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18+



"The level of distrust that we have observed has gone down considerably".
Alexander Lavrentiev, Russia's envoy in Astana.

6

the number of years the Syrian conflict has lasted.

2012

the first negotiating talks are held in Geneva.



Russia and Turkey announced a cease-fire in late December, which has largely held with the exception of a number of areas around Damascus.

A New Map For Syria

By **Eva Hartog** e.hartog@imedia.ru

Following Russia's script, the Astana talks have set the tone for future developments in the Middle East

If Russia's state television channel Rossiya 1 was to be believed, the fate of Syria depended on this week's talks in Astana.

In comments at the start of negotiations, however, the head of the Russian delegation, Alexander Lavrentyev, advised caution. After nearly six years of conflict in Syria, he told reporters Russia did not expect "simple solutions." It was enough, he said, to bring "the warring sides closer together."

In a very literal sense, the Astana talks did exactly that. For the first time, Syrian rebel fighters themselves, not just their representatives, sat across from officials of Bashar Assad's government. Previously, Moscow denied that a moderate armed opposition even existed in Syria — every group was labeled terrorist.

Predictably enough, day one of the talks ended with the Syrian parties hurling accusations at each other. The rebels described Assad's regime as "bloody" and "despotic," while the regime cast those fighting it as "terrorists." When the summit concluded on Jan. 24, the two sides were still only engaging indirectly and no new agreement was signed.

And yet, for the Kremlin, Astana is a victory. The Kazakh capital provided the perfect setting to show off Moscow's new political alliance with regional powers. In this alliance, Russia is playing the first fiddle.

Together, the new allies have tried to prove their ability to broker a durable cease-fire be-



Pro-Government Syrians wave Russian flags in Aleppo, Syria on Jan. 19, 2017

tween warring factions. They aim to prove that they are more effective, at least, than the United States and the United Nations. In late December, Ankara and Moscow announced a ceasefire agreement which, though tarnished by violations, has refueled hopes of progress.

Ahead of yet another round of Geneva talks slated for Feb. 8, Astana was meant to cement Russia's position as an inescapable powerbroker in the conflict, while increasingly sidelining the United States. Other than in the form of U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan George Krol, acting in an observer role, the world superpower was notably absent from the talks.

"It was a public declaration on who holds the cards in Syria — more important for who it excluded than the actual content of the discussion," says Michael Kofman, from the Center for Naval Analyses.

Unlike the impression given by some Russian media, Astana has not sealed Syria's fate.

But it has underlined who the power brokers are and set the tone for future negotiations.

Now, after securing Assad position in power, the challenge for Moscow now is to find viable levers of control over the Syrian regime and its Iranian backers, says political analyst Vladimir Frolov: "While Iran is betting on maintaining leverage in Syria through its militias, Russia is seeking to recreate a strong Syrian state with a monopoly over armed force, with the regime and the opposition sharing power."

The map of new Syria has not yet been drawn. But the Astana plan tells us what the Russians think is a realistic outcome. According to Joseph Bahout, a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Middle East Program, such an outcome would reject the notion of a "unified, democratic Syria." Instead, the region's future would lie with "the consolidation of existing statelets" and "zones of influence," determined through local truces and reconciliations.

According to such a vision, Assad will likely remain in the picture for some time to come. Russia's hand in shaping events in Syria and the Middle East will be as strong as ever. **TMT**



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BETWEEN FAITHS

On Anti-Semitism, Tolstoy's Heir and the Crimes of Grandchildren

By **Borukh Gorin**
Head of public relations for the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia



It was a sure-fire way to turn a scandal into a disgrace. As the dispute over the transfer of St Petersburg's premier St. Isaac's Cathedral to the Russian Orthodox Church was picking up pace, Pyotr Tolstoy, Duma vice speaker and the great-grandson of renowned Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, made a controversial intervention.

By raising objections against the church, "the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who overstepped the boundaries of the Pale of Settlement with guns in 1917, continue their work," he said.

The "grandfathers" and "great-grandfathers" Tolstoy talks about refer to the Bolsheviks who demolished the church and fought against religion. Several prominent Jews numbered among them. The Pale of Settlement was an area of western Imperial Russia where Ashkenazi Jews were permitted to settle.

It does not take much imagination to understand the comments are anti-Semitic. Uttered as they were by a senior Russian official, they also caused a major uproar in the Jewish community. The Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia has formally expressed its indignation.

Pyotr Tolstoy responded by explaining that he was not referring to the Jews at all. It was an altogether unconvincing explanation. But it did not stop Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin — the fourth most powerful man in Russia's political hierarchy — rushing to his defense.

"This term refers to convicts," Volodin said. "Convicts later occupied positions of leadership in the revolution."

It is difficult to decide which is more shameful — the anti-Semitic prattle of the heir to a great name, or evasions that insult our intelligence by a senior government official. I cannot believe that the parliament is headed by a person who does not know that the Pale of Settlement refers to Jews.

Returning to the original question — grandchildren — it is useful to point out that Pyotr Tolstoy is the descendant of a great Russian writer who was once excommunicated by the Russian Orthodox Church for his so-called anti-church activities. Those "crimes" were qualitatively no different than the "crimes" supposedly committed by the Jews. Does that mean Pyotr Tolstoy carries the same responsibility for what happened to Orthodox churches in 1917?

Bear in mind, too, that the Soviet authorities destroyed a larger percentage of synagogues than they did churches. Does that mean Russian Jews should present their complaints to senior members of the State Duma? The Russian parliament is the political successor to those ruling authorities, after all.

Russia's Jews do not share a uniform opinion on the return of St. Isaac's Cathedral. Their position on the matter is no more uniform than on any other as-

pect of Russian life. And it certainly has no connection with how somebody's grandfather or great-grandfather thought or behaved a century ago.

Whatever happened in Russia then, today there is a different reality. People view that reality not as somebody's descendent, but as independent, rational individuals.

Tolstoy's statement can only be interpreted as primitive nationalist propaganda. Xenophobia is, no doubt, a great temptation for political opportunists. They have only to convince voters that some "stranger" disagrees with the majority, and no further proof is required. The stranger's "crime" lies in being different, thereby making him a stranger and an enemy.

Politicians have always exploited this fear. And, as the past year has shown, even the most developed European and North American democracies can stand powerless before this fear.

It is entirely unacceptable that someone with the standing of Pyotr Tolstoy should utter such remarks. Russia's ruling United Russia party explicitly rejects anti-Semitism, and its banner speaks of a united nation. Tolstoy's comments undermine both positions.

It is a break — an accident, let's say — that could be compared to the rupture of a sewage mains. If you don't stop the flow immediately, the stench will soon become unbearable. **TMT**



Will there be a KGB under full Communism? No, because people will learn to arrest themselves.

175

persecutions for sharing
"extremist" content online.



Krokodil: official Soviet satirical magazine where moderate mockery of safe subjects like bureaucracy was allowed.

58-10

Article of the Soviet criminal code under which jokes were prosecuted.



An example of a Soviet joke, illustrated in style of Krokodil, a Soviet era satirical magazine (though the original did not contain speech bubbles).

Nothing in the Shops, but Jokes Aplenty

By Alexey Kovalev a.kovalev@imedia.ru | Illustration by Evgeny Tonkonogy

Recently declassified CIA archives offer chilling parallels with modern Russia

It's a few months before the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, and the Soviet authorities are preparing to host guests from abroad. All the shops in Moscow have been instructed to never say no to a customer. A man is standing in line at a department store.

"I'd like to buy a pair of gloves," he says to the shop assistant. "Of course. Which size do you need?" "Nine." "Oh, I'm sorry, we're out of that size. What color would you like? Maybe we'll find something." "Brown." "Oh, I'm sorry, we're out of brown. Maybe you'd like to match your gloves to your coat? If you bring your coat to us, we'll certainly find something." The man behind him in the queue says: "Hey, don't believe them, it's all bullshit. I've already dragged my toilet bowl here and shown them my behind, but they're yet to find any matching toilet paper."

These were the jokes ordinary Soviet citizens told each other in the privacy of smoking rooms and cramped kitchens. There are thousands of them, yet they all touch on similar themes: repression, the scarcity of everyday goods, wars the USSR waged but disguised as "brotherly assistance," Soviet leaders (from fiery but speech-impaired Lenin, to senile Brezhnev, and impotent Gorbachev), ethnic minorities and the silent majority.

In the years since they circulated among the proletariat, Soviet jokes have captivated academics and even piqued the interest of U.S. Presidents (Ronald Reagan was a famous fan, and the butt of many a joke). But as recently declassified CIA files show, foreign intelligence agencies also took a profound interest in them.

The recent "joke file," released as part of a trove of declassified CIA files, is a paltry two-page PDF published on the CIA's website. According to its masthead, the document was compiled at the request of the Deputy Director of the CIA's office — and then, presumably, went to Ronald Reagan's stand-up routine.

Most of the jokes are generic and common to the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia or Hungary: A man goes into a shop and asks: "You don't have any meat?" "No," replies the lady, "We don't have any fish, it's the shop next door that doesn't have meat."

Others are specifically Soviet in character — particularly those that stereotype ethnic minorities — and are traceable to the late 80s, the final years of the Perestroika and the Soviet Union itself: "What's the difference between Gorbachev and Dubcek [Alexander Dubcek, the Czechoslovak politician deposed during the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia who later supported the Velvet Revolution in 1989]? None, but Gorbachev doesn't know it yet."

Mikhail Melnichenko, Russian historian and folklore scholar, says some of the famous Soviet jokes were not Soviet at all.

Melnichenko says one popular gag could be traced as far back as ancient Persia where it was used to ridicule a local tyrant. Jokes about food scarcity, similar to those of the Soviet genre, can be heard in Venezuela today.

Even though it lacks explanation and context, the jokes file still provides insight into how the Soviets tried to rationalize the baffling world of official doublethink. Ben Lewis, the author of "Hammer & Tickle," who traveled across the former Eastern Bloc to research Communist jokes, formulated the "minimalist" and "maximalist" theories of humor under repressive regimes.

According to the maximalist theory, jokes were instrumental in the downfall of these regimes. The minimalist theory maintains that they were — at best — a way for people to vent after a long and grueling day at the factory or in a queue for the staples.

Melnichenko, author of a 1,100-page collection of Soviet jokes, prefers the minimalist joke theory. "Not every person who told these jokes was an anti-Soviet activist," he told The Moscow Times. "It was a way to blow off some steam and discuss political topics in a way that the official discourse would not allow."

"I treat these jokes as just one of the folklore genres — yes, highly politicized — but still employed as a means of entertainment, not a way to channel political discontent."

Far more interesting, Melnichenko says, are the jokes that provide historical context. Here's one of his favorites: Three prisoners meet in a transit camp. "I've been serving time since 1929 for calling Karl Radek a counterrevolutionary." "I've been serving time since 1937 for failing to condemn Karl Radek as a counterrevolutionary." "And I'm Karl Radek, nice to meet you."

It's ironic, says Melnichenko, that Russians have to study Soviet jokes declassified by the CIA. Russian secret services, which inherited vast archives from their Soviet predecessors, refuse to declassify them or open them to the public and researchers. There are still thousands of unheard jokes, overheard by informers or seized by authorities, buried in yellowing folders.

The Soviet authorities' attitude towards jokes softened over the years. There was never a specific sentence or punishment for telling jokes, so they could be prosecuted under different sections of the Soviet criminal code.

In Stalin's times, a joke could put you in a labor camp: "A judge emerges from a courtroom laughing. 'What's the matter,' a colleague asks. 'Oh, I've just heard such a hilarious joke,' the judge says. 'Tell it then,' the colleague responds. 'I can't,' says the judge, 'I just gave some poor sod ten years for it.'"

Later, in the post-war period, telling a careless jibe within earshot of an informer could probably cost you your job for "disseminating deliberately false insinuations about the Soviet state and society," but it wouldn't cost your life.

For many, the release of the U.S. Soviet joke files cast eerie parallels with contemporary Russia. No longer are citizens prosecuted for jokes as such. But, the number of prosecutions for "extremism" or "public incitement to violate the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation" (a charge reserved critics of Russia's annexation of Crimea) has spiked since a package of new repressive laws passed during President Putin's third term.

Today a meme shared on social media can — and does — result in fines and even prison terms. According to the SOVA Center, in 2010 there were six prosecutions for sharing "extremist" content on social media. That figure increased to 175 in 2015.

The bitter joke in Russia today is: "My grandfather served time for telling a joke, I'm going to serve time for sharing memes." **TMT**

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4 Looking Forward



*"We repeal sanctions, it tells Russia, go ahead and do bad things. That would be terrible," Democratic Senator **Chuck Schumer***

The Moscow Times
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\$600Bln
estimated cost of sanctions
for Russia over 2014-2017

Dec. 2016

Barack Obama signed
his final sanctions order
against Russia..



Ukraine sanctions are enforced by
Executive Orders 13660, 13661, 13662
and 13685. Trump can annul these
orders.

No Golden Opportunity

By **Matthew Bodner** and **Mikhail Fishman** m.bodner@imedia.ru

Even if Trump wanted to lift sanctions, his options are limited

No actor on the world stage was as publicly energized by the prospect of a Donald Trump presidency as Russia. At first glance, the support seemed entirely emotional. But there was also a rational interest: Trump was open to lifting sanctions, after all.

Sanctions have had a negative impact on the Russian economy, a fact that Russian President Vladimir Putin was eventually forced to admit. They have also diplomatically isolated Russia to an extent unseen since the Cold War.

With Russian industries struggling to survive without the support of Western financial markets — arguably the biggest impact of the sanctions regime — Trump, a so-called “dealmaker” with a relatable worldview, seemed to provide a lifeline for the Kremlin. But as Trump settles into office, it is growing clearer that sanctions relief is unlikely to come in the near future. And there is little Moscow can do to hasten it.

Even if Trump himself may want to lift sanctions — or trade them to his own interest — he will first have to negotiate with his own Congress at home, and then with his nation's closest traditional allies across the Atlantic.

Neither will be easy.

What Does Trump Want From Russia?

Trump's desire to strike a deal with Putin is not new, and has apparently not changed since he took office. In recent interviews, he reaffirmed his willingness to trade sanctions relief for Russian support in combating the Islamic State. He also said he would trade sanctions for a nuclear deal — apparently unaware that Obama already secured one in 2010.

“He simply doesn't understand what to do with Russia yet,” says Fyodor Lukyanov, a Russian foreign affairs expert.

Trump, it seems, only knows that he wants to make a deal with Russia. To those ends, a meeting with Putin is expected in the near future. The focus will likely remain on the Middle East, where Putin and Trump appear to see eye-to-eye.

Beyond that, nothing is guaranteed.

Regardless of the new administration's rhetoric, there are many signs Russia will not be a top policy priority for the Trump administration. First, the administration is divided on Putin. Most notably, the new defence secretary, Gen. James Mattis, takes a much more hardline position on the Russian leader than Trump himself.

Second, the allegations that Russia somehow helped Trump win the election will likely compel him to avoid looking too eager to work with Putin. They also reduce the likelihood of sanctions being lifted in the near-term.



ANDREW HARNIK / AP

Donald Trump has suggested that he would be interested in lifting sanctions against Russia. U.S. Congress and European partners are, however, likely to stand in the way.

What Can He Actually Do?

Assuming Trump wants to lift sanctions immediately, to what extent can he act unilaterally? In short, that depends on the type of sanctions under discussion. Some can be lifted with the stroke of his presidential pen, while others are enshrined in laws passed by large margins in the U.S. Congress.

In terms of unilateral action, Trump has the greatest room to maneuver when it comes to the sanctions levied against Moscow for its actions in Ukraine. These are based on four Obama-era executive orders. Trump, as president, can annul them. He can also overturn sanctions placed in December by executive order as a response to Russia's alleged election interference.

But Trump might not have the political capital to afford such unilateral action. President Obama, when signing the orders in question, enjoyed broad bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress for taking measures against Russia's intervention in Ukraine. Many at the time, especially in Trump's own Republican party, argued that Obama's response was not strong enough.

Already, a bipartisan effort is underway to pass a bill that requires any easing of sanctions against Russia be approved by the Congress. If recent congressional actions are any indication, the proposal has a good chance of being passed. A similar law, restricting Obama's ability to unilaterally lift Iran sanctions,

passed in 2015 with bipartisan support.

The remainder of U.S. sanctions against Russia are acts of Congress, which means only they can overturn them. Specifically, these are sanctions imposed on Russia for violations of arms control statutes and violations of human rights.

Broadly speaking, the U.S. Congress has been historically tough on all questions pertaining to Russia.

Will Europe Assist?

The issue of sanctions against Russia is not simply an American one. Washington's allies in Europe have closely mirrored and worked with the previous U.S. administration to impose their own sanctions on Russia. On the whole, it has been an allied effort. This makes it unlikely that Trump will lift sanctions unilaterally, says political expert Vladimir Frolov.

However, the situation in Europe is changing in Russia's favor. New winds are blowing across the continent, and the moods may be shifting. Populist movements are on the rise, and voices in favor of weakening sanctions on Russia are growing stronger.

Even the cornerstone Franco-German axis is under strain. Francois Fillon, the frontrunner in this year's French presidential election, is known for his lobbying against sanctions. On Jan. 23, after meeting German Chancellor Angela Merkel, he told reporters that Europe must be prepared to lift sanctions if Trump tries to go over their heads — “which is not inconceivable.”

The lifting of EU sanctions against Russia is no less complicated than the lifting of American sanctions. It will require a broad, union-wide consensus. Moreover, European sanctions are tied to the implementation of the Minsk ceasefire agreements in Ukraine. That wouldn't necessarily be a deal-breaker, says Lukyanov: It could be overcome should the major actors — Germany, in particular — support a u-turn on Russia.

Will Germany Break?

However, while France under a prospective Fillon presidency may be open to lifting sanctions, Germany under Merkel is not. “Under Merkel, Germany now is taking all responsibility for maintaining global liberal values”, says Alexander Rahr, research director of the German-Russian Forum. And Moscow's ability to undermine Merkel's stance are extremely limited.

The question is, then, how long can Merkel hold the line? Even she would be forced to change tack were Trump to ignore the concerns of his strongest ally on the European continent and unilaterally lift sanctions, argues Rahr.

Since that remains an unlikely scenario, Moscow's dreams of future free of a sanctions will, for the moment, have to wait. **TMT**

Sanctions at a glance

United States Sanctions			European Union Sanctions
Ukraine Sanctions	Arms control sanctions (Iran, North Korea, Syria Nonproliferation Act)	Human rights sanctions (Magnitsky Act)	Ukraine Sanctions
Level of decision-making: the White House	Level of decision-making: the Congress	Level of decision-making: the Congress	Level of decision-making: Council of the European Union, by unanimous vote
Sanctioned entities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior Russian officials and their foreign assets• Companies benefitted from Crimea• Energy, defense and banking sectors	Sanctioned entities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Russian state arms export agency Rosoboronexport• Four Russian military-industrial enterprises	Sanctioned entities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior Russian officials and their foreign assets	Sanctioned entities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior Russian officials and their foreign assets• Companies benefitted from Crimea• Energy, defense and banking sectors• Broad arms trade embargo



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Реклама



"The fight against corruption is not a show" – Vladimir Putin, December 2016.

131st

out of 176 – Russia's place in latest corruption index.



According to Transparency International Denmark, New Zealand and Finland are the least corrupt countries — whereas North Korea, South Sudan and Somalia are most corrupt.

November 2016

Economy Minister Alexei Ulyukaev controversially arrested on bribery charges.

Russia's Corruption Paradox

State-backed show trials might make for good PR, but they do nothing for the fight against financial crime



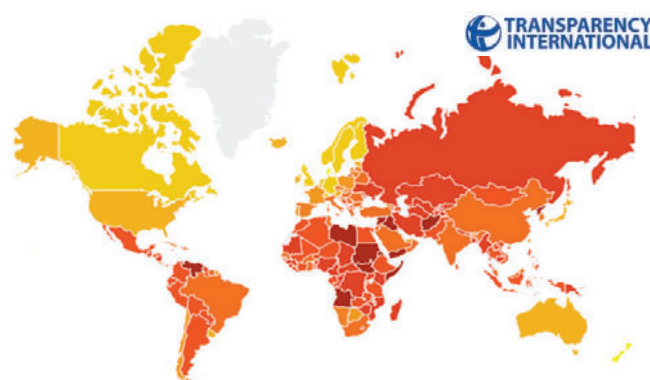
Op-Ed by **Anton Pominov**
Executive Director, Transparency International — Russia

Transparency International has published its latest Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). Top of the rankings were Denmark, New Zealand, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland. Last place was shared by Somalia, South Sudan, North Korea, Syria and Yemen. Russia was not far off the bottom pack — 131st place out of 176.

The factors that ensure a rise to the top of the ratings are clear: democracy, political competition, an independent judiciary, a free press, as well as strong economic development. Conversely, it is just as clear that the practical absence of a state — the examples of Somalia, Syria and South Sudan — is a guarantee of last place in the rating. Another guarantee of poor ratings is centralised state power at the expense of civil society and legal accountability.

Russia is an example of this latter trend. It has shown only minor changes over the past five years: in this time, its ranking has improved by just one point out of a hundred. Russia's continuing low marks are particularly striking in light of a highly visible anti-corruption campaign launched last year.

Transparency International's report includes recommendations for what to do to move up in the Index. But Russia ignores the guidelines. Instead, the country's leadership has launched a purely emblematic battle against corruption. It is impossible to rise to the top rungs of our rating with directives like "convict 300 people for corruption" or "arrest a governor." Last year, a federal minister was arrested for the first time.



Very clean

Highly corrupt

Source: Transparency International

These moves are superficial and fail to address the root of the problem: institutions.

In December 2014, we recommended introducing protections for whistleblowers and an electronic system for the public declaration of officials' income and property. We also suggested removing excessive regulation of the press and civic organisations that act as anti-corruption watchdogs. Those are the kind of institutional changes that would impact the country's corruption ranking right away.

We continue to advise against increasing the number of anti-corruption administrators in the security agencies. Such a move could, in theory, be effective. But just as easily, it will have exactly the opposite effect.

Here are our recommendations for 2017: draft and pass laws on lobbying and on the protection of whistleblowers, require law enforcement agencies to respond to public and press in-

vestigations, ensure the economic independence of the courts from the executive branch, engage in international cooperation in asset recovery and in uncovering beneficial owners.

Showing a TV program about the arrest of another high-ranking official is, of course, an excellent display of state initiative. There have been dozens of these trials this year alone. Unfortunately, effective anti-corruption measures based on institutional change lack the PR glamour of high profile trials, but they are significantly more effective.

In China, there is the death penalty for corruption — every official who is caught stealing is shot and replaced by another, and nobody can be sure that they too will not suffer the same fate. This is an efficient way to ensure new hires. It is clearly not so great for combating corruption.

Here are some other recommendations. Court chairmen should be elected and the distribution of cases among them should be random. Russia needs to participate, finally, in international efforts to return illicit assets.

Another important point: no country in the top 20 of our index found fault with its independent media or the activities of its civil society. We say it year after year: those are our allies in the fight against corruption, not enemies of the state. Finally, we need fair elections. Not just once, but every time.

None of this is particularly original. It is taught in most political science and economics departments and it is also confirmed by life experience. The countries in the first third of the index have more in common than not. But there are countries and leaders that prefer to go their own way. At their best, they go overboard. At their worst, they are corrupt autocrats themselves.

Thieves and corruptioneers should, of course, be punished. But you should not expect to achieve long-term results or to move up the CPI rankings by repression alone. Indeed, you cannot win by fighting corruption. To win, you have to build institutions. **TMT**



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Реклама



"The U.S. hasn't done anything to give us grounds to revise the law"
Yelena Afanasyeva, author of the adoption amendment.

The Moscow Times
 No. 5789

40,000

fewer children in orphanages in 2015 than in 2012.

200-250

estimated number of families whose adoption plans were halted in 2013.



Russia and the U.S. signed the bilateral agreement in 2011, outlining rules of intercountry adoption and addressing Russia's concerns about children's safety. The Dima Yakovlev law voided it.



VIACHESLAV YAKOBCHUK / SHUTTERSTOCK

Bargaining Chips

By **Daria Litvinova** and **Eva Hartog** newsreporter@imedia.ru

Following a European Court ruling, raises hope that Russia's much-derided ban on adoption by U.S. citizens could soon be overturned

By the time the ban came into effect, Jennifer and Josh Johnston, an American couple, were only one court hearing away from taking four-year-old Anastasia home with them from an orphanage outside Moscow.

"When our time with Anastasia was over, we promised her we would come back and take her. She said she would wait," says Jennifer.

The happy reunion never happened. In January 2013, Russia introduced the notorious Dima Yakovlev law banning the adoption of Russian orphans by U.S. nationals. "We broke our promise," Jennifer said, her voice cracking.

Since then, there have been hundreds of sleepless nights and many tears over conference calls with other families hit by the ban with U.S. officials. A mountain of paperwork was also gathered for the class action suit filed at the European Court of Human Rights by 45 U.S. families on behalf of themselves and 27 Russian children.

Four years later, on Jan. 17, 2017, the ECtHR ruled in the families' favor, stating that the ban unlawfully discriminated against prospective parents on the basis of nationality. The ruling means Russia owes the families financial compensation. More importantly, it has fed hopes that the law could be overturned, and that more than 200 affected families can be reunited with the children they were forced to leave behind.

"We are hopeful that the U.S. and Russian governments can come together and negotiate a way for at least the children who were already assigned American families before the ban to be able to finish their adoptions," says Katrina Morriss, whose plan to adopt a seven-year-old girl with Down syndrome, Lera, was also crushed in 2013.

However, the Yakovlev law had little to do with either fam-

ily values, love, or children. In fact, the adoption clause was part of a purely politically-motivated legislative act, to retaliate against the U.S. at a time of geopolitical tension.

Russian orphans were caught up in the geopolitical crossfire in 2013; Four years later, with a new president in the White House, the children affected by the Yakovlev law could become political pawns once more.

A Question of Politics

The Yakovlev law was designed in retaliation for the Magnitsky Act, an American law named after Sergei Magnitsky. A Russian lawyer who had been investigating government tax fraud, Magnitsky died in prison in 2009 of a heart attack under suspect conditions.

In response to the lawyer's death, the U.S. blacklisted a number of Russian officials involved in "human rights abuses." A total of 18 individuals were banned from entering the country or owning real estate or other U.S. assets.

In mid-December 2012, Russia introduced a draft bill, tagged the "anti-Magnitsky law," introducing similar measures against Americans "involved in human rights abuses."

Several days after passing its first reading, however, an amendment was introduced to the bill to include an entirely new clause imposing a blanket ban on Americans' adopting Russian orphans.

"It came as a complete surprise," says Dmitry Gudkov, one of a handful of opposition politicians at the time, and a staunch critic of the Yakovlev law. "Before that, the word adoption hadn't even been mentioned."

The alleged danger for Russian orphans across the pond had become a talking point on state media after the much publicized

case of Dima Yakovlev, a toddler who died of heatstroke after being left alone in a car by his American adoptive father in 2008.

But the hyped stories of personal tragedy didn't coincide with Russia's political agenda until large protests broke out in 2011 and 2012 against rigged parliamentary elections and Russian President Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency.

"The Kremlin suspected the U.S. of trying to instigate a color revolution, and the adoption ban was an act of retaliation," says political scientist Valery Solovoi.

He argues that the plight of Russian children abroad was also a psychologically effective way of distracting Russians from other domestic issues. "People are always worried about children," he adds.

By merging the anti-adoption measure with the anti-Magnitsky law, authorities were hoping to avoid a fuss, says political analyst Yekaterina Schulmann.

But the plan backfired — people working in the social services sector and a handful of opposition politicians, including Gudkov, raised the alarm, attracting widespread outrage on social media and even small protests. To its critics, the measure became known as "The Scoundrels' Law."

Despite the concerns, only two days later the Duma voted practically unanimously in favor of the bill. Only 7 lawmakers voted against it.

"The pressure was intense," remembers Gudkov. "It was made clear to deputies that not voting would have consequences, and that the order had come from the very top."

It became a turning point for a parliament which gained a reputation for rubber-stamping the Kremlin's proposals, says Schulmann.

Continued on Page 11 →

Out & About



January 26 –
February 1, 2017

7

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



VOLNA



Volna offers
traditional
Russian
seafood us-
ing fresh fish
from each of
the country's
distinct sea
coasts.

The Restaurant Making Waves in Moscow

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

Introducing Volna - a fish restaurant from the owners of Pushkin

Volna - "wave" - is a new restaurant by Andrei Dellos, the owner of Pushkin, the compulsory stop for well-off tourists, and the omnipresent Mu Mu fastfood chain. Volna replaced the Nordic cuisine restaurant Orange 3, which also belonged to Maison Dellos.

In the center of the hall you'll find a counter stall where you can check out the shrimps, oysters and fish in ice baths. Behind the stall is an open kitchen. The wall in the back is covered with carved fish shapes and the lighting gives them the illusion of a 3-D projection.

Volna's brand chef is Andrei Makhov, who's been at the helm of Pushkin for many years. He works together with chef Denis Fil, known for his restaurant work in Russia's southern Krasnodar region.

Volna is about fish and seafood in all its varieties and it comes from all over the country—from Northern rivers (omul, whitefish, salmon), from the Baltic Sea (lamprey and smoked eel), from the Black Sea (mussels, mullet) and from the Far East (shrimps and crabs).

Volna capitalizes on the trend of going back to the roots of Russian cuisine. Thus, fish is

not just cooked at a run of the mill grill, but by a technique called "na rashchepe," literally, "splintered wood." Volna also brings back some old Russian recipes, like "telnoye"—fish patty made of carp, served with stewed cabbage (590 rubles).

There's a lot of raw fish—try suguday made of omul, a fish native to Lake Baikal, cut into extra thin slices and served with a bit of oil and salt (495 rubles). You also have your choice of stroganina, similar to suguday, but served frozen, made of red salmon or whitefish (from 790 rubles). If you are looking for something more

familiar, order ceviche made of river trout from Karelia (650 rubles).

Seafood is rather pricey, 1 kilogram of shrimp will cost you 3,900 rubles, while crab fingers are 4,400 rubles. If you're short on the green, you can also try "rybnik" (fish pie) with Northern fish — 1,100 rubles for four people. Wash your fish down with a glass of white or rosé from a carefully curated wine menu (from about 400 rubles). **T.M.T.**

+7 (495) 025 0015

rest-volna.ru

26 Tverskoy Bulvar, Bldg. 2
Metro Tverskaya, Pushkinskaya

NEWS & OPENINGS



15 KITCHEN + BAR

15 Kitchen + Bar

Michelin-starred chef from NYC

15 Kitchen + Bar's concept is that it hosts chefs from all over the world. The latest arrival is Chris Arellanes, who's worked at three-Michelin star restaurants in New York City: Per Se and Eleven Madison Park. Try the excellent burrata with caramelized carrot and cranberries (700 rubles) or veal tongue in mayonnaise-based sauce with bits of bear's garlic (500 rubles).

+7 (985) 767 1066

15kitchenbar.ru

15 Pozharsky Pereulok
Metro Kropotkinskaya



CHINA BISTRO

China Bistro

Chinese classics in the Telegraph building

China Bistro replaced the recently closed "Kitayskie Novosti" (Chinese News). The menu consists of perennial classics like smashed cucumber salad (220 rubles), Gong Bao chicken (280 rubles), spicy Szechuan beef (350 rubles), and several types of dim sum (try the one with crab-meat — 390 rubles). Chase it with a cold Tsingtao beer (270 rubles) or pu-erh tea for just 120 rubles.

+7 (495) 227 3808

chinabistro.ru

7 Tverskaya Ulitsa
Metro Okhotny Ryad, Teatralnaya



FOUR ROOMS

Four Rooms

Wine bar, coffee shop and a restaurant rolled into one

Located on Kamergersky Pereulok, Four Rooms is divided into three areas: a coffee shop at the entrance, wine bar in the basement and a restaurant upstairs. The restaurant has a somewhat innovative menu. Try duck confit with quinoa and carrot sauce (750 rubles) or salmon with potato rösti and sesame sauce (690 rubles).

+7 (495) 651 0807

facebook.com/pg/fourroomsrestaurant

5/7 Kamergersky Pereulok
Metro Okhotny Ryad, Teatralnaya



DICTATURA AESTETICA BAR / FACEBOOK

Dictatura Aestetica Bar

Secret gin bar on the island

An innocuous door with a chalk drawing of a martini glass signals the entrance to this watering hole. With its proliferation of candles, exposed brick walls and its interesting use of a bedstead as a sofa, the interior has the feel of a gothic den of iniquity. If you successfully navigate the standoffish doorman, the house gimlet (400 rubles) is a well-deserved reward.

+7 (495) 991 9946

facebook.com/dictaturabar

6 Bersenevskaya Naberezhnaya, Bldg. 2
Metro Kropotkinskaya

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!**

Promotion
No. 5789

Flotilla
Radisson
ROYAL MOSCOW



РЕКЛАМА

Daily cruises along the Moscow River are a great way to explore the capital in 1.5 or 2.5 hours, all year round, in any weather, with no traffic jams! On the longer cruises passengers see all the best sights of Moscow: the Kremlin, Novodevichy Convent, the monument to Peter the Great, St. Basil's Cathedral, Moscow State University and much more — all in comfort, while enjoying a delicious meal made fresh right on board the ship.

2. The House of Architects

Next look to your left at the semicircular residential house on the hill known as the House of Architects. In 1934, when Alexei Shchusev, who designed Lenin's Mausoleum, was commissioned to construct an apartment block for acclaimed architects, there was the small Church of the Annunciation standing here. Legend has it that Shchusev curved the house to spare the church from destruction. Was it just a coincidence that the church was torn down after his death? In Soviet times, the intellectual elite, including the famous linguist Dietmar Rosenthal and pianist Maria Yudina, lived here. Today it's for anyone who can afford it.

5 Rostovskaya Naberezhnaya

Vorobevskaya Naberezhnaya

3



Plushchad Kiyevskogo Vokzala

1

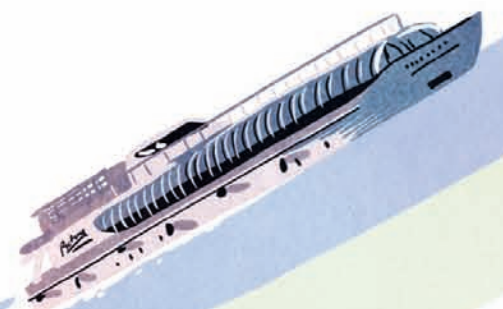
Metro
Kievskaya

2



3. The Sparrow Hills

The forested slopes of the Sparrow Hills on the right rise some 70 meters above the river, making it one of the highest points in Moscow — and a great place to see the city from the observation platform. Over the past 200 years, the authorities have been tempted to build something monumental here, like the Christ the Savior Cathedral, a stadium, one more statue of Lenin, or a monument to Russia's medieval Prince Vladimir, but the fragile hillside foiled all their plans. The only projects brought to life here were the Moscow State University (built in 1953) which is a kilometer from the slope, and a ski jump built same year. Now it's undergoing repairs, while snow bunnies the three downhill ski trails.



Along the Moscow River Familiar Landmarks Decked Out For Winter

By **Daria Demidova** artsreporter@imedia.ru | Illustration by **Evgeny Tonkonogy**

Follow the curves of the Moscow River by boat for an extraordinary view of riverside attractions

Along the Moscow River

Promotion
4-hour cruise

9

Flotilla
Radisson
ROYAL, MOSCOW

Gastronomic cruises with a new brand-chef on Radisson Royal yachts.

The yachts of flotilla “Radisson Royal, Moscow” are famous not only for great routes, when from the deck you can see all the main sights of Moscow, but also for an excellent restaurant service. This season we are working with a new chef **Sergey Maslov**, who has many years of experience behind him with Regis Trigales. International experience of Sergey was influenced by the gastronomic traditions of different countries - from France and Russia to India and Thailand. His professional opinion coincides with the philosophy of the Flotilla: the food must be a gastronomic pleasure. Sergey has completely altered the cruise menu, he presents dishes of Russian and Asian cuisine, Italian and Mediterranean. The peculiarity of the author's signature is the original interpretation of classic recipes.

РЕКЛАМА

6. Peter the Great

The colossal bronze statue of Peter the Great standing on a boat deck with a golden goblet in his hand marks the confluence of the Moscow River and the Drainage Canal. Put up in 1997 by Georgian sculptor Zurab Tsereteli, the monument was immediately voted the city's ugliest sculpture. Thousands of Muscovites argued that the 98-meter statue disrupted the city's architectural integrity and demanded that it be taken down. But it's never easy to get rid of a monarch, especially one that weighs 2,000 tons. The bronze emperor still stands firmly on his pedestal despite all attempts to oust him.

10 Krymskaya Naberezhnaya



Rostovskaya Naberezhnaya

7. House on the Embankment

Finally, enjoy the view of the oddly shaped apartment complex known as the House on the Embankment, on the right bank. This monumental complex built in late constructivist style in 1931 for high Soviet officials embraced the latest concepts about ideal housing. Like modern premium-class residential compounds, the house offered their tenants all sorts of facilities, including a laundry, post office, nursery school, and - a special feature - the film theater “Udarnik” (meaning “shock worker”) which had a unique retractable roof. This good life was enjoyed by only a few in the Soviet era, and here they enjoyed themselves for only a short time: over 700 of the 2,000 residents were imprisoned or executed. Today, these extravagant apartments are still a symbol of high social — and economic — status.

2 Ulitsa Serafimovicha

Ulitsa Serafimovicha



Metro
Oktyabrskay



5. The Central House of Artists

After going under the bridge, on the right you'll see a bulky grey structure one could easily mistake for a warehouse or a factory but is actually the Central House of Artists and the New Tretyakov Gallery. The odd bit is that the facade of the Doge's Palace in Venice was apparently the source of inspiration for the architect, Nikolai Sukoyan. Put up in 1979, it is one of the world's largest exhibition centers. You might see a long line of people shivering in the cold, waiting to buy tickets for a special exhibition.

10/14 Ulitsa Krymsky Val

Krymskaya Naberezhnaya

Ulitsa Krymsky Val

4

4. Gorky Park

The Sparrow Hills merge into Neskuchny Sad (“fun-filled garden”), which in turn flows into Gorky Park. During the winter months, this integrated park zone continues to be a center for sports and outdoor fun. Gorky Park competes with VDNKh Park for having the largest artificial-ice skating rink in the city. It certainly is the most colorful with multi-colored ice and a giant 8-meter high frozen fountain in every color in the rainbow. There are also slides and jumps right onto the embankment for snowboard fans.

9 Ulitsa Krymsky Val





Emily Knightley, Emily's Pantry

For special occasions my favorite restaurant has to be **Chemodan** where you step back in time for an exquisitely authentic Russian meal of Siberian wild venison and mouth-watering braised red cabbage, washed down with homemade cranberry nalivka.



Eight Mind-Blowing Quests in Moscow

The idea behind the recent quest craze in Moscow is simple enough — you take a computer game off line, put a team of players in an impossible situation, and they attempt to get out of it. The first quests appeared in Moscow in 2013. In 2014 there were already several companies running quests, and by 2015, it turned into a full-fledged obsession. Several hundred quests are currently available in Moscow. We picked the most interesting.

The Mystery of Marilyn Monroe

Solve the famous case

The Mystery of Marilyn Monroe is by Kinokvest, a company that organizes quests based on famous films or cinema-related stories. It's a quest-investigation set in the America of the 1960s. Players have to investigate the death of Marilyn Monroe. The details have been carefully copied from the actual items that belonged to the actress. Monroe room, where she spent her last night, was reconstructed from archival photographs. It looks incredibly beautiful and real, so you might think you're in the original apartment. Players say that it's great that the story's finale is also very realistic.

+7 (499) 653 9065

kinoquest.ru

13 Izmaylovskoye Shosse
Metro Semenovskaya



Santa's Factory

Help Santa to save Christmas

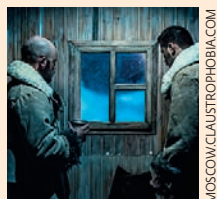
Santa's Factory is a quest for kids, where they get to be Santa's little helpers. Here you have a sleigh and a magic fireplace, the whole works. At the entrance you have to put on comfortable fur slippers, postcards

haven't been sent yet, presents are not ready and a Christmas party is under a threat! You and your team of elves are the last hope. Try to find out who is going to spoil the holiday and stop them before midnight comes.

+7 (926) 886 7709

moscow.claustrophobia.com

18 Ulitsa Shabolovka, Bldg. 2
Metro Shabolovskaya



The Polar Station

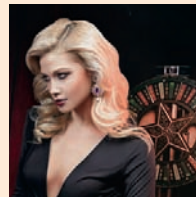
Travel to the South Pole without leaving Moscow

The Polar Station is a romantic quest just for two. Perfect for fans of Jack London stories about the North. You will be given extra coats, but dress warm just in case. Part of an expedition to the South Pole, you were hit by a storm and lost any connection to the outside world. There is an abandoned polar station nearby and you must fix the equipment to send a distress signal. The big storm is coming and you need to hurry, otherwise the rescue team won't be able to save you.

+7 (985) 787 0047

moscow.claustrophobia.com

46/50 Kosmodamianskaya naberezhnaya,
Bldg. 1
Metro Paveletskaya



Casino

How to get away with a robbery

Casino is a series of quests by the Exit company. Located in one building, all the rooms in this quest form a consistent story. The casino is managed by a ruthless psychopath and mystic, Jack Crayton. The house always wins and the only way to outsmart Jack is to rob the casino, which is what the teams of players are tasked with. Every room has a different assignment, but the most curious one is Options for Retreat, where you need to carefully plan your exit strategy.

+7 (495) 211 4030

exit.am

21 Ulitsa Novy Arbat
Metro Arbatskaya, Smolenskaya

I, Robot

Travel into space with a hologram

I, Robot is a quest for the whole family. Saving the world can be fun and you get strapped into a space ship and go to a station where there's been a fire. You need to figure out the reasons behind the incident, put out the fire and decide whether to believe whether the space station's manager is a robot or a human. Another bonus is that the quest's leader, who is giving you directions and useful tips, is an actual hologram.

+7 (916) 478 9411

moscow.claustrophobia.com

11 Ulitsa Baumanskaya, loft 7
Metro Baumanskaya



The House of Bella

Haunted house quest

The House of Bella is a quest-performance by Cherdak — Crazy Quests company. It's a scary adventure in an old mansion with antiques and a mysterious inhabitant. You are lucky enough

to be the sole heir of a deceased relative, who bequeathed a house with all its furniture to you. But someone's already taken charge of the family house and you'd better keep out of her way. The interior of the House of Bella was developed by people who worked on several sets for films and TV series, and it feels like the inside of a horror movie. It's a mystical adventure with unexpected plot twists.

+7 (964) 622 2274

crazyquests.ru

3 Rubtsovskaya naberezhnaya, Bldg. 17
Metro Elektrozavodskaya



Secret Conspiracy

Perfect treat for a conspiracy theorist

Secret Conspiracy is organized by the World of Quests. The Brotherhood of Masons intends to carry out a revolution in a country, which would lead to major calamities across the world. You need to uncover the conspiracy and stop this global crisis. This quest is special because it has virtually no "search and find" assignments or mathematical puzzles. It will test your logic, attentiveness and agility. The equipment and the props on this quest seem to be rather expensive. The location consists of several spacious rooms.

+7 (926) 453 7078

worldofquests.ru

10 Bolshaya Pereyaslavskaya Ulitsa
Metro Prospekt Mira

Crossroads of Time

A quest for technology buffs

Crossroads of Time is organized by the company Seryoznie Igrы (Serious Games). An eccentric professor created dozens of marvelous devices and each can change the world. You are to understand the ingenious mechanisms and complete the work of the scientist, who left behind a laboratory filled with an incredible number of inventions. You also need to solve a mystery, and the destiny of the entire planet depends on it.

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request.ru

5 Likhov Pereulok

Metro Trubnaya, Tsvetnoy Bulvar

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"This isn't a question of politics. It's a question of ethics,"
Dmitry Gudkov.

5,600
children sent to orphanages
by foster families in 2015.

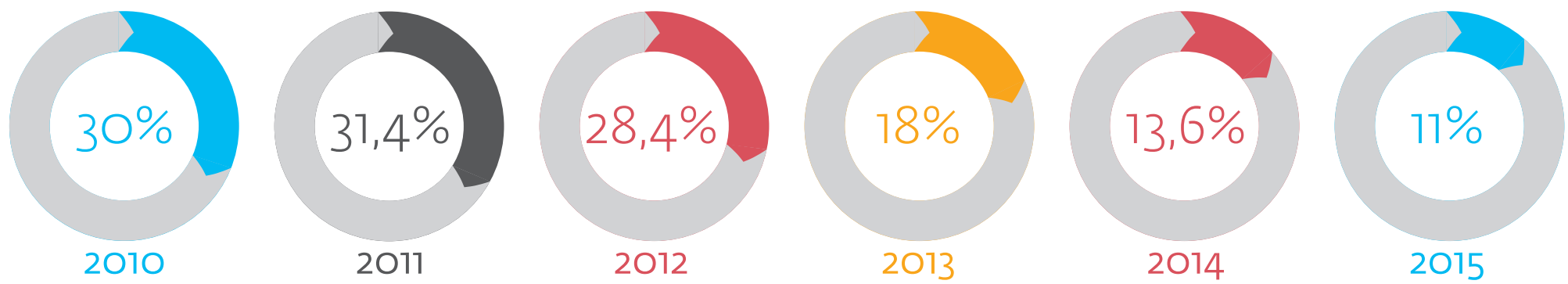


The Yakovlev law was named after Dima Yakovlev, a Russian toddler who died in 2008 of heatstroke after his adoptive father left him in a car for nine hours. A U.S. court acquitted the man of involuntary manslaughter.

\$3,600
The amount Russia owes each American family that sued the country through the ECtHR.

International Adoption in Russia

International adoption in Russia has been steadily decreasing over the past five years, plummeting from 30 percent of all adoptions in 2010 to 11 percent in 2015.



Source: RBC.

← Continued from Page 6

Effective Immediately

The law was widely criticized for stripping Russian orphans — especially those with disabilities — of the opportunities the U.S. can offer. Cutting-edge medical treatments, better living conditions, quality education — privileges which, critics said, were out of reach for disabled children from remote Russian regions — are widely available in the U.S. But most importantly, those already in the process of being adopted were deprived of families they had already met and grown attached to.

“Of course if the law had been passed a little later, I would have left for the U.S. and would have gotten a great education there,” says Maxim Kargapoltssev, an orphan whose adoption by an American couple was halted by the ban. He was 14 at the time.

Now an 18-year-old college student in Chelyabinsk, Maxim was one of the Russians on whose behalf the lawsuit was filed to the ECtHR.

“I could have had a family when I needed one most. I still stay in touch with the couple who planned to adopt me — I recently visited them when I was on a holiday. But having a family at a younger age is a completely different thing,” Kargapoltssev told The Moscow Times.

Supporters of the ban argue that it has improved the lives of Russian orphans. “The attitude towards orphans and people who want to adopt has changed drastically. There was more financial support, orphanages changed the way they worked and Russian adoptions increased — despite the fact that we’re going through a financial crisis,” Yelena Afanasyeva, the very lawmaker who introduced the notorious adoption provision to the law in 2012, told The Moscow Times.

According to official government statistics, before the Yakovlev law came into force, there were almost twice as many children in orphanages than after: some 104,000 in 2012 compared to 60,100 by the end of 2015.

However, the number of actual adoptions has decreased: In 2012, Russian families adopted 6,500 children, whereas in 2015 that number was only 5,900. International adoption reached its lowest point last year, plummeting from 2,400 children in 2012 to 746 in 2015. At the same time, according to the office of Russia’s children’s ombudswoman Anna Kuznetsova, the number of children being returned to orphanages has increased in 2015 alone, 5,600 children were sent back to orphanages from foster families, which is 6 percent more than in 2014.

In general, lower numbers of children in orphanages does not necessarily mean that the situation has improved, says Yelena Alshanskaya, head of the Volunteers to Help Orphans charity foundation.

“Those figures can reflect a number of factors: decreased birth rates, social services taking fewer children away from families, government officials not willing to register new cases,” Alshanskaya told The Moscow Times.

Changes on the Way?

Following the ECtHR ruling, the clause banning adoption for U.S. citizens has once more become the subject of debate. For the first time in years, top officials have publicly expressed a willingness, if not reverse the law, to at least reconsider it.

Valentina Matvienko, speaker of Russia’s Federation Council, recently said Russia was prepared for “dialogue” on the law if the U.S. could “guarantee the health of Russian children.”

“This law is not a goal in itself,” she was cited as saying by Russian media.



ANDREI PRONIN / TASS

The Yakovlev law sparked outrage across Russia, and in large cities people took to the streets to rally against it.

Russian children’s rights ombudswoman Anna Kuznetsova also expressed a hesitant willingness to talk. “Our first task is to review how children who are already there are doing. If everything is fine, we can start asking what to do with the law,” she told reporters, adding that Russia’s request to follow up on children had so far been “ignored.”

Other Russian officials were not so keen to concede. Georgy Matyushkin, Russia’s representative in the ECtHR, already announced the country would appeal the ruling to the Court’s Grand Chamber. It is allowed to do so within the next three months, says Karinna Moskalenko, the lawyer who represented American families in the lawsuit.

The lawyer cautions against such a move, however. “All Grand Chamber cases go through public hearings, and nothing good will come out of drawing even more attention to this shameful legislation. It already looks very unsightly for Russia,” she said.

Matter of Political Will

Nonetheless, the statements are a careful sign that under U.S. President Donald Trump, Russia is preparing the ground for negotiations. With the Kremlin hoping sanctions targeted at Russian officials could be lifted, the Yakovlev law might become a potential negotiating tool.

“Russia does not have much to offer in such negotiations, but the Yakovlev law is something that can be bargained with,” says Solovei. He considers it unlikely that the law will be completely reversed and argues that concessions are likely to come in the form of amendments.

“Russia will never publicly say that it made a mistake or that it took inhumane action,” he says. “So if it’s partially reversed, it won’t be an act of humanity, it’ll be politically expedient.”

Even then, there are several obstacles to reversing the ban. For one, despite some protest, many Russians support the measure.

Figures by the state-run VTsIOM pollster show support for the adoption ban has steadily grown over recent years, with 76 percent of respondents in a 2015 survey supporting the law. Changing that sentiment would require a serious information campaign.

“After everything that has been said, including features on state television on Russian children being killed by Americans, reversing the mood will require a targeted propaganda effort,” says Schulmann.

Former Duma deputy Gudkov has little faith in the idea that using Yakovlev as a bargaining chip to convince the U.S. to lift sanctions will work. “Trump may be president but he is not alone; relations have to be mended with Congress and the Senate, too” he says.

Those who want the law to be lifted should look not toward the White House, but to the Kremlin, Gudkov says.

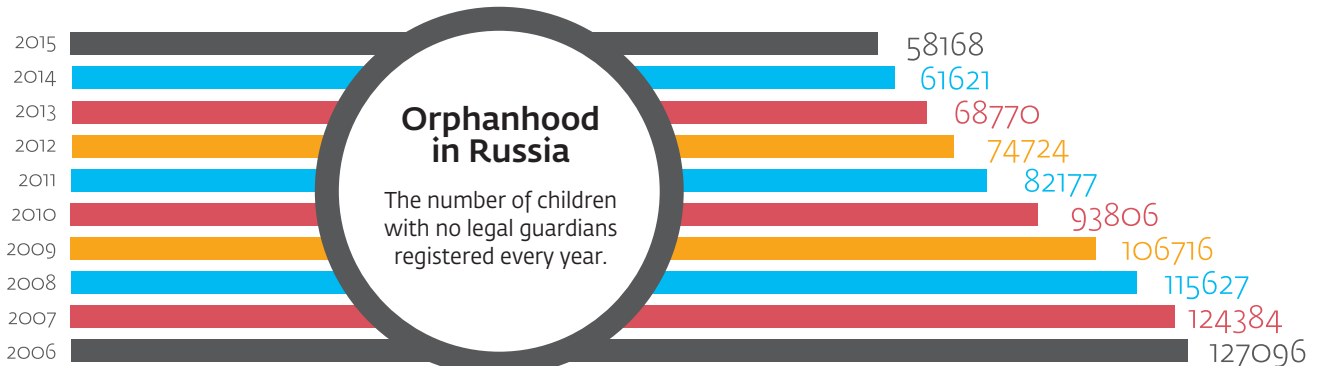
“The biggest factor is the mood of president [Putin]. Should he intend it, the law would disappear within a day.”

In the meantime, parents in the U.S. continue to hope. Not even for the opportunity to reunite with the children they once fell in love with, they say, but for the children’s well-being.

“There is no way of staying in touch with Dima and Ariana, all we have is sporadic pieces of information from the Internet,” says Sara Peterson, another mother hit by the ban. She and her husband were in the process of adopting a four-year-old girl with Down syndrome and a three-year-old boy with spina bifida, a severe neurological defect, when the ban came into force. The Petersons appealed it in Russian courts but lost the case.

“They still haven’t been adopted, that much we know,” Peterson says.

“At this point, as much as we still want to take them home and care for them, we’re praying for them just to have a loving family — even if it’s not us.” **TMT**



Source: Usynovite.ru



"All these new chefs are, first of all, foodies. They are simply interested in food." — food critic **Anna Maslovskaya**

2015

TMT named Danilovsky "best city improvement."

\$7.2 million

The price at which Ginza Project purchased Danilovsky Market.



A bowl of pho at Bò costs 350 rubles (approximately \$6 dollars).



The Vietnamese pho soup, one of the main attractions at Danilovsky Market, is prepared out in the open at the Bò cafe.

Moscow on the Mekong

By **Matthew Kupfer** newsreporter@imedia.ru

After years of bland sushi and pasta, Moscow's restaurant scene is opening up to innovative, foreign cuisine

It's nearly 8 p.m. — an hour before closing time — but an enthusiastic crowd of twenty-somethings is still queuing at Bò, a food stand at Danilovsky Market that is widely regarded as the best Vietnamese cafe in Moscow.

"It's interesting, it's cheap, it's delicious," says Olga, a regular customer who has just ordered spring rolls and a mango smoothie. "But there are always long lines."

Up on Danilovsky Market's second-story seating area, Pavel, another regular customer, has just finished off a heaping bowl of Pho, a Vietnamese soup made with noodles, beef, and herbs.

"My friend went to Vietnam and said there isn't anything as good as this over there," Pavel says.

It may only be a small Vietnamese food stand, but Bò and the highly acclaimed market it calls home represent one of the most significant cultural developments in Moscow's recent history: an explosion of creativity and internationalism in the city's culinary landscape.

In the past, mediocre sushi and Italian dominated Moscow's bland foreign food scene. A dedicated gourmet could find other foreign flavors, but at a steep price. On the whole, restaurants were big halls serving expensive food — places intended for a rare special occasion.

Today, that is changing. New, complex international cuisines are proliferating throughout the city. At the moment, Vietnamese is one of the trendiest.

The growth of "exotic" foods has been extremely noticeable in the last few years, says Anna Maslovskaya, senior food editor for the Afisha website. It represents not only the introduction of new cuisines to Moscow, but also a shift in public attitudes toward food.

Previously, chefs were trained in state vocational schools and many of them were simply people who did not get high enough grades to enroll in a university, Maslovskaya says. Cooking was just a job — like plumbing or repairing cars.

Around seven years ago, however, a new generation of chefs trained outside vocational schools entered the profession, bringing with them a different attitude and a zeal for food as an art form. The new chefs were well-travelled, with broad interests, and they brought this passion to the kitchen.

"All these people are, first of all, foodies," she says. "They are simply interested in food."

Maslovskaya cites restaurants like Delicatessen and Ragout as two of the first establishments to offer high quality, creative food — dishes like pasta with Korean kimchi or burgers with inventive toppings.

That process has only continued, but the last four years have brought another development. Young people — often trained through culinary internships — are entering the profession, bringing the startup culture to Moscow's restaurant scene.

Many of these projects go bust, and sometimes the food leaves much to be desired, but these new eateries add dynamism and creativity to Moscow. Now, even established restaurant holdings are trying to partner with these startups.

Maslovskaya believes the new restaurants go hand in hand with the city's changing culture. Since the Soviet collapse, Russians have begun to travel abroad extensively. Wider access to the internet has also helped connect ordinary people to the world beyond Russia's borders.

Even an economic crisis and the sharp depreciation of the ruble have not reversed these changes. Russians want to learn about other cultures, and "food provides a direct path," Maslovskaya says.

"The new generation sees going out to eat as a normal part of life," she says of people in their twenties and thirties. "Going to restaurants, photographing food, putting it on social media, and being a chef have all become popular."

Politics have also played a surprising role. Russia's agricultural sanctions — imposed in August 2014 as a response to Western sanctions over the country's involvement in Ukraine — have limited the public's access to food products imported from the West. The result has been a transition to locally produced goods — despite growing interest in foreign cuisines.

"In the last two years, we've seen a big shift from Italian to Vietnamese, Chilean and Chinese," says Anastasia, a woman enjoying a bowl of pho at Danilovsky Market. Under the sanctions, "even Russian food has gotten new attention," she adds.

The irony here has not been lost on foreign visitors. As Russia's politics grow markedly more anti-Western, its restaurants have increasingly provided the kinds of international delicacies commonly found in the West.

Danilovsky itself is one of the brightest signs of Russia's evolving culinary culture. A market has existed there for centuries, but, in 2014, the government discussed converting it into a modern shopping mall.

"Our task is to make this a civilized marketplace," Vladimir Efimov, head of Moscow's City Property Department, said at the time. It appeared a trade pavilion of produce, meat and dairy stalls had no place in the government's vision of civilization.

Then, in March 2015, a subsidiary of the Ginza Project restaurant holding purchased the pavilion from the state, and began to develop and renovate the market. Since then, Danilovsky has transformed from an ordinary Russian fruit and vegetable bazaar to an innovative farmer's market known for its fresh produce and food court filled with international edibles.

Today, besides succulent fruits and crisp vegetables, the market boasts Dagestani baked goods, Israeli falafel, artisan dumplings, deli sandwiches, Uzbek plov and the famous pho. And the list of cuisines is ever-expanding. Soon, two new eateries satisfying Moscow's growing appetite for Asian cuisine will launch at Danilovsky: Three Ducks, a Chinese cafe headed by a Michelin star chef, and the Korean cafe K-town.

The market has also become a platform for culinary master classes and food festivals. This trend looks set to continue. In the near future, Danilovsky's management plans to open one of celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's culinary schools on site, according to Olga Kukoba, Danilovsky Market's creative director.

Now, other marketplaces are taking notice and following a similar path, but Danilovsky remains the originator.

This places it on the cutting edge in a city where Russians increasingly take an international view of food.

"Today," says pho-devotee Pavel, leaning back in his chair at Danilovsky Market, "people are really interested in what they eat and drink and how it all fits together." **TMT**



Stephen recommends the Moskva-Delhi restaurant in the Patriarch's Ponds neighbourhood of the city

150

number of theatres in Moscow (estimate).



The original Meyerhold Theater was closed in 1938. TsIM, its modern incarnation, opened its doors in 1991

Stephen's favorite spots in the Moscow Metro are exits from Mayakovskaya and Avtozavodskaya stations.

Stage East

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

American Stephen Ochsner on acting in Moscow



SVETLANA SELEZNEVA

Stephen Ochsner first came to Moscow as a student in 2008, returning in 2011 as a professional actor.

Home for Stephen Ochsner is in the middle of the Rocky Mountains, in the heart of the United States. But the 28 year-old American has re-invented himself as a Russian actor in Moscow.

How did this happen? Ochsner had always dreamed of a life on stage. He fell in love with Russian theatre after reading all of Anton Chekhov's plays. So when he graduated from Oklahoma City University in 2008, his first move was to travel to the Russian capital for a three-month course at the Moscow Art Theatre's American Studio.

One of his mentors there, Ochsner reminisces, told him that "Russia is like a disease, some people come here, get infected and then can't stop coming back." That was to be Ochsner fate, too. He returned to the U.S. to finish his studies and got a job at a Chicago theatre for a short while. But he spent most of his free time studying Russian and trying to meet Russians. "I thought: well, I should just move back to Russia!" he says.

Ochsner then returned to Moscow in 2011 to study at the Moscow Art Theatre, later transferring to the Russian State Institute of Theatre Arts. Looking for work, he began rehearsing in the city's Meyerhold Theatre Center.

Immersing himself in Moscow's theatre circles, he started to notice the biggest differences between Russian and American cultures. "When Americans are not talking about sports or politics, they usually switch to discussing music. A lot of people strongly identify with the type of music they listen to," he says. Russians, he says, prefer talking about literature: "If Americans love going to concerts, then Russians prefer theatre."

At the Meyerhold Centre, Ochsner met theatre director and his future wife Zara Antonyan, who was at the time finishing her master's degree in drama. She asked him if he could star in "Sententsii Panteleya Karmanova," based on one of the first stories written by Russian playwright and director Ivan Vyrpaev. The play is about Panteley Karmanov's eleven-year prophetic journey from Siberia to Moscow in post-Soviet Russia.

The two went on tour with the play around Russia, Lithuania and Zara's homeland, Armenia. During that time, their relationship changed. "It shifted into us being interested in starting a life together. So that's exactly what we did!" says

Ochsner. In 2015, the couple moved to Armenia to continue working together and start a family. Today, the actor's life is split between two cities: "I spend two weeks in Moscow, a week in Yerevan, then back to Moscow."

After starring in "Sententsii" for a few years, Ochsner received an offer from Vyrpaev to adapt the story for an English speaking audience. The journey now takes place in America and the main character's name has been changed to Peter Pockets. Aside for Moscow's Meyerhold Center, "The Maxims of Peter Pockets" has also been shown in Colorado and New York City.

Whilst performing at the Meyerhold and having brief appearances in Russian films and TV series, Ochsner also plays in a theatrical concert band called SousKefal (which roughly translates as "GoatfishSauce"), a Russian-American band which performs their own songs written in a style — "junk folk" — they invented themselves.

There are many things Ochsner loves about Moscow. But above all, he praises the city's transport system. "The metro is louder than in any other European city but in terms of convenience and being able to plan one's day, it's unbeatable," he says. Back home in Colorado, he adds, you can't even get a job if you don't have a car. He also enjoys Moscow's green spaces. "I've never been to a city where I love being in the parks more than in Moscow."

In the nine years since he first came to Moscow, the Russian capital is almost unrecognizable. "It used to feel like this kind of wild place and more third world," he says. A lot has changed: the city is much cleaner and there are fewer kiosks. "They had a certain exotic charm that's missing now," he says. But, on the plus side, Ochsner feels the city feels safer without them.

Naturally, the place is far from perfect. "I don't like the really long dark winter months and the slush that destroys your shoes," he says. And roadrage is a serious problem, too. "It is absurdly aggressive," says Ochsner.

But Moscow's current culinary revolution makes up for all of this. "The quality of food and drinks in the city has vastly improved and has washed over the pompousness," he says.

"Life in the Russian capital is getting much better." **TMT**

THE WORD'S WORTH

Moderation, Russian-Style

Умеренность: temperance

By **Michele A. Berdy**

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



YEVGENY PARYONOV

Over the years I've paid particular attention to the key words and concepts in Russian culture, since foreigners need to know not just what a word means, but where it is on the Russian value chart in order to fit in. That is, you need to know that *гордыня* is pride, but also that Russians consider it the worst of the семь грехов (the seven sins).

I wrote about the sins but gave short shrift to добродетели (virtues). Let's face it: good behavior is a snooze. I got you through усердие (diligence) and смирение (humility), now it's time to consider умеренность (moderation, temperance).

In the Russian list of sins and virtues, умеренность counters обжорство (gluttony) and is sometimes replaced by the stricter воздержание (restraint, abstinence).

I think it's fair to say that умеренность doesn't come easy to Russians, who tend to value big and generous emotions, personalities, appetites, and heck — even novels (Leo Tolstoy, I'm looking at you). Умеренность is умение человека быть хозяином своих чувств, желаний, влечений (a person's ability to be master of his or her emotions, desires and inclinations). And they support it on the macro level: Именно умеренность и аккуратность могли бы спасти русскую нацию (Moderation and precision are what's needed to save the Russian nation.) And on the micro-level: Главное для похудения — это умеренность и сила воли! (To lose weight you must have moderation and will power!)

But at least some Russians believe that too much temperance is also not a good thing: Человек должен быть умеренным даже в своей умеренности (A person has to be moderate even in moderation.) So have a slice of chocolate cake — but just one.

That said, some people of moderation have a trait that is one of Russian culture's highest values: скромность (modesty). Being modest is a Very Good Thing in Russian culture: Скромность украшает человека (Modesty adorns a person.) A person who is successful but modest is admirable: Наш профессор принял награждение с благородной скромностью истинного профессионала (Our professor accepted the award with the noble modesty of a true professional.)

In fact, sometimes you don't get ahead in the world by being pushy, but by being modest: Он скромно опускал ресницы, зная, что скромность ему к лицу... "Этот мальчик далеко пойдёт!" — говорили про него в детстве. (He modestly lowered his eyes, knowing that modesty made him more attractive. "That boy will go far," people said.)

And the desire to appear modest might even influence speech patterns: Говорить "мы" — это признак скромности. (Saying "we" is a sign of modesty.)

But скромность has to be genuine; false modesty is a Bad Thing that must be cast off: Отбросив ложную скромность, можно подчеркнуть, что журнал наш всё же гораздо больше хвалят, чем ругают (Putting aside false modesty, I'd like to stress that our magazine gets more praise than criticism.)

And that Russian tendency to present oneself modestly can be a problem for job seekers in other cultures, like the U.S. As the writer Sergei Dovlatov discovered and wrote: Скромность в Америке не является первоочередной добродетелью. (In America modesty isn't the number one virtue.)

The moral is: when applying for a job, check the country's value system before you write your resume. To be on the safe side, remember: умеренность во всём (moderation in everything). **TMT**



"It was a secret revolution" – exhibition curator Alexandra Selivanova.

1934

Yakov Meksin set up a Museum of Children's Books.

1920-1930

the avant-garde style lasted longer in children's literature than in other art forms.



Shabolovka - a neighborhood in southern Moscow, home to much of the Russian capital's 1920s architecture.



A group of writers and illustrators in 1920s' Soviet Russia revolutionized children's literature. A century later a small Moscow gallery honors their work.

The Secret Revolution

By [Ola Cichowlas](#) o.cichowlas@imedia.ru | Twitter: @olacicho

New exhibition showcases the free spirit of early Soviet children's books

How do you begin explaining a revolution to children? In the early days of the Soviet Union, this is exactly what a group of artists tried to do. By the time their efforts were curtailed in the mid-1930s, the cohort had produced an impressive body of futuristic avant-garde illustrations and poems — all of which fundamentally changed the Russian approach to children.

A century later, and a tiny Moscow gallery opened a new exhibition dedicated to their work.

Before you even reach the "Constructivism for Children" exhibition, you take a step back into 1920s Soviet Moscow. The gallery is not easy to find, nestled in among the residential backstreets of Moscow's Shabolovka neighbourhood. These streets are home to much of the city's avant-garde architecture.

The gallery itself is housed on the ground floor of a 1927 housing complex. The exhibition's three small rooms are filled with children's books' illustrations taken from the Russian State Children's Library and private collections.

"I wanted to show a relatively narrow range of books that were published after the revolution to teach children about their new surroundings," says curator and avant-garde expert Alexandra Selivanova.

Grown-Up Books

Before the grey days of Stalin's 1930s, early Soviet children's literature was humorous, exotically illustrated and far less controlled by state censors than adult literature. "It was freer and more flexible," says Selivanova.

Through children's books, writers found a more direct way of communicating with the public. This meant that, for the first time, serious poets like Osip Mandelstam and painters like Vladimir Lebedev started writing and drawing for children.

Millions of these books were printed and distributed across the Soviet Union, in far larger quantities and with far freer content than adult novels. "It was a secret revolution," says Selivanova.

Whereas pre-revolutionary Russian children's literature focused on romantic fairy tales and toys, the 1920s brought a new era of explainer books. The subjects became more complicated: stories were written about factories, gold mines and oil refineries. For the first time, Selivanova says, children were treated as "little human beings" who, if taught properly, could be able to make anything.



GRIGORI MATVEEV



GRIGORI MATVEEV

Avant-garde illustrators sought to explain the new world to Soviet children.

As a result, children's books were written not only by writers and poets but by people who were industrialists by profession.

One of those was Boris Zhitkov. A ship designer who started writing about his travels for the children's magazine *Ezh* ("Hedgehog"), which existed between 1928 and 1935. Another was Mikhail Ilyin, a chemist who wrote "One hundred Thousand Whys," explaining things like why potatoes are dry after you boil them in water. His

books were illustrated by Nikolay Lapshin, who drew complicated plans in black and white.

"This was scientific text and the subjects were boring, but they made it fascinating," says Selivanova.

A significant part of the exhibition is dedicated to books that introduced children to urban life. As the Soviets proclaimed ambitious Five-Year-Plans to catch-up with the industrialization of the West, thousands of Russians migrated from rural areas which barely had dirt roads into towns and cities. "It was a completely different life for millions of village children," says Selivanova. Some of them had never seen public transportation before. In 1926, Mandelstam wrote "The Two Trams," — a poem about two trams called Klik and Kram, who are actually brothers, riding around the city looking for each other.

An Unsung Hero

Selivanova's exhibition also honours a forgotten Russian pioneer of children's literature and juvenile rights. In the 1920s and 30s, Yakov Meksin collected over 60,000 children's books published in the Soviet Union. He even traveled the world showcasing his collection, including to Western Europe and Japan. In 1934, he founded the Soviet Union's first Museum of Children's Books in Moscow, in which children were taught how to print their own stories.

"This was probably the first interactive museum in Russia," says Selivanova, who organizes workshops as part of the exhibition in memory of Meksin's "laboratories" for children.

The golden age for Soviet storytellers came to an abrupt end in 1937, the beginning of Stalin's Great Purges. Meksin's museum was shut down and he was sent to a Siberian gulag, where he died in 1943. His collection was confiscated and scattered around the Soviet Union, and his name was largely forgotten by history.

Still, the legacy of the books lives on. Millions of these are hidden in households all over Russia for children to read.

"I hope they can make a comeback," says Selivanova. **TMT**

Constructivism for Children is on at Galeria na Shabolovke (Serpukovskiy Val, 24, Korpus 2. Tel: 8 (495) 954-30-09) until Feb. 26. Opening times: Tuesday-Sunday, 11am until 8pm. Entry fee: 200 rubles.

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A Life Devoted to Vision: Howard Schatz at the Lumiere Center

By **Ruth Moore** artsreporter@imedia.ru
Twitter: @ruth_skii



← Pascale LeRoy, Smuin Ballet, photographed in San Francisco, February 1997.

→ Shawn Crawford, sprinter, photographed at the USA Nationals in Eugene, OR, June 2001



For a man who only took up photography in earnest at a time when others might be considering early retirement, Howard Schatz has had a truly prolific career. Curator Olga Annanurova and her colleagues at the Lumiere Center for Photography trawled through thousands of his images published in over 20 books to decide on the material for their latest exhibition: “Howard Schatz: 25 Years of Photography.”

“He’s an artist that works in many different genres, but when we looked through the huge array of photographs that span his career the most interesting for us were those that took the human body as their subject,” said Annanurova in an interview with The Moscow Times. “We wanted to show the diverse ways in which he works with the human body in all its different incarnations: be it a portrait or simple fragments of the whole.”

While Schatz only published his first photography book “Gifted Women” in 1992, in a way, his whole life has been dedicated to vision. The

photographer had a successful career as retina specialist until the pull of his hobby drew him to a second, no less successful profession. Since focussing his efforts to photography full-time, Schatz’s photographs have been published in the likes of Vanity Fair and The New York Times Magazine, not to mention countless commercial and advertising assignments.

His training as an eye doctor gave him a natural flair for the technical side of photography: lenses, optics and an exacting, almost medical preoccupation with the human body. A significant proportion of the current exhibitions at the Lumiere Center are devoted to dancers and athletes — in them you not only appreciate the evident beauty of the human body, but also its power. Graceful movements belie taught muscles and straining tendons: bodies drip with sweat or contort in their physical exertion. Schatz’s photographs are exhibited around the world for their artistic beauty, but there’s a technical, often scientific approach to the shot

he is trying to achieve.

Another aspect of Schatz’s success has been his ability to form quick, trusting relationships with his photography subjects. This easy “bedside manner” allows him to capture the unguarded, intimate moments that characterize his images. For his series “Caught in the Act: Actors Acting,” Schatz presented actors with imagined scenarios and photographed their spontaneous responses. From Colin Firth struggling to remember the name of a woman he once had a one-night stand with to Allison Janney berating her philandering husband, the videos and accompanying photographs make for entertaining viewing. From the beginning, Schatz’s photography has been characterized by him asking his subjects to tell a story, be it real or imagined. His third book — and the one that brought him international recognition — features portraits of homeless people on the streets of San Francisco. Still practising as a retina specialist during the week, Schatz spent his weekends walking the

streets, talking with people sleeping rough and taking their picture. A number of his black and white portraits are on show at the current exhibition alongside revealing accompanying quotes. Now a world-renowned photographer with the power to turn down commissions, Schatz is still fascinated by the breadth of human society. In 2010 he created a series at Suffolk County Corrections Facility, where he talked and photographed inmates to create unexpectedly powerful and intimate portraits.

“Some of the prisoners resemble clothing models. Schatz is asking you to consider the way you view the people around you,” said Annanurova. “That’s why his photography is so interesting, because it has a democratic span — we can see how people differ, and at the same time, how they are similar.” **TMT**

“Howard Schatz: 25 Years of Photography” runs through March 12 at the Lumiere Brothers Center for Photography. 3 Bolotnaya Naberezhnaya, Bldg.1. Metro Kropotkinskaya, Polyanka. Lumiere.ru

“Paradise” Opens in Theaters In Russia

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

“Paradise (Rai)”, the latest movie by one of the patriarchs of Russian cinema, Andrei Konchalovsky, opened at theaters across Russia last week. This holocaust-themed movie received a Silver Lion at Venice Film Festival last year and was short listed for the best foreign language film at Oscar 2017, but got snubbed in the final selection of nominees.

The movie focuses on three characters, whose lives become intertwined in the course of World War 2. One is Olga, a Russian princess and a member of the French Resistance, played by the director’s wife Yuliya Vysotskaya, another is Jules, a police officer working under Vichy government (a brilliantly cast Philippe Duquesne) and Helmut, an SS officer of some repute, played by newcomer Christian Clauss. Approaching the age of 80, Andrei Konchalovsky took a very different turn in his film-making with 2014 “The Postman’s White Nights.”

“The Postman’s White Nights,” is a rather introspective film with some documentary elements taking part in a village in the Russia’s North. Even though it also won a Silver Lion at Venice. Konchalovsky, known for his criticism of Hollywood, decided not to take part in the race for an Oscar’s nomination.

“Paradise” also uses documentary, or rather mockumentary, elements. It is filmed in black and white and its main narrative is interspersed both with flashbacks and scenes of the three main characters sitting in what feels like a solitary confinement, yet turns out to be something entirely different. In these scenes each character speaks his or her own language, so you can hear Russian, as well as German in French spoken in the film.

Konchalovsky takes a very clean approach to holocaust: there’s almost no blood on the screen, we see most of the concentration camp’s victims only on photographs. At the same time, Helmut’s meeting with Heinrich Himmler is so surreal that it wouldn’t be out of place in the popular alternative history sci-fi series “The Man in the High Castle.”

“Paradise” is a film about each character’s version of paradise and how their concept of it changes in the course of their lives. You can watch it with English subtitles at either Pioneer Cinema or 35 mm movie theater. Just remember that Konchalovsky, an avid user of Facebook, asked his viewers not to drink Coke or eat pop corn, while watching “The Paradise.” **TMT**
kino35mm.ru/en
pioneer-cinema.ru/en