hungry and thirsty football fans.

Many businesses closed shop before the match between Croatia and Nigeria kicked off on Saturday at 9 p.m., deeming “the risks too high,” Yermak was cited as saying by the Interfax news agency.

“We warned restaurateurs that it would be peak time. Everyone should have been prepared but it turns out they weren’t,” Yermak said, grading the cafes and restaurants with a B-.

Meanwhile, the city’s museums were open late – pointlessly, according to the minister who said only a handful of fans went during evening hours. “You can’t say it was very popular,” he said.

Kaliningrad will get a second chance on June 22, when it hosts Serbia against Switzerland.



It is the first Japanese royal visit since 1916.

Japan’s Royal Visit

Japan’s Princess Hisako Takamado was spotted in Saransk on Tuesday, ahead of Japan’s match against Colombia.

The princess is a cousin of Emperor Akihito and the first royal to visit Russia in more than a century, the Kyodo news agency reported.

“Japan’s imperial household has no political function, so there is no need to move in step with the Western countries that boycotted [the World Cup],” a senior official of Japan’s Imperial Household Agency was cited as saying.

Relations between Russia and Japan have been strained since World War II over a chain of disputed islands, known in Russia as the Kuril Islands and in Japan as the Northern Territories.

Princess Takamado will attend several matches in Russia before returning to Japan in late June, the Kyodo report said.

Mayor Beats Ronaldo

Russian news outlets mentioned Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin more often than they did Portugal football star Cristiano Ronaldo in articles about the lead-up to the World Cup, according to the Interfax news agency.

Sobyenin’s name was mentioned 1,700 times compared to 1,400 for Ronaldo between Jan. 1 and June 13, Interfax reported Tuesday. Other regional politicians – and football players – were written about half as often.

The pro-Kremlin mayor announced his re-election bid last month for the mayoral race scheduled for Sept. 9, in what analysts say will be an easy win for the incumbent, whose popularity is buoyed by loyal local media.

An investigation last year alleged that media in Moscow were required to mention Sobyenin’s name at least three times in every article they published about the city’s mayor.

The mayoral race kicked off in June.

Team Survives Fire

Saudi Arabia’s national football team landed safely in Rostov-on-Don on Monday evening, after an apparent engine fire on the plane carrying the players to a World Cup match.

Russia’s aviation watchdog Rosaviatsya said that during the landing there was a brief fire on one of the engines and that it would investigate the incident, Interfax reported. Social media footage appeared to show one of the engines catching fire, but a spokesman for airline Rossiya denied a fire had occurred.

As it came in to land, the plane “suffered a technical fault with one of its engines, with a bird getting caught seen as the preliminary cause,” a Rossiya airlines spokesman said in a statement.

“Nothing threatened the safety of the passengers. The aircraft’s landing took place in a routine fashion. No warning was sounded during the landing.” (Reuters)

MEET THE FANS

Everyone is nice and everyone is helpful. I didn’t really expect that before I came. In my home country, I hear a lot of stuff about Russia. But now that I’m here, I see that everyone is friendly.

Gustaf, Sweden



UPCOMING GAMES			
Wednesday 3 p.m.	Moscow, Luzhniki Stadium	Thursday 4 p.m.	Samara Arena
	–		–
PORTUGAL		DENMARK	
	–		–
	MOROCCO		AUSTRALIA
6 p.m.	Rostov-on-Don, Rostov Arena	8 p.m.	Yekaterinburg Arena
	–		–
URUGUAY		FRANCE	
	–		–
	SAUDI ARABIA		PERU
9 p.m.	Kazan Arena	9 p.m.	Nizhny Novgorod Stadium
	–		–
IRAN		ARGENTINA	
	–		–
	SPAIN		CROATIA

Foreign Fans Land in Russian Jails

At least eight foreign World Cup fans have been detained or fined in the first days of the football tournament in Russia, with media reports naming nationals from Mexico, Iran, Peru and the Britain among the suspects.

Russian authorities have beefed up security measures in the 11 cities hosting games this summer, with an increased police presence in public areas and additional CCTV cameras.

The dubious milestone of being the first foreign visitor to land in a Russian detention center during the World Cup was reportedly taken by a Peruvian fan in central Moscow. She was handed a two-month sentence on charges of pickpocketing 17,000 rubles (\$265) from a Thai citizen on Red Square, Interfax reported Friday.

Another Peruvian fan was detained for allegedly stealing three Germany-Mexico tickets on Sunday, according to Interfax. The 42-year-old was said to have been charged with theft.

A spokesperson for the Public Monitoring Commission (PMC) prison watchdog said that its observers had located and spoken to three Mexican citizens and one Iranian being held in Moscow jail cells. The Mexican Embassy in Moscow confirmed that three of its citizens had been detained, without specifying their charges.

A Mexican national is suspected of stealing a

bag with \$8,000 inside, watchdog member and Dozhd TV news channel journalist Kogershin Sagiyeva reported Monday. The man was detained at a hotel after sharing some of the sum with two of his compatriots, who were also reportedly arrested.

"I took someone's bag at Domodedovo Airport," the man was cited as saying by the Moskovsky Komsomolets tabloid.

"I didn't know there was so much money in it. I thought there was just a little," he added.

The fan has reportedly complained to prison watchdog representatives over the poor conditions in his cell.

In a separate incident, an Iranian citizen said he was falsely accused of stealing \$1,000 by a Brazilian fan in Moscow.

Meanwhile, two British fans were charged with hooliganism and public drunkenness after they were taken off a train bound for Volgograd for England's match against Tunisia on Monday. One was hospitalized after breaking the glass door of his train compartment. Another reportedly refused to obey police orders while attempting to get out of the train.

The British Embassy in Moscow told The Moscow Times that it was in contact with the local authorities regarding the two fans.

OPINION

By Daniel Kozin



Crossing Russia on The Trans-Peruvian

Lena, 27, was the conductor of carriage number 3 on the train bound from Moscow to Orsk, 1,800 kilometers to the southeast. She wore a bemused look as dozens of foreign football fans filed into her car.

On this day, her carriage was full of Peruvians, now famous for being among the more boisterous fans of the 32 nations in the World Cup. Clad in red and white, they were en route to their country's opening game against Denmark in Saransk.

"Seat, seat! No wifi!" a Peruvian man was trying to explain to the bewildered conductor, pointing at his phone as the train left the capital.

Thousands of foreign football fans are making similar long-distance journeys across Russia's vast expanses this month to watch their national teams compete in the World Cup. But foreign spectators hoping for a taste of Soviet-train chic might be left disappointed. Russia's tracks no longer haul the rickety old vagoni of years gone by. They have been replaced with newer models, fitted with power outlets, USB chargers and, sometimes, even air conditioning.

"I don't understand what he wants," Lena said in perplexed Russian. "New sheets? A pillow?"

Most Russians are quiet on trains, they aren't really that happy or willing to communicate.

What's more, the conductors are no longer the grumpy old babushkas of travelers' lore. Most are young and cheery. Despite their best efforts, though, not all possess the language skills to communicate with the dozens of nationalities here for the football tournament.

It turned out that Juan Carlos, a 40-year-old electromechanic, did not know his seat number and couldn't open his ticket on his phone due to the spotty internet connection.

When he eventually found his place, he told me he was here with his brother, nephew and a friend, and that they planned to follow the Peru team over 21 days to Saransk, Yekaterinburg and Sochi. "Peru hasn't played in the World Cup in 36 years," Juan Carlos explained. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance!"

Luis, his 22-year-old nephew, admitted that communicating with Russians, who were indeed very hospitable, had been difficult. "There was a guy at the Kazansky train station in Moscow we didn't understand. He just kept buying us beers. 'More beer! More beer!' he kept saying. 'No, no more beer!' we told him!"

After a few hours on the train, the Peruvians plucked up the courage to chat with two girls across the aisle. Masha, 24, and Yulia, 25, both gym receptionists on their way to Samara for a vacation, crooned Spanish songs to break the ice. The grand finale was Ricky Martin's "Livin' La Vida Loca."

Yulia said it was her first time meeting foreigners. "Nobody understands what the other is saying, but it's so funny," she said in a fit of laughter. "I like that they're so open and willing to communicate with us," she added. "Most Russians are quiet on trains, they aren't really that happy or communicative."

Back in my compartment, Elya, a chatty 61-year-old retired teacher who now works as a real estate agent in Moscow, said the World Cup atmosphere had suspended her skepticism of foreigners.

"The center of Moscow is so beautiful now!" she said en route to see her relatives and tend to her brother's grave. "So many colorful costumes!"

Elya said she wasn't that interested in football until she turned on the television in her kitchen while Russia was trouncing Saudi Arabia 5-0 in the tournament's opening match. "Now I wish I could go see a game with Cristiano Ronaldo. He's playing. Right?"

It wouldn't have been an authentic Russian train experience without a vodka-fueled anecdote. Stopping in Ryazan, about two hours into the journey, the Peruvians piled out of the stuffy train to get some fresh air.

A Peruvian from another carriage, Miguel, 32, was immediately approached by a determined-looking Russian passenger, dressed in short athletic shorts and a black tank top.

"Peru champion?" he boomed, clapping Miguel on the back. "Drink vodka?" "Poquito," Miguel shrugged. "We'll find you [on the train]," the man said in Russian, relinquishing his grip on Miguel's shoulder.

Then he noticed Paolo. "This is a good guy," he announced to the passengers waiting around the train door. "He already drank two shots with us."

"He's almost a real Russian now," one of the train conductors chimed in.

London hopes the gesture to honor Stalingrad's fallen soldiers may help salve battered ties.



England Honors Stalingrad's Fallen

England football fans and a top British diplomat paid tribute to those who died in the Battle of Stalingrad during World War II in a moving ceremony ahead of England's match against Tunisia, a gesture London hopes may help mend battered ties.

Monday's game, which England won 2-1, was in Volgograd, which until 1961 was called Stalingrad. The city was the location of the bloodiest battle of World War II when the Soviet Red Army, at a cost of over 1 million casualties, broke the back of advancing German forces.

England begin their World Cup campaign at a time when relations between Moscow and London are at a post-Cold War low, with the two countries at odds over Ukraine, Syria and

the poisoning of a former Russian spy in England.

Deputy British Ambassador to Russia Lindsay Skoll laid one of three wreaths at a memorial complex to the city's defenders, located on a hill above the city's football stadium.

"Given the immense suffering of Volgograd and the pivotal part it played in the route towards victory, I think it's only fitting that the 2018 World Cup should have Volgograd as one of its host cities," Skoll said, speaking after a Russian military honor guard marched past wall banners bearing the names of Stalingrad's defenders.

"What this demonstrates more than anything is that the enduring nature of the relationship between the United Kingdom and Volgograd outweighs

any political ups and downs in our relationship."

The British gesture, in a building known as the Hall of Military Glory which houses a statue of a hand holding a torch in which an eternal flame burns, is likely to be well received in Russia where the battle site is regarded as sacred ground.

Greg Clarke, chairman of the English Football Association, also laid a wreath on Monday, as did English fan Billy Grant.

"I was very nervous" to come to Russia, Grant, a black Englishman, told reporters, referring to stories in the British media about racism in Russia. "But from the first day I walked out people have just said to me 'we are your friend' and 'thank you for coming to Russia.'"

(Reuters)



The World Cup Gold Rush

With FIFA set to make billions, local businesses want a slice of the pie

BY EVAN GERSHKOVICH @EVANGERSHKOVICH

In the run-up to the world's largest sporting event this year, small businesses in central Moscow were readying in the hopes of making a quick buck.

With FIFA set to earn \$6.1 billion from the World Cup this summer — 10 percent more than estimated and \$1.3 billion more than the 2014 World Cup — local businesses are hoping that they can get a cut too. Some even said they had seen increased earnings before the first match kicked off.

"We're up 20 percent just after last week," said Anton Gusev, 27, manager of Bar Buffet Nikolai on Tverskaya Ulitsa. He pointed to increased foot traffic along one of Moscow's main streets as the reason.

Throughout central Moscow on Thursday afternoon, just hours before the opening match kicked off, businesses were dressed up for the party. Decorated in football-themed regalia, shops ranging from cafés and restaurants to electronics stores were ready for the tens of thousands of tourists expected to flock to the capital over the next four weeks.

Sex dolls, chocolate balls

Near Lubyanka Square, where throngs of tourists were passing onward to Red Square, everyone seemed to be getting in on the fun. They included a man dressed in traditional Moldovan garb who was advertising live showings of the matches at a nearby Moldovan restaurant. "We still want to make tourists happy even though Moldova didn't make the World Cup," he said.

Some businesses even sprouted up solely for the tournament.

Football Party Bar, down an alley just off Tverskaya, is hoping to attract tourists by touting itself as an exclusively English-language watering hole. The bar's 33-year-old owner Alexander Abramov explained it will offer daily lunches, nightly 90s disco dance parties lasting

long past sunrise and, as per a flyer, Russian girls.

Several of those girls last Thursday afternoon were handing out the flyers to passers-by clad in other countries' football jerseys. Abramov said that he had selected the girls with the best English so that tourists would feel comfortable.

Meanwhile, one girl was trying to explain to a tourist that she couldn't hear what he was saying. "I don't listen you," she said. With her meaning lost in translation, the tourist, disappointed, continued on his way.

Across town, near Moscow City, Dmitry Alexandrov has taken a creative approach to tapping into Russia's feminine draw. At the beginning of May, just in time for the tournament, he opened The Dolls Hotel — a hotel where, in addition to having a place to rest, patrons can also have sex with human-like dolls.

"I am eager to welcome many foreign tourists," Alexandrov, 35, said. He noted that over the past week he has seen a 15-percent increase

I don't expect we'll make much more money than usual. But I am really excited to practice my English.

in customers, most of whom were Spaniards.

"Many guys came to have a good holiday here, but they don't want to cheat on their other half," Alexandrov explained.

For guys who arrived in Russia with their other half, Yelena Buyanova runs a chocolate shop near the Bolshoi Theater. Buyanova, who is in her 60s, put out a line of World Cup-themed chocolates — boots, balls, even the World Cup trophy — that she says "would make a great gift for a girlfriend." She also hung a plasma screen television behind the register so patrons could watch matches while shopping.

Both offerings, however, Buyanova said, were simply an effort to get into the World Cup spirit. "We don't have that much to offer tourists," she said. "We're not a bar where a lot of people will come watch the game, we only sell chocolate."

A woman who was hawking mink fur soccer balls for 10,000 rubles (\$159) that fit in the palm of a customer's hand shared Buyanova's sentiment. The woman, who asked to remain anonymous, compared her wares to the bouquets of

flowers in the shape of football balls inside the Marriott Hotel on Ulitsa Petrovka where she had set up shop. "All of this is just thematic," she explained, motioning around the hall.

Rich in atmosphere

If so, it is indeed the right sentiment, said Sergei Altukhov, deputy director of Moscow State University's Sports Management Center and a professor in the university's economics department. "There's no trickle-down effect for local businesses during events like this," he explained. "Sure, there's increased foot traffic, but it doesn't make a very significant difference."

And if businesses try to hike up their prices to boost earnings, Altukhov said, Russia's consumer protection watchdog Rospotrebnadzor is ready to pounce with fines.

That threat, however, has not stopped landlords on Airbnb from setting prices for wooden sheds, among other odd options, in excess of \$300 per night. Moreover, a Russian journalist found a café close to Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium with prices in the English-language menu set at double those in Russian.

Altukhov's warning had perhaps not made its way to the management of Prime Café, a Moscow-based chain. At a branch on Tverskaya Ulitsa, papier-mâché soccer balls hung from the ceiling. Alexander Konstantinov, a 21-year-old barista, said that management had even prepared a list of English phrases for employees to learn.

"I don't expect we'll make much more money than usual," he said. "But I am really excited to practice my English."

Moments later, an Uruguayan couple came in. Konstantinov greeted the pair eagerly in English, though when he found out that they only spoke Spanish, he was visibly dismayed. Still, after a few fumbled attempts at communication, the three broke out in laughter.

When the couple sat down, Konstantinov said, "It's so fun to meet foreigners."



For 10,000 rubles, this mink fur ball could be yours.

A Ruble for Every Kopeck?

Russia has spent lavishly on the World Cup, but for good reason

BY BEN ARIS [@BNEEDITOR](#)

With a price tag of around \$50 billion, headlines in the run-up to the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014 were quick to dub them “the most expensive Games ever.” The World Cup also comes with a big bill – and criticism.

The Russian government has earmarked a total of 678 billion rubles (\$11.8 billion) for the tournament this summer, but costs were already overrunning last year and the final price tag is bound to be significantly higher.

Moscow gets roasted over what is widely assumed to be a corruption rout by the oligarchs. By way of comparison, France spent a mere \$2 billion when it hosted the competition in 1998.

But the criticism misses the point of the huge spend.

It's not just a question of building a couple of stadiums and planting flowers along a few roads. In many of Russia's 11 host cities, much of what makes a modern city was simply missing.

The World Cup money went into upgrading or replacing dilapidated Soviet-era infrastruc-

ture: new roads, airports, hotels, conference centers, telecom networks and rail links. (A plan to link all the venues with the new high-speed rail links was abandoned due to the astronomical \$60 billion investment bill.)

In Russia, upgrading infrastructure is an expensive and difficult business. Take, for example, the cost of building a new road. In Europe the average cost is \$5 million per kilometer. In Moscow it is 10 times more, according to real estate professionals.

Part of this is corruption, but only part. There are no detailed maps of what lies under

roads, so any pipes or wires found supplying buildings have to be moved or remade. Under Russian law, any object designated “socially important,” like a sewer pipe or power substation, has to be rebuilt in a new location. That involves acquiring land and going through the same complex process of securing permission and getting the work done.

All this eats up time and resources, but at the end of this process the land, its objects and rights, have been catalogued.

Infrastructure investments are an economic multiplier. According to a study by Renaissance Capital's infrastructure fund, every \$1 invested in a road could add as much as \$6 to local GDP.

A Shot in the Arm

Sochi has flourished since the Winter Olympics. President Vladimir Putin often hosts foreign dignitaries there, but it has also become the city of choice for an increasing number of conferences, businesses and holiday makers.

While the official statistics are vague, anecdotal evidence from local businesses suggests an influx of both new residents and businesses. Inbound tourism in Sochi was up by a quarter year-on-year in 2016. And property prices have doubled, according to the local press, to some 40,000 rubles (\$650) per month. The local population increased by two-fifths between 2015 and 2016.

The income divide between Moscow and the regions is legendary, but after 25 years of transformation many of the best regions are starting to flourish – especially as competition to attract investment between the leaders takes off.

Kazan and Krasnodar are notable success stories of cities enjoying population growth. St Petersburg is probably the most impressive of the regional growth stories and is now an industrial manufacturing hub, thanks to its large local population, port and easy access to Moscow, which is by far the biggest local consumer market in the country.

Kaluga created an automotive hub from scratch, though its success is more due to the entrepreneurship of its governor Anatoly Artamonov than federal policy. And Murmansk in the country's Arctic Circle was amongst the fastest growing regions last year.

But this growth is very uneven. Most of Russia's regions remain backward and under-resourced. A recent Rosstat report found poverty increased in 44 out of 71 Russian regions last year.

The World Cup is designed to give the local economies of 11 important regional cities a shot in the arm.

In the short term, the World Cup won't make much difference. In January analysts at Russia's Gaidar Institute estimated it would give a small boost to growth of about 0.2 percent thanks to new jobs and the sales of goods and services. But the Central Bank warned it may also cause a small spike in inflation.

However, the long-term gains are supposed to transform local economies, establishing sustainable growth.

Above all, the World Cup could change Russia's reputation abroad. Official estimates suggest more than a million tourists could come – the equivalent of the number of tourists Russia usually receives in a whole year.

They are mostly from countries in the former Soviet Union and, increasingly, China. So the massive influx of first-time Western visitors to Russia is an important opportunity to shape perceptions.

During the 25 years I lived in Russia, I was regularly invited to people's homes for shash-



Upgrading infrastructure in Russia is an expensive and difficult business.

lik and beer. This generally open attitude to strangers born from the “we-are-all-in-it-together” mentality of the Soviet Union will go a long way to undermining the KGB and gulag narrative that typically colors most reporting on Russia.

And bringing about a change in how Russia is perceived is the golden goose the country could get from hosting the tournament. Russia's poor image is costing it a fortune, and it is a heavy ball and chain that is shackled to inbound investment flows.

Take one concrete example: Russian companies are paying their shareholders the highest dividends in the world. Average dividend yield is 6 percent, twice the emerging market average of the benchmark MSCI Emerging Markets index pays.

And yet the price-earnings ratio of Russian

stocks (a standard measure used to estimate how attractive a stock is to investors) is in single digits and half that of the other three leading BRIC markets.

Improving Russia's image and getting rid of the “Russia discount” that has been holding share prices down for two decades could see the value of the stock market double overnight, all without changing anything else.

The story is the same in foreign direct investment and a variety of other investment issues, which are all driven by sentiment at the end of the day.

If hosting the World Cup can make even a small difference to Russia's horrible image, then it will be worth every kopeck.

Ben Aris is the founder and editor of Business New Europe.



New infrastructure, new optimism.

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Part of this is corruption, but only part. There are no detailed maps of what lies under

The World Cup is designed to give the local economies of 11 important regional cities a shot in the arm.

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реклама

Football Fa

A tsunami of color, music and fun
thousands of football fans e



Russian Cossacks and Brazilian fans swap garb and pose for a photo at the fan Fest in Rostov-on-Don.



A Portugal fan cheers before the match in Sochi.



A Croatian supporter sends love from Kaliningrad.



Fans from Germany and Mexico sit side by side at St. Petersburg Fan Fest as they watch the



Even with this impressive wingspan, Peru was not able to soar to victory over Denmark in Saransk.



Argentina fans bring some Latin American passion to St. Basil's Cathedral on Red Square.



Iceland fans summon Nordic spirit with a mass "Viking clap" in Moscow's Zaryadye Park.



Central Moscow's Nikolskaya Ulitsa has been transformed into a party hub.

Fan Frenzy

and fun has swept Russia as tens of
fans explore the host country



watch their teams play against each other.



Square.



A South Korean fan sends hope in Nizhny Novgorod Stadium.



The usually quiet and anonymous metro is gone: underground, the party continues.



Bring some color to the Russian streets? Check!



Uruguay discovers Urals city Yekaterinburg.



Sweden fans take over a metro station in Nizhny Novgorod before their match with South Korea.



Football fans from Egypt pose for a selfie before the match against Uruguay in Yekaterinburg.



Brazil fans, whose team has won the World Cup five times, have good reason to go all out in Rostov-on-Don.

Host City in the Spotlight:

Nizhny Novgorod

Located where the Oka River flows into the Volga, this ancient city has long been an industrial and economic base for Russia

Once a closed city, Nizhny Novgorod is now welcoming World Cup visitors with open arms. Nizhny Novgorod Stadium, which only began construction in 2015 and was completed a few months ahead of the championship, is thought to be one of the tourna-

ment's most impressive arenas. The stadium is decked out in white and blue, inspired by the surrounding Volga countryside. It was built at the confluence of the Volga and Oka rivers, providing stunning views of the river as well as of the 500-year-old Nizhny Novgorod Kremlin. With slim pillars, a semi-transparent façade, extra security measures and cutting-edge technol-

ogy, the total cost of the new arena was \$290 million.

The rapid construction associated with building the arena is nothing new for Nizhny Novgorod. Dubbed "Russia's Detroit," this is an industrial city. As Russia adopted a policy of deindustrialization after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Nizhny Novgorod still maintained its industrial identity. Today, the city has the highest proportion of residents working in industry of all Russian cities with a population of at least one million. But this is not simply a modern phenomenon: Founded at the crossroads of empires, Nizhny Novgorod has always been a center of trade, construction and innovation.

Nizhny Novgorod was founded in 1221 by Yuri Vsevolodovich, the Grand Duke of Vladimir. The placement of the new city at the junction of the Volga and Oka rivers was strategic. Economically, it stood on a trade river route between the Baltics and Central Asia. Militarily, the location on a hill surrounded by water allowed the duchy to defend its frontiers from invading Mordovinians, Maris and Tatars.

In these early years, the city's first *kremlin*, or fortress, was built. It was made of wood, meaning that enemies could easily raze the fortress to the ground – and so they did, multiple times. In 1392 the town was incorporated into the Muscovy empire, an early step in building the country that would become Russia.

The kremlin that currently looms over Nizhny Novgorod was constructed in the early 16th century and comprised 13 watchtowers, 12 of which still exist. Local legend has it that when building these towers, the townspeople decided to bury the first living creature that approached the first tower – Koromyslova Tower – in its base, an attempt to make the new kremlin structure firmer and stronger. That first living creature turned out to be a young girl, who was sacrificed and buried there.

Nizhny Novgorod was a central Russian stronghold as the country expanded its borders throughout the Volga region in the 16th and 17th centuries. As Russia conquered more lands to the east, the city became an even more important trading post, serving as a vital link between east and west and a hub for shipbuilding. By 1662, its citizens had mastered 119 different craft professions.

Flourishing craft and trade continued into the 19th century, resulting in the formation of an annual fair that was the largest in Russia until its conclusion in 1917. The historical emphasis on industry meant that Nizhny Novgorod recruited its serf population to aid in manufacturing far earlier than other Russian cities did. Nizhny Novgorod subsequently became one of the first Russian cities to witness the process of industrialization that led to the Russian Revolution.

The Soviet Union took advantage of Nizhny Novgorod's manufacturing capabilities. Many plants were located there, especially during World War II when western plants were strategically moved eastward, away from the front. Nonetheless, the city is also recognized for its artistic contributions: namely as the birthplace of celebrated Soviet writer Maxim Gorky. In 1932, the city renamed itself Gorky in his honor – while Gorky himself was still alive. This name remained in place until 1990, when a decree by the Supreme Soviet Presidium restored it to Nizhny Novgorod.

In the latter half of the Soviet era, authorities realized that foreign special services were tracking Nizhny Novgorod's special defense manufacturing plants. They consequently closed the city to all foreign visitors, a regulation that remained in place until the fall of the Soviet Union, including 10 years when the city could not be found on a map.

This closed-city status made Nizhny Novgorod an ideal place for hiding away "dangerous" political elements. Andrei Sakharov, a Soviet dissident and one of the creators of Russia's nuclear bomb, was kept in exile in the city with his wife Yelena Bonner for six years, beginning in 1980.

Once the Soviet period ended and the Russian Federation was established, Nizhny Novgorod experienced many of the same rapid transitions as other Russian cities. But it also continued its traditional process of industrialization. There was substantial expansion and construction, including a new metro. But even with its new, modern cityscape, the medieval Kremlin and cathedrals still stand, a constant reminder of the city's heritage and place.



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July 1

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ENGLAND



PANAMA

July 6

QUARTERFINAL



An English-language Soviet Cookbook

If you are interested in learning about Russian cuisine but assume that the Soviet period in Russia was a culinary desert, here's an acclaimed book that can sort out that misconception for you.

Written by the country's most prominent food historians, Olga and Pavel Syutkin, "CCCP Cook Book: True Stories of Soviet Cuisine" was commissioned especially for an English-speaking audience by the FUEL publishing house. It is a compendium of 60 recipes that were developed during the Soviet period.

The Syutkins are Russia's premiere historians and advocates of Russian cooking. Both Pavel and Olga grew up in the southern part of European Russia. And as Pavel Syutkin said in an interview with The Moscow Times two years ago, "Olga and I grew up in culinary families where we liked to eat and cook good food. It was something that our mothers and grandmothers inculcated in us."

Pavel Syutkin was first trained as a historian. Years ago, the couple combined their knowledge and love of good food with his expertise as a historian and began to study Russian cuisine.

Working on the history of Soviet cuisine was quite different from examining pre-revolutionary Russian culinary traditions. As Olga Syutkin

said, "It's the food of our childhood and youth, so no matter what it was actually like, we will always think of it with warm feelings."

Although the general tendency is to see the Soviet period as one of destruction of the intricate, subtle and complex cuisine of the tsarist period, the Syutkins are not so categorical. Pavel Syutkin said: "Imagine if there had not been a revolution and the tsar had continued to rule. What would have happened? Many features of Soviet cuisine would have appeared anyway. It was the cuisine of an industrial state — and what occurred here happened in other developed countries: fast food, a mix of many national cuisines, new kinds of canned goods, concentrates and ready-to-eat food. These are foods that help women who are working full time."

They also appreciate the thousands of talented specialists who worked in the test kitchens of culinary institutes developing new recipes. "Now we might consider some of them funny," Olga Syutkin said, "but many are delicious, like Kiev cake, Prague cake and 'bird's milk' cake."

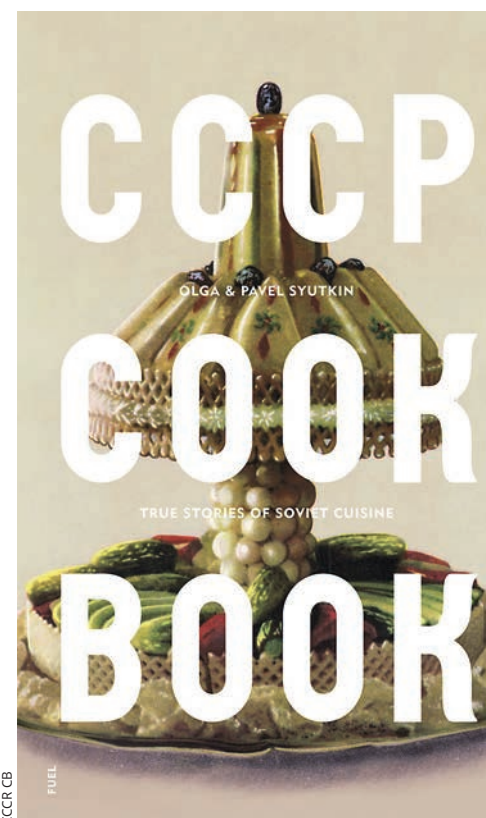
The Syutkins compiled some of the best recipes from the Soviet era in this English-language cookbook, produced to look as if it were beamed into the future from about 1959, com-

plete with the slightly fuzzy and very stylized illustrations from old cookery books. The translation by Ast A. Moore is delightfully idiomatic and accurate, down to every last gram and cut of meat.

Each recipe is introduced by a story that puts the dish into the cultural, economic and political context that produced it, showing how Soviet cuisine evolved over 70 years. Some of the stories are as entertaining as they are illuminating. For example, how did the early Soviet government convince people to try the new canned fish products developed by Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov's wife, Polina Zemchuzhina? They pulled off a legendary public relations stunt. Molotov announced that smugglers were using the cans to transport contraband pearls to the West, and to illustrate his point, he opened a can and pulled out a pearl necklace. The cans flew off the shelves.

The CCCP Cook Book is the best kind of cookbook: You can read it like a novel, or use it to cook up some terrific dishes.

CCCP Cook Book: True Stories of Soviet Cuisine by Olga and Pavel Syutkin is published by FUEL and available in both Britain and the U.S.



RECOMMENDED



Strana Kotoroi Net

Located in the very heart of the city, Strana Kotoroi Net (literally, "a country that doesn't exist") is a popular spot. While the interior is modern, the extensive menu harkens back to distant times, serving food from across the Soviet landscape. From traditional Georgian khachapuri to Kamchatka crab salad from the Far East to the home-made lagman noodles of Central Asia, you are certain to find something that fits your tastes. And you will learn a little something about some of the traditions of the Soviet table.

2 Ulitsa Okhotny Ryad. Metro Teatralnaya, Okhotny Ryad.
novikovgroup.ru/restaurants/strana-kotoroy-net



Mu-Mu

A chain of buffet-style restaurants specializing in traditional Russian and Soviet fare, Mu-Mu is the best of both worlds: as quick and affordable as some fast-food places, but healthy and comforting like something out of your grandmother's kitchen. Though these restaurants are not meant to be "retro," the menu actually is. Mu-Mu offers everything from *shchi* and *borshch* to goulash and roast potatoes. And if you just want to grab a bite for the road, their classic pies—meat, apple and cabbage—will tide you over as you go exploring the city.

Located throughout the city
cafemumu.ru



Varenichnaya No. 1

This chain of Soviet-style restaurants has exploded in recent years, and no wonder. Decorated with Soviet-era posters, books and a soundtrack of the greatest Soviet hits, a meal at Varenichnaya is a journey back in time. You'll need a while to peruse its extensive menu, overflowing with Russian, Ukrainian and Soviet classics, but you can't leave without tasting the restaurant's namesake dish: the traditional *vareniki* dumplings, with an array of fillings ranging from potato to sour cherry. There's something for every taste.

Located throughout the city
varenichnaya.ru



Kamchatka

Kamchatka is a bit of a curveball from upscale restaurateur Arkady Novikov. By day a Soviet-style *stolovaya* with tasty eats, by night a sweaty, crowded bar with loud music and outrageously cheap beer. You'll need sharp elbows to be served, and on the weekends it's not unheard of for people to dance on tables, adding to the fun. Vodka comes out of a soda gun, and lots of traditional Russian finger foods are served. In the summer you'll recognize it by the outdoor barbecue and hoards of people spilling out onto the pedestrian street. 7 Ulitsa Kuznetsky Most. Metro Kuznetsky Most. facebook.com/Kamchatka-Bar

Moscow Museums for Children and Families

Planetarium

Enter a world of black holes, hurricanes, zero gravity, optical illusions and a 4-D constellation exhibition. Kids can create artificial clouds and tornadoes, generate electrical energy to compose music and find out how much they would weigh on other planets. Free excursions are available with English options upon request.

5 Sadovaya-Kudrinskaya Ulitsa. Metro Barrikadnaya.

planetarium-moscow.ru



ANDREI LYUBIMOV / MOSKVA NEWS AGENCY

Living Beings Children's Museum

A giant, hungry-looking Tyrannosaurus Rex guards the museum entrance, an exhilarating introduction to the animal exhibits. Kids are challenged to jump as far as a rabbit and hang from monkey bars like, well, a monkey. The second section of the museum is devoted to the human body and how it works, with many inventive ways to instruct.

46 Butyrskaya Ulitsa. Metro Savyolovskaya.

bioexperimentarium.ru

The Fersman Mineralogical Museum

Stones, gems and minerals have been pulled from the earth, dusted off and put on display: meteorites, precious stones and minerals that look like sea creatures, furry creatures and plants. Many of the exhibits can be touched, and all the exhibit information is in English.

18 Leninsky Prospekt, Bldg. 2. Metro Shabolovskaya.

fmm.ru



POLYTECHNIC MUSEUM ON VDNKH

Polytechnic Museum

The museum's seven dimly lit, atmospheric chambers explore electricity, genetics, radiation and other wonders of science. They're ideal for kids who love science—and just as good for kids who don't quite yet. Skip past the old radio transmitters and head straight for the fun interactive exhibits—like gloves that allow you to feel the vibrations of a magnetic field.

The centerpiece is a deactivated atomic bomb, complete with howling air raid sirens, a white flash of light and the roar of an explosion. Most

exhibitions have English translations, some in the form of video lectures by cartoon scientists and wizened grannies.

119 Prospekt Mira, Bldg. 26 (Pavilion 26). Metro VDNKh.

polymus.ru.



MUSEUM OF ILLUSIONS

Museum of Illusions

As soon as you walk in the door, you enter bright and colorful rooms painted with cartoon characters, different lights and perceptions of space—like the popular slanted room. Kids run from room to room, trying out the optical illusions. Bring your camera: The fun is in taking photos of your family that make it look like you were in outer space or turned into giants (instructions on the wall show the best way to take photos). There aren't any signs in English, but illusions don't require translation.

4 Maly Nikolopeskovsky Pereulok. Metro Arbatskaya.

bestmuseum.ru

The Doll House

If you have a child who likes dolls, this is a good place for an afternoon. Over 1,500 dolls, toy sol-

diers and stuffed animals are scattered around the homey museum. Each one has its own story. One survived World War I in a child's hand, another lived with the royal family and others have been around for many centuries. Lessons in doll-making and excursions in English are available upon request.

13 Ulitsa Pokrovka. Metro Chistiye Prudy.

dollmuseum.ru

Moscow Lights

Take the kids through historical Moscow and let them try their hand at being a pre-revolutionary street lamp lighter or a Soviet manager of street lights. All of the museum's many lights can be operated by the visiting children. Tours are available in English.

3-5 Armyansky Pereulok, Bldg.1. Metro Lubyanka.

ognimos.ru



KIDBURG

Kidburg

This tiny city inside the Detsky Mir toy store has its own port, bank, hospital, police station, television and radio stations, newspaper, school dance, fashion house, supermarket, cafe and bakery—each a learning station where a “worker” tells visitors about his or her profession. While no English guides are provided, children still have fun roaming the streets and trying their hands at their dream jobs.

5 Teatralny Proyezd, 5th floor. Metro Lubyanka.

kidburg.ru

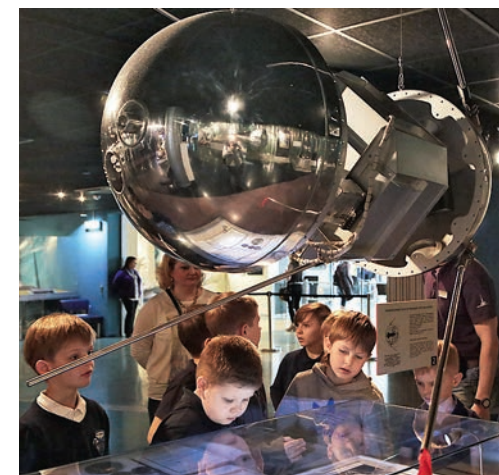
World of Chocolate Museum

It's a museum about chocolate. What else do you need to know? You mould your own choco-

late animal, go on an interactive tour (available in English upon request), learn about cocoa drinks among ancient tribes, find out about pre- and post-revolutionary chocolate-making in Russia and do lots of sampling. A history lesson that you can eat—it doesn't get better than that.

2 1st Brestskaya Ulitsa, Bldg. 3. Metro Mayakovskaya.

chocoandcacao.ru



MEMORIAL MUSEUM OF COSMONAUTICS

Memorial Museum of Cosmonautics

Located in the base of a soaring monument to the conquest of space, this museum's exhibits are stellar—space suits, a helicopter and a rocket simulator, satellites and models of rockets. Excursions are sometimes available in English (it's best to call ahead to arrange it).

111 Prospekt Mira. Metro VDNKh.

kosmo-museum.ru

Sweet Museum

For those who need to liven up their Instagram, this museum boasts ten unique spaces all dedicated to the wonderful world of sweets. The interactive art exhibit has everything a child could want from a candy land, from giant marshmallows beanbags to never-ending cotton candy. If you and your children have a sweet tooth and like to take pictures, the Sweet Museum is the place to go.

24 Ulitsa Novy Arbat. Metro Smolenskaya.

sweetmuseum.ru



EXPERIMENTANIUM

Experimentanium

When you're not watching a science demonstration, you'll probably be joining your kids as they warp their minds with optical illusions, make waves in the water zone and hesitatingly lower themselves onto a chair of nails. This museum doesn't do much in the way of catering for a non-Russian speaker, but it is packed full of interactive stations that don't need much explanation. When you've had enough of the lasers, drums and magnets, pop into the cafe for some tasty Russian fare.

80 Leningradsky Prospekt, Bldg. 11. Metro Sokol.

experimentanium.ru

DAY TRIPPIN'

Get Out of Town

Vladimir

An ancient capital

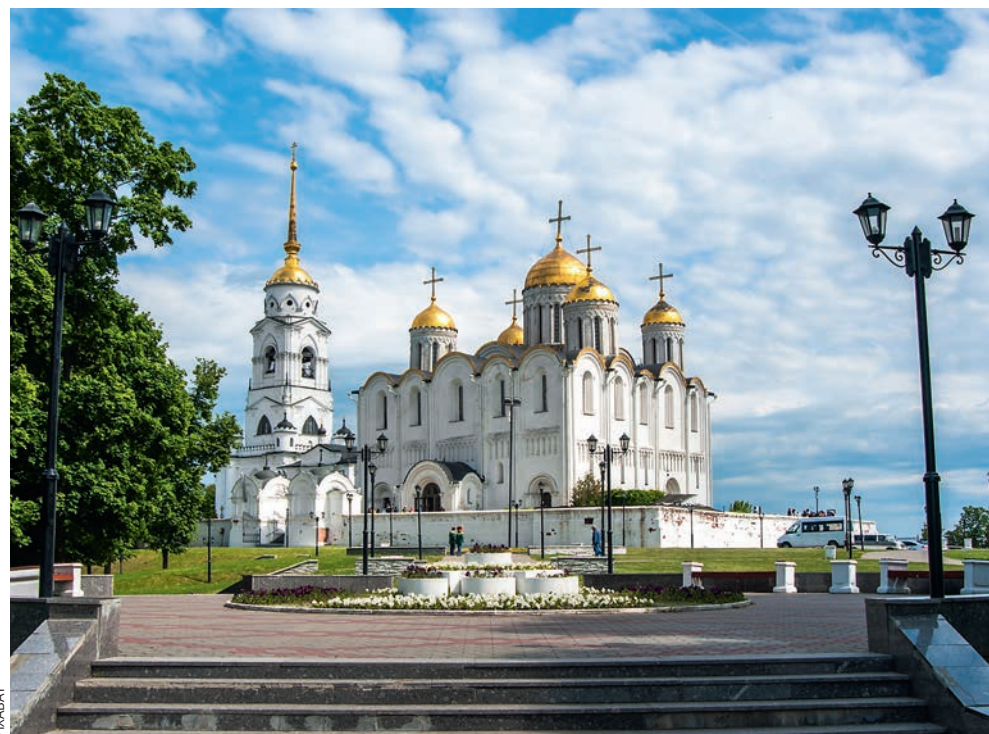
A little less than 200 kilometers to the north-east of Moscow, Vladimir was already known as a heavyweight political, religious and cultural hub while Moscow was still in its provincial youth. The city's golden age was during the 12th century, when Prince Andrei Bogolyubsky moved the capital of Rus to Vladimir from Kiev and built many of its best-known landmarks.

The city was founded in 1108, if not earlier. Its golden age was cut short when it was besieged by the Mongol-Tatars of the Golden Horde in 1238, never to fully regain its place as the center again. As the Mongol yoke receded, Vladimir was eclipsed by the Grand Duchy of Moscow.

To get there, take the express train from Kurskaya Station (the journey takes around three hours) and don't be put off by the rather dour Soviet infrastructure you'll be greeted by

when exiting the train. If you head into town you'll soon see what everyone is talking about. First stop is the Cathedral of St. Demetrius, which bears intricate stone carvings depicting King David, wild beasts and the Kievan Prince Vsevolod III.

Walk past the Palaty, an 18th century court building that holds a children's museum, exhibition and art gallery, toward the fairy-tale golden domes of Assumption Cathedral. After gawking at the Byzantine-inspired exterior, head inside for frescoes by Rublyov and the coffin of Alexander Nevsky of Novgorod. Ghoulish types will get a thrill from the glass coffin through which you can see his withered, mummified hand. A word of advice: Take little notice of the signs and instead inquire with the babushka at the desk as to when you can expect the churches to open their doors. Express train from Kursk Station or bus from Shcholkovskaya metro station.



The golden domes of Assumption Cathedral are a part of medieval Russian heritage.



The intricately-painted Nativty Cathedral is located within the Suzdal Kremlin.

Suzdal

Onion domes and old-world charm

If you've made it as far as Vladimir, it would be a shame not to hop on a bus and make the 40-minute journey to Suzdal, rightfully referred to as the diamond of the Golden Ring. If you're looking for rustic charm, more wooden carvings than your Instagram account can cope with and an unusual ratio of churches to human beings, Suzdal is the place for you.

Start your walkabout at the Suzdal Kremlin, home to the beautiful blue-domed Nativity of the Virgin Cathedral, a museum, a few streets of houses and several smaller churches. Leaving the Kremlin, take the bridge across the river to the Museum of Wooden Architecture and Peasant Life. It's more about the former than the latter, but the picturesque Church of the Transfiguration from 1756, a café serving *medovukha* (a honey based drink) and the old mills make it a lovely place to while away an hour or two.

Further north is Suzdal's biggest monastery, Saint Euthymius. The complex features buildings and churches funded by Ivan the Terrible and the wealthy Pozharsky family. There is no shortage of guest houses and restaurants, so if making the journey back to Moscow doesn't seem like an attractive option, spend the night and have dinner and a few glasses of Georgian wine on the terrace at Gostiny Dvor. Express train from Kursk Station to Vladimir. Cross the road to the bus station and buy a ticket to Suzdal. Buses depart every 30 minutes.



Wooden architecture is inspired by historic peasant villages.

INFO FOR U.S. CITIZENS TRAVELING TO THE WORLD CUP IN RUSSIA

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Many of Vasily Vereshchagin's famously dramatic paintings focus on the horrors of war.

A Vereshchagin Retrospective

By Andrei Muchnik

Exhibit showcases famous 19th century Russian painter

The Vasily Vereshchagin retrospective at the New Tretyakov Gallery presents a comprehensive overview of this substantial 19th-century painter. It's the latest installment in an exhibition series devoted to prominent Russian painters, following retrospectives on Valentin Serov and Ivan Aivazovsky.

The scale is immense, with about 500 items: 180 paintings and 140 drawings, plus letters and various objects of applied and decorative arts, such as Central Asian carpets and gowns. Most of the items are from the Tretyakov Gallery and the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, but a total of 20 museums and four private collections contributed to this exhibition.

The retrospective shows different facets of Vereshchagin's personality and life, as an explorer, traveler, historian, writer and soldier. Known best for his large-scale paintings on war, Vereshchagin's works depicted its horrors, suffering and cruel waste.

He was an avid traveler, and many of his works are devoted to studies of foreign countries and their cultures. The exhibition is organized

around Vereshchagin's most famous travel series — covering Turkestan, the Balkans, India, Japan, Palestine and Russia — each region marking a particular period in his artistic career.

Vereshchagin was born in Cherepovets into a family of nobility. At the age of eight he was admitted to sea cadet school and graduated ten years later at the top of his class. He was intended to become a naval officer, but chose to resign and attend the Academy of Arts instead, where he studied for three years. Later, he studied at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He lived in Munich in the 1860s, then moved to Paris for 14 more years. In 1891 he finally settled in Moscow.

He married twice — to a German, Elizabeth Fisher, and to Lidia Andreyevskaya, who was his assistant on a tour of the United States. Fisher, known in Russia as Yelizaveta Kondratyevna, accompanied the painter to the Himalayas and co-authored a book about their travels with Vereshchagin, her husband contributing the illustrations.

Vereshchagin saw combat firsthand during several military operations, and it can be said that he was among Russia's first military correspon-

dents — much like today's photojournalists. His most dangerous adventures included Central Asia (1867-1868, 1869-1870), the Russian-Turkish War (1877-1878) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904), during which he was killed when his ship struck two mines. In 1877, Vereshchagin was seriously wounded in the Russian-Turkish War while sailing on the Danube River, though this didn't stop him from taking part in later military campaigns.

He captured the brutal side of war and many of his paintings were graphic by the standards of the time. This aspect sometimes made him controversial, and apparently both Emperor Alexander II and Alexander III disliked him. And yet he was also the first Russian painter to gain international attention and acclaim.

The New Tretyakov exhibition also presents

two large canvases from Vereshchagin's "Trilogy of Executions" cycle, as well as from the "1812" series. The latter is devoted to Napoleon's Russia campaign and seems to be largely inspired by Tolstoy's "War and Peace."

The exhibition is open until July 15.
10 Krymsky Val. Metro Oktyabrskaya.
tretiyakovgallery.ru



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The painter was an inveterate traveler who captivated audiences with his paintings of distant lands.



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Red Cavalry (Konarmia)

June 20-21

"Red Cavalry" ("Konarmia") is one of Maxim Didenko's first productions that made him a star of Moscow's contemporary and experimental theater. Known for his unorthodox productions, Didenko usually mixes several genres. "Red Cavalry" is loosely based on a collection of short stories by Russian author Isaac Babel devoted to the Russian Civil War of 1917-1922. There is some spoken narrative, but musical and dance numbers take precedence. Some of the music comprises traditional Jewish and Ukrainian songs, but the rest was composed by Didenko and his long-time collaborator Ivan Kushnir.

Meyerhold Theater and Cultural Center

23 Novoslobodskaya Ulitsa. Metro Mendeleyevskaya. meyerhold.ru



MEYERHOLD THEATER AND CULTURAL CENTER

Concert Mirror Suite

June 21

"Mirror Suite" is a concert of unofficial avant-garde music composed in the latter half of the 20th century in the Soviet Union. It is part of a series of events jointly organized by the AZ Museum, which aims to preserve and promote Anatoly Zverev's legacy, and GII (the State Institute for Art Studies), a major cultural and scientific institution. The music will be performed by Studia Novoi Muzyki (New Music Studio) at the Mirror Hall of the GII.

GII

5 Kozitsky Pereulok. Metro Chekhovskaya, Pushkinskaya
museum-az.ru



MEYERHOLD CENTER

Theater The Man From Podolsk

June 21

"The Man from Podolsk" was one of last season's most notable premieres. It was directed

by Mikhail Ugarov, the theater's artistic director who died shortly afterwards. The performance at first seems to address the subject of police abuse as a young man from Podolsk, a town in the Moscow region, is detained and brought to a police station without grounds. But then it turns out that the action takes place in an alternative reality, where the police are primarily concerned with the intellectual development of its city residents. Despite the plot's absurdity, "The Man from Podolsk" turns out to be a true story of Moscow life.

Teatr.doc

19 Maly Kazyonny Pereulok. Metro Kurskaya.
teatrdoc.ru

Opera Macbeth

June 20-22

This June, the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Academic Music Theater is premiering a new version of Giuseppe Verdi's opera based on Shakespeare's play. "Macbeth" is directed by the renowned Kama Ginkas, and it is his first opera in Russia. While other directors continue to update classic texts for modern times, Ginkas places Shakespeare's tale in prehistoric times.

Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Academic Music Theater

17 Ulitsa Bolshaya Dmitrovka. Metro Chekhovskaya.
stanmus.com

Concert Chicherina

June 21

Chicherina is a Yekaterinburg band fronted by its only original founding member, Yulia Chicherina. The band is mostly famous for "Tu-la-la" and "Zhara" ("Heat"), pop-rock hits from almost 20 years ago. But Chicherina has remained active, releasing her latest single in 2017. So it's likely that her Thursday concert at GlavClub will feature new material. So it should be a good time for those who would like to enjoy a bit of nostalgia, as well as for those who would not.

GlavClub

11 Ulitsa Ordzhonikidze. Metro Leninsky Prospekt.
glavclub.com



ANDREI NIKERICH / MOSKVA NEWS AGENCY

LIFEHACK

How Do I Book a Private Banya?

One of Russian life's greatest joys is the *banya*. An oasis of tranquility, indulgence and relaxation in an otherwise stressful city like Moscow, there's nothing like a good steam and soak in a traditional bathhouse to ease a hangover or cure those aches and pains. While purists would argue that you need to head to one of the city's public bathhouses like Sanduny to benefit from the full banya experience, getting naked in front of complete strangers isn't everyone's cup of tea.

If so, we recommend that you turn to sauna.ru. This handy website allows you to search for a banya according to price, location and capacity. You can see photos of the interiors, a map location and both a phone number and online booking form to reserve your venue of choice. It's worth noting that the price displayed per hour is for the rental of the entire

banya, not the price per individual. A per-hour fee may initially seem like a lot, but split between 15 people, you're looking at something more reasonable. Prices are cheaper in the daytime and on weekdays, and it's worth looking into lowered costs if you bring your own food and drinks.

Even if you're not in the market for a private steam session, the website is fun to browse anyway. With many extravagant banyas boasting banqueting tables, slightly dodgy looking "relaxation rooms" and pool tables as standard, hunting for your banya is half the fun. All you need to do is remember to request a stylish felt hat to protect your hair and the *veniki* (birch branches) with which to beat your poor tired body.

For more information see sauna.ru.

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