Medical staff with Russia’s national team have denied allegations that the country’s players took substances to increase their fitness levels during the World Cup.

After Russia’s loss to Croatia on Saturday, Germany’s Bild tabloid published an article alleging that the team had inhaled smelling salts in the dugout of Sochi’s Fisht Stadium during the game. The ammonia inhalants, which are not illegal, could have helped the Russian players increase their “respiratory stimulation” and “improve oxygen supply,” Bild reported.

The Russia team’s head doctor, Eduard Bezuglov, told the Sport-Express newspaper that the players had used the ammonia-based inhalants “to perk up.”

He added that the mixture has been used for decades by “thousands of athletes” around the world and could be purchased at pharmacies.

Paulino Granero, a fitness coach for Russia’s team, said the allegations “could only have been thought up by an idiot.” “Ammonia is not on the list of banned substances,” he was cited as saying by Marca.

Russia’s surprising run into the quarterfinals sparked the allegations. Russian players showed impressive physical stamina, with midfielder Roman Zobnin having covered the greatest distance in the tournament — 63 kilometers.

“Extraordinary performances demand additional tests,” the head of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency said last month, while a Saudi newspaper alleged doping after their country’s shock 5-0 defeat to the hosts.

Meanwhile, Bild said in its report that “it is absurd that the Russians pretend that [smelling salts] are as common as shampooing while showering,” pointing to Russia’s history of doping.

After the Sochi Winter Olympics, more than a dozen Russian athletes were stripped of medals over an alleged state-sponsored doping program.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Tuesday said he found a U.S. senator’s statement comparing the Russian leadership to the mafia “difficult to understand.”

Senator John Kennedy traveled to Moscow as part of a congressional delegation earlier this month. The group met with high-ranking Russian officials and reportedly discussed the conflict in Syria, Ukraine and alleged elections meddling.

In comments to the press, Kennedy described Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as “a bully.”

“We didn’t call each other an ‘ignorant s-l-t’ or anything, but we exchanged words,” he was cited as saying by the Associated Press. “There is no political philosophy in Russia. It’s sort of like saying, what’s the political philosophy of the mafia?”

In a response to the comments on Tuesday, Peskov said “the American political establishment is a) full of stereotypes b) under huge Russophobic pressure,” Interfax reported.

The harsh words come a week before U.S. President Donald Trump is set to meet President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki on July 16.

Asked by White House reporters to say whether Russia was a friend or foe, Trump responded he couldn’t say. “As far as I’m concerned, a competitor,” he said.
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The possibility of more Western sanctions against Moscow is the key risk for the Russian economy, as much as 20 percent of which has already felt the impact of existing sanctions, Russia's Analytical Credit Ratings Agency said in a report on Tuesday.

Western sanctions are expected to weigh on Russia's oil-dependent economy in the longer run, having dented incomes of Russian households, the Kremlin-backed ACRA said.

The West imposed economic and financial sanctions against Moscow in 2014 for its annexation of Crimea and its role in the Ukraine conflict. Russia has responded with counter-sanctions, banning imports of a wide range of food from countries that had targeted Moscow. Later, sanctions against Russia were expanded, putting extra pressure on Russia's economy and the rouble.

"The risk of widening of anti-Russian sanctions remains one of the key risks that the Russian economy could face this year," ACRA said.

New sanctions might target more companies, Russia's state debts even disconnect Russia from the international SWIFT payment system.

For now, Russia's international reserves, which stood at nearly $456 billion as of late June, "fully cover external debt, which is vulnerable to wider sanctions," ACRA said.

"Sanctions should not be named the key factor that limits economic growth in Russia in the medium term. The impact of sanctions on the growth rate could turn to be more pronounced in the long-term for both companies and the economy in general."

CREDIT AGENCY: SANCTIONS ARE HURTING THE ECONOMY

Western sanctions have hit Russian companies that account for 95 percent of the country's oil and gas industry revenues.

Restrictions imposed on Russian oil and gas companies in 2014 will affect their oil output in the 2020s, ACRA said.

Sanctions have also hit Russia's major state-owned banks, which account for 25 percent of banking assets. But the sanctions' impact on the financial health of domestic banks and banks has been less pronounced than that of the country's economic policy, ACRA said.

Russia's response to the sanctions has inflated prices for a number of goods.

"Counter-sanctions have resulted in price growth and a decline in households' incomes by 2.5 percentage points in 2014-2018," ACRA said.

Black Sea: Hot or Cold?

They've waited all winter for this.

A swimming ban has been imposed on all beaches in the resort town of Anapa, on the northern shore of the Black Sea, after water temperatures there dipped below 15 degrees Celsius, Interfax cited local authorities as saying on Monday.

"The temperature of the sea is too low for July," the press office of Anapa's City Hall told Interfax.

At the same time, emergency officials in the Krasnodar region, where the city is located, warned residents to avoid open spaces on Tuesday because of temperatures nearing 40 degrees C.

The swimming ban has been in effect since Friday, the town's head of public safety Sergei Semenkov told the RBC business portal.

Two bulletins on the Anapa administration's website dated July 6 informed readers that swimming would not be allowed at any of the town's beaches due to the excessively cold water.

The coastal city of Gelendzhik has also introduced swimming restrictions, Interfax reported on Tuesday.

A Kyrgyz taxi driver who plowed into a crowd of pedestrians near the Kremlin in the first week of the World Cup has reportedly begun to financially compensate the victims of the incident.

Seven people, including two Mexican fans, were injured when a taxi swerved onto the sidewalk in central Moscow on June 16 and hit a group of pedestrians.

Driver Anarbek, told police that he lost control after a 20-hour shift on two hours of sleep and had mixed up the accelerator and brake pedals.

"My client has partly compensated the victims for material and other damages," Anarbek's attorney Pavel Berezin was cited as saying by Interfax on Monday.

Anarbek faces up to five years behind bars. A Moscow district court later rejected an appeal to place him under house arrest.

The Kremlin's first goal, which is already partially achieved by the very fact of the summit, is to clear the air. It is in Putin's interests to ease tensions and reset the relationship on his terms, especially if he doesn't have to yield any ground on Ukraine, U.S. election messages, or Iran.

Moscow will probably seek a joint statement announcing that full contacts between the governments are being reinstated. (They were suspended by the Obama administration in 2014 in response to the annexation of Crimea.) For Putin, this would be a powerful reaffirmation that his strategy of staring down the United States is working.

Moscow is not necessarily focused on tangible deliveries from the summit. Rather, it would like to create a narrative that would allow Trump to tout the meeting as a triumph for U.S. interests, a triumph that justifies his taking further steps to repair the relationship, even though the U.S. would get little in return.

The Kremlin does not really expect sanctions relief. It knows that Trump’s hands are tied by Congress. Plus, it has adjusted to the current level of sanctions. What it wants to prevent is an escalation of U.S. pressure, or a repeat of what happened in April, when U.S. Treasury sanctions started to dictate the ownership structure of major Russian companies. This undermines Putin’s claim of Russia’s full sovereignty. Moscow’s main aim, which was derived after carefully observing Trump’s summit with Kim Jong Un in Singapore, is to create momentum that would make it politically painful and personally humiliating for Trump to revert to confrontation.

Moscow wants to keep Trump so deeply invested in dialogue that he becomes reluctant to admit the whole endeavor is a failure. The idea is to lock Trump into a policy and propaganda framework that would eventually force him into major U.S. concessions on issues of interest to Russia. Putin sees how easily Kim Jong Un has forced the U.S. to soften its negotiating demands in order to maintain the illusion of Trump’s success in Singapore.

Three possible deliveries are likely in Helsinki: One would be an aspirational, vaguely worded statement committing Russia and the United States to working toward the withdrawal of “foreign forces” from Syria. The United States would take that as a Russian pledge to push out Iran, Russia would insist it means a complete U.S. withdrawal from northeastern Syria, as well as U.S. consent to Bashar Assad’s continued rule. Both countries will spin this as a major triumph for diplomacy, which would later lead to disappointment. Russia cannot force Iran out of Syria, nor does it want to — Putin may want to insert himself as an intermediary between Tehran and Washington to raise his value to Trump and to keep the U.S. and Iran in conflict, but not at war.

There could be an attempt to get closure on election meddling. Moscow will deny “government responsibility,” but keep open the possibility that “patriotic hackers” were involved. Trump will eagerly buy it. They may issue a meaningless statement saying that both states promise not to meddle in elections in the future. This gives Trump a “WIN!” — he prevented Russian meddling in the 2016 midterm elections. Putin, on the other hand, will take it as a U.S. commitment not to use internet platforms as Russia to promote democracy.

Finally, there could be some agreement to extend the New START Treaty till 2026, as a low-cost fix. Neither side is interested in reductions or in new arms control treaties. Both are pursuing strategic modernization programs for their nuclear arsenals.

There will be some discussion of Ukraine in the one-on-one meeting. Trump has three possible offers. First, the “Baltic solution” in which he doesn’t recognize Russian sovereignty over Crimea, but normalizes ties anyway. Second is the “Finland solution” — recognition in exchange for full Russian withdrawal from Donbas. The third would be to demand a Russian pledge to never again change borders by force in Europe, in exchange for NATO switching clear of Ukraine and Georgia. What Putin would bring to this discussion will be the most closely watched part of the meeting.

Vladimir Frolov is a Russian columnist and political scientist.
Relief in Defeat

Semyon Slepakov, a famous Russian singer-songwriter who wrote a parody song about the country’s dismal chances in the World Cup, has now released a statement thanking the team and apologizing for his earlier skepticism.

“This is a post of thanks and support for Russia’s brave team and best young footballer after the World Cup,” he added.

Since the incident, social media users have left over 158,000 comments on FIFA’s Facebook page, expressing their support for Vida and the Russian national team.

Meanwhile, Ukraine’s Football Federation issued a statement thanking the team and apologizing “to the Russian people over the incident and noted its ‘long-term friendly relationship’ with its Russian counterpart.”

Football also apologized to the Russian Federation for the incident and called it “an attempt to win political capital amid a plummeting approval rating,” the Guardian reported. Others criticized the leader for choosing to travel to Russia instead of unveiling a plan to fight poverty that had been scheduled for Tuesday, the local news website reported.

Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel, who had previously said he would attend the semifinal, reportedly had to change his plans because of a NATO summit taking place in Brussels on July 11–12.

Belgium’s royal couple, King Philippe and Queen Mathilde, attended the match in his place, along with the country’s Foreign Minister Didier Reynders.

Meanwhile, renowned actress Pamela Anderson attended the match in support of the French national team.

“I love, which has moved mountains, made me come here … I feel like a little girl,” Anderson wrote in Russian on Instagram, in what appeared to be an appeal to her relationship with France’s defender Adil Rami. Anderson was reportedly invited by the French Football Federation.

MEET THE FANS

Moscow is very clean and the people are charming. They want to help us all the time, whether we are taking the underground or walking the street or searching for a restaurant. Russians are very nice people.

Tibo from Belgium

Croatian Player Sparks War of Words

FIFA has sanctioned a Croatian football player and coach for making pre-Ukrainian statements after their team’s victory over Russia in the World Cup on Saturday.

In a video published on social media after the game, Croatia defender Domagoj Vida shouted “Glory to Ukraine,” while coach Zlatko Dalic made the “V” for Virdnik (Virovitica) and added “this win is for Dynamo (Kiev) and Ukraine.”

FIFA prohibits the tournament’s participants from making political statements or gestures. It previously fined three Swiss players for a hand gesture in the shape of the Albanian flag during a match against Serbia in the group stage.

The “Glory to Ukraine” phrase also elicited the ire of Russians politicians and internet users, some of whom linked the slogan to Ukrainian nationalism. Russia has been at odds with Kiev since the ousting of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych.

“It was a challenge, it was a provocation and it was deliberate,” Federation Council deputy Franz Klintsevich was cited as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency, before demanding an official response and calling Croats “the traitors of the Slavic world.”

The ‘Glory to Ukraine’ slogan is seen as being highly reactionary and unpleasant for what is likely to be the vast majority of Ukrainian citizens,” Sergei Yevsyeyev, a Federation Council deputy from Crimea, was cited as saying by the RBC news website on Monday.

FIFA’s disciplinary committee for “unsportmanlike behavior” has announced its decision following the player’s protest.

Meanwhile, Vladimir Vukov, president of the Croatian Football Federation, expressed his regret over Vida’s protest and called it “a post of thanks and support for Russia’s brave team and best young footballer after the World Cup. The ‘Glory to Ukraine’ slogan is a greeting, a celebration of the fallen and a patriotic symbol of the Slavic world. It is also offered to pay the footballer’s fine.”

“The ‘Glory to Ukraine’ slogan is a greeting, a celebration of the fallen and a patriotic symbol of the independence, liberty and freedom-loving nature of the Ukrainian people,” the statement said.

“Vida apologized to the Russian Federation and was given a one-match ban by the Croatian Football Federation.”

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“If I offended you with my work, I regret it... It was deliberate,” Federation Council deputy Franz Klintsevich was cited as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency, before demanding an official response and calling Croats “the traitors of the Slavic world.”

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Tibo from Belgium

Local Brazilian Hero

Russia’s Brazilian-born defender Mario Fernandes thanked fans for their support in an emotional Instagram post on Sunday.

“I thank God for having brought me to Russia,” he wrote. “I’m thankful for the honor of defending the country’s colors as part of the national team. I’m really very happy here.”

The 27-year-old accepted Russian citizenship in 2016 after spending four seasons at CSKA Moscow, becoming one of the best players in the Russian Premier League.

Fernandes, who was Russia’s only foreign-born player in the tournament, scored a crucial goal in overtime against Croatia on Saturday, forcing the game into a penalty shootout. He was one of two players who missed a spot kick, costing Russia a ticket to the semifinals, but has nonetheless been lauded as one of the heroes of the squad.

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**Russian Fans Ask: Where Is President Putin?**

As Russia’s World Cup dream ended with defeat to Croatia, some football fans noted the absence from the stadium of President Vladimir Putin, who has attended only one match in Russia’s best World Cup run since the Soviet collapse in 1991.

Putin was at Russia’s opening game against Saudi Arabia but skipped the following four — despite the national side defying expectations and reaching the quarterfinals.

“Where has the president gone?” asked Nezygar, a popular news channel on Telegram.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday that Putin had only ever been scheduled to attend the opening and closing games of the tournament. He was minimizing attendance because matches “happen when he is at the height of his working day.”

“He doesn’t play football himself, but naturally like the overwhelming majority of Russians he is a fan. Of course he isn’t obsessive — because he can’t permit himself this — but he likes interesting football,” Peskov said.

Competing theories in Moscow swirled as to why Putin appeared to have stayed away. Putin, a black belt in judo, is an avid ice-hockey fan. The Bell cited a high-ranking official as saying the reason for his absence was a simple lack of interest in football. One Moscow-based political analyst speculated the real explanation was the wish not to be associated with a Russian defeat, the prospect of which loomed larger as the side faced higher-caliber opponents in the knockout stages.

“Vladimir Putin likes to be associated with victories and triumphs, but doesn’t like to be associated with defeats and losses,” political analyst Valery Solovei said.

**OPINION**

**Russian Enough, But For How Long?**

A few months after I moved to Russia, I was stopped by a police officer just outside the Moscow metro. “You!” he barked. “Come this way!”

I was new to the country, and given his stern tone and my weak language skills, I didn’t feel much scope for asking what I had done or why I was being led away.

At the police station, I was taken to a small room where the issue became clear: My fellow detainees were all people of color. Perhaps more to the point, none of us looked Russian.

After 30 minutes of questioning and having our documents inspected — mine were all valid — I was released. But it wasn’t the last time I would have an encounter with the police because of my skin color.

There are hundreds of thousands of football fans from all over the world in Russia for the World Cup this summer. In general, they are singing the praises of Russian hospitality, charm and friendliness. To visiting fans, concerns of racist attacks might seem unfounded. But the World Cup version of Russia is not the Russia I moved to two years ago.

How frequently, for instance, have I been held up by security guards for “random” bag checks and passport inspections? (I recently asked my American, blond-haired, blue-eyed partner how often he has been approached by police in the metro. “The only time I’ve ever been stopped by the police in Russia was with you,” he replied sheepishly.)

Then there’s the Russian stereotype of being frowning at public transport — which is especially alarming when you’re the only one in the entire carriage who looks like you, or when the foreign comes from someone who could pass as a skinhead.

In the two years since I arrived in Russia, however, I’ve noticed a gradual change. It’s not so much that the police checks have stopped, or even that people are no longer glaring at me on public transport. It just seems to be happening less often than it used to.

Russia’s brutal winters have made my skin the fairest it possibly can be, but I don’t think that has anything to do with it. I’m starting to realize that Russia’s open and unapologetic xenophobia isn’t just about skin color. It’s also about understanding how Russia works.

My friend Adewole Oyeyemi Dele, 27, moved to Russia from Nigeria in 2008. Although he said racism is rampant in Russia, there were two options: dwell on it or figure out how to integrate. “I felt that the only way to understand Russian people was to learn the language and learn the culture,” he recently told me.

Ten years later, Adewole says, racism is especially prevalent in the older generation, but “Russians under 40 are more and more exposed to foreigners and less and less racist.” Having said that, when he speaks to older Russians in fluent, grammatically correct Russian, “They fall in love with you immediately.”

Adewole’s encounters range true of my experience, too. While skin color is apparent immediately, it is not being able to fit in that seems to offend most. It is not knowing how to acclimatize that is most jarring to Russians.

For how long? Russia was with you,” he replied sheepishly.)

The point, none of us looked Russian.

“Vladimir Putin likes to be associated with victories and triumphs, but doesn’t like to be associated with defeats and losses,” political analyst Valery Solovei said.

Competition theories say Putin is either uninterested in football or was afraid of Russia losing.

**Belgium fans celebrated before their team's semifinal against France on Tuesday.**

**England Fans Rush to Moscow**

Dozens of English football fans began heading for Moscow in a last-minute rush on Tuesday in an effort to be part of a potentially historic sporting moment as England take on Croatia in the World Cup semifinals.

Taking advantage of extra match tickets released by FIFA and additional seats provided on Moscow-bound flights from Britain, they converged on London’s Heathrow Airport with hope in their hearts.

“It’s been crazy here in England, really exciting. Now I want to go and see what’s going on in Russia,” said one fan, Michael Roberts, 27, as he waited for his flight. Another fan, Bradley Goldberg, 46, was taking his son to share the moment.

“Whether we win or lose, we’re creating history,” he said. “We’ll be there — and it’s once-in-a-lifetime opportunity seeing them in the World Cup.”

Saturday’s 2-0 victory over Sweden took manager Gareth Southgate’s team into a World Cup semifinal for the first time in 28 years, raising the prospect of England possibly winning the tournament for the first time since 1966.

England supporters have been notably sparse in Russia so far, deterred by warnings of possible violence and logistical difficulties.

But British Airways, which has been the star in terms of flights to Russia on its website since last week, has now released hundreds more seats on Moscow flights by using bigger planes.

“If we win, if we beat Croatia, I’ll probably cry, because to see England in a World Cup final is like a lifelong dream,” England fan Alex Klein, 28, said. (Reuters)
A lucky draw, a freak handball, strange VAR decisions — the World Cup has been fodder for conspiracy theorists, many of whom suspect President Vladimir Putin is pulling the strings.

Few Russians believed their side had any hope against Spain. The hosts were the lowest-ranked team playing in the World Cup, after all. For most of the first half, Russia lagged 1-0. Then, relief came in the form of Gerard Piqué’s hand. In the 63rd minute of the game, the Spaniard raised his arm to block the ball and Russia was awarded a much-needed penalty. The rest is history: Russia scored and went on to win after a penalty shootout.

Spectators were aghast. “That’s absolutely idiotic from Piqué,” a Newsweek journalist wrote on Twitter. “Gerard Piqué gives the host country a hand,” the Peruvian Libere’s tongue-in-cheek headline read. On social media, many suspected money had changed hands. Since Russia won its bid to host the World Cup, conspiracy theories have never been far away. A glimpse at social media paints a picture of a World Cup rifle with match-fixing, substance abuse and, in some cases, even supernatural forces. In many tellings, Putin is personally pulling the strings.

Money woes

At the draw in December, Russia was pooled with Uruguay, Egypt and Saudi Arabia in the World Cup’s weakest group. A social media storm ensued: “Group A is the biggest fix in World Cup history.” One Twitter user wrote.

The rumor mill did not stop there, particularly after Russia breezed through the group stage. While much of the country was cheering, a large part of the Runet was trying to find answers to the team’s success.

“Why did we wipe out Saudi Arabia? Putin personally asked the top Saudi to help [Russia] get the win,” a Twitter user wrote.

A surge in Tinder matches during the World Cup has some Russians unusually spoiled for choice.

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The Russian education system fostered a world view that encouraged conspiratorial thinking. Levinson added. “The idea was that we see one thing, but in reality there are forces and interests at play that are really influencing events that we cannot see with our eyes.”

As Europe and Russia entered into the Euros, conspiracy theorists began searching for explanations. The host country versus the West? Could it be Putin? Or was it just bad luck for the visitors? Many of these theories started with just a hint and quickly migrated to more elaborate forms.

Some Wins Are Beyond Belief

A surge in Tinder matches during the World Cup has some Russians unusually spoiled for choice.

BY ARON OUZILEVSKI @ARONOUZIL

Russia's win against Spain was met with skepticism online.

In the World Cup Friend Zone

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The virtual cat-caller, who Petrova recalls was a young European football fan, was holding out hope for a one-night stand. Instead, he got a reply in all caps: “Not all Russian women are like this.”

Petrova, 26, is one of thousands of Tinder users who have boosted traffic to the dating app since the World Cup kicked off. The Megafon forecaster told The Moscow Times it had registered an almost four-fold increase in traffic to Tinder on July 1 compared to early June, before

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People were dressed up like freaks, guzzling vodka and screaming along to 90s Russian pop hits.

the start of the tournament.

But not everyone using the app during the tournament is looking for the love of their lives. Many, like Petrova, who had only recently reinstalled the app, were on it “for fun” and to meet some of the foreigners flocking to Russia.

Cultural exchange

Alexandra Belyayeva, a 26-year-old journalist, told The Moscow Times that because so few Russians travel abroad, being active on Tinder during the World Cup’s influx of football supporters from abroad was a fast track to meeting foreigners.

According to a 2018 survey published by the independent Levada Center pollster, 76 percent of Russians don’t own travel documents that allow them to leave the country and 68 percent have never traveled abroad.

Belyayeva told The Moscow Times she had created her Tinder account one week into the World Cup for friendship, not romance.

“I’ve been to Europe many times, and there people take pleasure in showing me all the quirks of their culture,” she said.

Now, for the first time, Belyayeva had the opportunity to flaunt her own country.

Her first night using Tinder, Belyayeva decided to invite a trio of Australian fans to accompany her and her friend to a trashy 90s-themed disco.

“It was a bold move on our part, because this was no ordinary club,” Belyayeva said. “People were dressed up like freaks, guzzling vodka and screaming along to 90s Russian pop hits.

“We translated all the songs for them, and at a certain point they even started to sing along,” she recalled. The Australians particularly enjoyed a song about the despair in realizing that there’s only one glass of vodka left, she said.

“They were very caring: When we told them we didn’t want to drink anymore, they brought water for us, and didn’t expect anything in return,” Belyayeva added. “[Russian men] buy you a drink, but then always expect something in return, and if you don’t give them what they want, they swear at you and leave.”

Asked why Russian men behave this way, Belyayeva said there is a lack of competition for feminine affection in the country. “[Unlike in Russia], European men are all in good shape because there are fewer beautiful women there.”

Not everyone’s experience has been positive, however. Mikhail Zakharov, a young, openly gay Muscovite, had high hopes for his World Cup Tinder experience.

“My conversations with Russian guys often feel strained: There’s just no culture of small talk here,” Zakharov, 21, said.

But Zakharov’s Tinder experience did not live up to his expectations.

“I matched with a young American student and immediately thought that he’d be super interesting.”

Unfortunately, the American student spent the whole three-hour date asking Zakharov where he could find illegal drugs in Moscow.
In a village in Chechnya, football is a balancing act.

A dog plays goalkeeper in Ryazantsevo near Yaroslavl.

Children and a young husky play tag in the Siberian village of Novosyolovo.

A man on horseback gallops past goalposts in Bolshaya Dzhalga.

Goats roam through a pastoral football pitch in Pervomaiskoye, Crimea.

This football field in Pribrezhnoye, Crimea, stretches far and wide.

An Orthodox church looks over these uprights in the Siberian village of Tyulkovo.
Who says football pitches are flat and green, that goalposts are made out of metal and fields are for playing football?

Lush fields in Stavropol provide a pleasant setting for a morning run.

Humans and their furry friends get some exercise on the sidelines in Krasnoyarsk.

In Divnogorsk on the Yenisei River, a boy plays with his gyro-scooter.

Boys gather during traditional Cossack games outside the Arkhonskaya village.

One of the Stalin-era “Seven Sisters” skyscrapers looms over this Moscow football pitch.

This goalpost doubles as monkey bars in St. Petersburg.

An Orthodox church looks over these uprights in the Siberian village of Tyulkovo.

Goats roam through a pastoral football pitch in Pervomaiskoye, Crimea.

Boys gather during traditional Cossack games outside the Arkhonskaya village.
The English Stamp on Moscow’s History

Anglo-Russian relations date back to the time of Ivan the Terrible and Elizabeth I

By Emma Friedlander | @emmacfried

The English national team has beaten the odds and made it to the semifinals of the World Cup. Their success comes at one of the tensest moments in Russian-British relations in living memory. Any England fan may feel a little out of place donning St. George’s cross and singing “God Save the Queen” amid the onion domes and Cyrillic lettering of the Russian capital.

But the fact is that England has been a significant part of Moscow’s history since the 16th century. The historical saga involves a spurned marriage proposal, the stubbornest gentleman’s club in Moscow and the invention of art nouveau. Three architectural spots spanning four centuries represent the long history of England in Moscow and may leave England fans feeling more at home than they expected.

Old English Court, 1550s-1640s

Nestled under the Kremlin’s shadow on Varvarka Ulitsa, the Old English Court is one of the oldest surviving buildings in Moscow. The 16th-century Tudor mansion with its thatched roof seems out of place on a street otherwise crowded with onion-domed churches. Passersby may feel as if they have time-traveled into a hybrid of Elizabethan England and Tsarist Russia.

This isn’t far from the truth. In 1553, English navigator Richard Chancellor blundered while searching for a naval passage to China and India, and instead arrived smack dab in an entirely different country: Russia. When Tsar Ivan IV, known as Ivan the Terrible, learned of the Englishman’s arrival, he enthusiastically invited him to his court in Moscow for a formal reception.

Chancellor made his way through 1000 kilometers of ice and snow to reach the tsar’s court. When he finally arrived, Ivan made sure the journey was worth it. Chancellor wrote that the tsar’s palace was literally dripping with precious stones and that the feasts on offer were ambrosial. Chancellor also found it odd that outside the tsar’s golden palace, the enormous city of Moscow (much larger than London) was constructed almost entirely out of rudimentary wooden houses.

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The vast was a success, resulting in the establishment of trading routes between the countries. In 1555, the Muscovy Company was founded and the Old English Court was subsequently built as a trading post, home and embassy for English merchants. England traded wool, metal and Mediterranean goods in exchange for Russian hemp, tallow and rope.

Relations between England and Muscovy were sweltering, making Ivan IV so bold as to ask for Queen Elizabeth I's hand in marriage. He hoped that the marriage would provide him political asylum in case surrounding countries encroached on Russian territory. The Virgin Queen coolly declined his proposal. She told him that he could come to England if he wanted, but would have to pay his own passage. Ivan never made it to England.

The Muscovy Company continued to flourish throughout the first half of the 17th century. However, when British Parliamentarians executed King Charles I in 1649, Russia cut off communications and threw all the merchants out. Regicide was a deal-breaker for the tsars.

Today the Old English Court is a museum, offering exhibitions and excursions about the first Englishmen in Moscow.

The English Club, 1770s-1910s

English and Scottish merchants trickled their way back into Russia in the 18th century, when Peter the Great founded his long-desired seaport in St. Petersburg. Eventually they made their way to Moscow. By 1771, the English merchant community was flourishing enough to found its own social club. The English Club rented out various houses before permanently moving into a classical mansion (at 21 Tverskaya Ulitsa) in 1831. Any aspiring Russian dandy coveted membership. Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol and Leo Tolstoy were among its members. As Russia’s elite craved European culture throughout the 19th century, the English Club provided succor.

The English Club didn’t factor into the new Bolshevik order after 1917. The mansion on Tverskaya was repurposed as a military hospital and then a museum. Today, the imposing brick structure houses the State Central Museum of Contemporary Russian History.

The Walcot houses, 1910s

Before the revolution halted English influence, architect William Walcot put his stamp on Moscow with some of the city’s earliest art nouveau architecture.

Walcot was actually born in Odessa and trained in St. Petersburg and Paris, then settling in Moscow to help develop art nouveau. He channeled his English roots when building a series of houses in the first decade of the 20th century. He designed the stunning pink art nouveau mansion at 8 Prechistensky Pereulok, and a geometric brick English-modernist home next door at number 10. These houses were fashionable “turnkey” mansions, meaning they were rented out by various wealthy occupants on a seasonal basis.

The city’s elite clamored for Walcot’s English designs. He also constructed a boarding house for English governesses at 9 Spiridonievsky Pereulok, responding to the demand for education and culture from the British Isles.

Walcot moved to England permanently in 1908, and later the Soviet government turned his houses on Prechistensky Pereulok into office buildings. Now B Prechistensky Pereulok serves as the embassy of Morocco.

Once home of the elite English Club, 21 Tverskaya Ulitsa is now a history museum.
Some Great Belgian, English and French Joints in Moscow (Waiting on Croatian)

As the World Cup moves into the semifinals, we thought it would be helpful to provide a guide to some of the best pubs and restaurants in Moscow that correspond to the national cuisines. Take heart, fans of Croatian football and food! We couldn't find any Croatian-themed places in town — a glaring hole in Moscow's culinary and social landscape — but this deficit offers a brilliant opportunity for aspiring entrepreneurs and trendsetters.

Brussels and Paris are the capitals of the world of beer. Here are the best places where you can drink Belgian, French and British ales in Moscow.

Brasserie Most
Floor-to-ceiling windows, huge mirrors that reflect the light of the chandeliers, tasteful art-deco styling — at Brasserie Most, visitors find an elegant, upscale take on French cuisine. In the hands of Bordeaux-born chef Jean-Luc Molle, traditional recipes gain an artisanal twist. You can try cucumber and avocado gazpacho with Kalamata crab and cucumber sorbet alongside the usual Burgundy escargot or pear chutney and foie gras. End the meal with vanilla mille-feuille or the timeless creme brulee for a truly unforgettable evening.

Brasserie Most
6/3 Kuznetsky Most. Metro Lyubnaya.
en.brasseriemost.ru

Bruxelles Gastropub
Putting a modern spin on all the usual recipes, Bruxelles brings the concept of the Belgian pub into the 21st century. Serving delicate beef tartare with potato waffle, cheese croquettes with raspberry pepper sauce and mussels with everything from hops to garlic cream sauce, this gastropub prides itself on having an original and creative approach to every one of its dishes. So get a snack, settle down with one of Bruxelles' 20 on-tap beers and join the regulars for some good cheer.

Bruxelles Gastropub
18/3 Malaya Dmitrovka. Metro Tverskaya.
italy-group.ru/en/restaurants/bruxelles-moscow

Café Providence
True to its name, Café Providence transports you, body and soul, into the south of France with its vintage French posters and chairs straight from a Nice casino. There's Cannes salad with tiger shrimp and spinach, duck leg confit stewed in port and orange juice, passion fruit panna cotta and much more. The café is alcohol free, but that's only a bonus. Instead, you get to sample one of their fortifying herbal teas or a breezy fresh lemonade. Ranging from raspberry to lime, the wines are plentiful and chefs think outside the box, serving beer and cider, as well as summer-light chutney and foie-gras. End the meal with vanilla mille-feuille or the timeless creme brulee for a truly unforgettable evening.

Café Providence
7/11 Ostozhenka, Bldg. 2. Metro Kropotkinskaya.
geraldine.ru

BELGIAN

Brugge
Find yourself in a 12th-century Belgian town as you enter Brugge, a pub that brings the culinary and cultural traditions of its namesake into the heart of Moscow. With live music on the weekends and a menu sporting all the classics from Belgian waffles to grilled sausages, the pub's warm and welcoming atmosphere channels historic Belgian hospitality. Naturally, no meal is complete without a pint of beer, and at Brugge even the most choosy will find something to their liking. There are over 150 varieties on offer, and you'll want to come back again and again.

Brugge
bruggepub.com

Lambic
At Brasserie LAMBC, beer is a philosophy and a way of life. Offering a dizzying variety of ales — light, dark, fruity, wheat, you name it — LAMBC won't just hand you a menu and leave you in the lurch. Their expert sommelier and wait staff are always on hand to advise you on labels, flavors and the perfect dishes to go with every drink. Fans can get the quadruple Kasteel Barista and the perfect dishes to go with every drink. So get a snack, settle down with one of Bruxelles' 20 on-tap beers and join the regulars for some good cheer.

Lambic
27 Ulitsa Ostozhenka, Bldg. 2. Metro Kropotkinskaya.
lambicbar.ru

Kelya
From its stained glass windows and domed ceilings, to the habit-clad waiters and quiet, calming atmosphere, every aspect of Kelya (in English, ‘monastic cell’) is styled after a Belgian monastery from ages past. The first Belgian restaurant to open in Moscow, Kelya has long been a haven for expats and beer lovers eager for a respite from life in the capital and a pint of quality ale. Follow centuries of tradition as you try a Westmalle or Chimay, brewed by the monks of the Abbey of Van Scourmount, or take a bit of the abbey of Westmalle or Chimay, brewed by the monks of the abbey of Van Scourmount, or take a bit of a different game La Boule is the place to be.

Kelya
6/3 Kuznetsky Most. Metro Lyubnaya.
facebook.com/La-Boule-petanque-

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Café Providence
7/11 Ostozhenka, Bldg. 2. Metro Kropotkinskaya.
geraldine.ru

Café Providence
7/11 Ostozhenka, Bldg. 2. Metro Kropotkinskaya.
geraldine.ru

Cross Keys Pub
As you step through the doors of Cross Keys Pub, you are transported directly to an English local tavern. At this atmospheric joint, where the dark wooden furniture recalls its British counterparts, every detail, from the food to the decor, adds to the atmosphere of home and comfort. The Full English breakfast is offered all day long, and typical dishes are supplemented with Mexican chilli con carne and quasadillas.

Cross Keys Pub
piepoint.ru

CHELSIA

Chelsea Gastropub
Once you see Chelsea Gastropub's extensive menu, you'll want to try everything and never leave again. No worries: The pub's open 24/7, so you can stay as long as you like. With over 100 types of whiskey and a magnificent selection of beers, Chelsea might surprise even the savviest connoisseur. The food is an eclectic mix of British and international, English sausages appearing side-by-side with aromatic paella, but in spite of the diverse menu the vibe echoes a true British pub. You'll get a full sense of that on game night: The whole pub becomes a sea of Union Jacks.

Chelsea Gastropub
Multiple locations
chelseagastropub.ru/en

Pie Point
Outside the British Isles, pie is one of the best plancos to get a taste of real English pie: Whether you're in the mood for Shepherd's pie with curdled, pea and gravy, a veggie span- ach, tomato and mozzarella pie with a side of fresh green salad, or a rich duck-in-cider pie with apples, thyme and oranges, Pie Point is ready to serve you with the pie of your life. They also serve beer and cider, as well as summer-light mimosas. The simple interior and friendly atmosphere ensure that every visitor feels like they belong.

Pie Point
piepoint.ru
Insider Shopping in St. Petersburg

Traditional souvenir shops selling matryoshka dolls, amber jewelry and fur hats are easy to spot in St. Petersburg. But where do St. Petersburg locals go when they need to find a special gift? Here are some of our favorite insider shops.

Imperial Porcelain Factory

Most locals have an item from the Imperial Porcelain Factory in their cupboard. Founded in 1744 by the decree of Empress Elizabeth, the manufacturer became Russia’s first and Europe’s third porcelain factory, and one of the city’s legends.

The company’s iconic and most famous pattern, cobalt net, was created in 1944 by Anna Yatskevich, who was awarded a gold medal at the World EXPO exhibition in Brussels in 1958. The design is regarded as a symbol of the Siege of Leningrad during World War II. It was inspired by the image of cross-taped windows of buildings and cross spotlights illuminating the sky during the siege.

92 Nevsky Prospekt; 7 Vladimirsky Prospekt; 10 Bolshaya Konyushennaya Ulitsa

imp.ru

Krestetskaya Strochka Factory

Russian embroidery is almost an extinct art form these days. This means it is all the more precious to see the revival of the Krestetskaya Strochka factory, which produces handmade tablecloths, napkins and bed linens using a unique technique developed in the late 18th century in northwest Russia and exclusive to the manufacturer. Some of the factory’s products are recognized as the cultural heritage of Russia and are preserved in the collections of the State Hermitage Museum and other galleries.

2 Bolshaya Konyushennaya Ulitsa

Russkiye Samotsvety

As a former imperial capital, St. Petersburg had its own fine jewelry producers. The Russkiye Samotsvety jewelry factory was founded in 1912 by Tsar Nicholas II and followed in the footsteps of the Imperial Lapidary Works established in 1712. Today, this is still one of Russia’s finest jewelry-makers and the only company in Russia that has preserved the centuries-old craft of filigree enamel on silver — a type of cloisonné enameling where the cloisons are made of twisted wire soldered to the base and filled with opaque enamel. The factory makes popular enamel pendants in the style of Faberge eggs.

30A Ligovsky Prospekt; 3 Ulitsa Yefimova; 3-5 Pervaya Krasnoarmeiskaya Ulitsa; 8 Karl Faberge Square

russam.ru

Razgulyaev & Blagonravova

The young and exciting St. Petersburg brand Razgulyaev & Blagonravova, which makes hand-made shoes, is the favorite shopping spot for the city’s culture vultures. The company’s signature collections include home slippers decorated with motifs from the paintings of Kazimir Malevich, Vassily Kandinsky and Raphael. “From the very start we really wanted to connect with the arts: Living in St. Petersburg, it is impossible not to relate to its amazing, vast museum collections,” said Lyudmila Razgulyaeva, the brand’s founder and director. “The State Russian Museum got very interested in our collection inspired by paintings of Kazimir Malevich, and for the Faberge Museum we made special models with a print referring to one of Carl Faberge’s earliest jeweled eggs, the First Hen egg.”

4 Stolyarny Pereulok

home-shoes.business.site

Varvara Skripkina Gallery of Dolls

Another local gallery with a distinct St. Petersburg feel and a favorite of locals is the Varvara Skripkina Gallery of Dolls. You are sure to enjoy their permanent exhibitions of dolls and puppets made by around 60 local artists over the past few decades. Skripkina brings warmth and humor to her artfully made creatures from Russian books, films and cartoons, as well as historical and fictitious characters.

53/3 Bolshaya Morskaya Ulitsa
Arvo Pärt, Rehabilitated in Moscow

By Alexander Feinberg

Exhibition celebrates the famous Estonian composer

His music was disapproved of by the Soviet authorities, especially due to its religious themes.

It is as the inventor of Tintinnabuli and a pioneer of holy minimalism that Pärt would capture the hearts and minds of the Western audience.

Tintinnabuli is characterized by having two voices that are intertwined, and Pärt, now a devout Russian-Orthodox Christian, thought of it as an analogy for his religious struggles. In an interview with the musician Björk in 2017, the composer commented that “one line is my sins, the other line is forgiveness for my sins.”

Pärt put the idea into greater effect with the 1977 orchestral composition “Tabula Rasa” — one of the first of his works to reach a Western audience. It is meditative, spiritual, melancholy and, as the music critic Alex Ross notes, it has been likened to a “vehicle of saloace” for the terminally ill and dying.

World fame

His music met with the disapproval of Soviet authorities, especially due to its religious themes. In 1980 Pärt left the country. He, his wife Nora and their two sons moved to Vienna and then to Berlin, where they lived for 30 years and where he continued to find success. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, his music exploded in Estonia. In 2010 he returned.

Now, as in the Soviet Era, Pärt does not shy away from the political in his work. After the 2006 murder of journalist Anna Politkovskaya, the composer dedicated a year of his concerts to her memory. Then, in 2008, Pärt dedicated his Symphony No. 4 to Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who was then imprisoned in Russia on what were widely condemned as politically motivated charges.

Pärt’s international standing has also steadily grown over the last decades, and his music is believed to be the most played among any living classical composer in the world. It has appeared in over 40 films, ranging from the show “The Young Pope” to — astonishingly — “Avengers: Age of Ultron.” In fact, Pärt’s music has been heard in so many movies that in 2008 The Guardian published an article titled “Is It Time to Give Pärt a Rest?”

Pärt has received many commissions, including from the Vatican, the International Olympic Committee (for 2006) and many of the world’s major orchestras. At 82, he continues to compose and fill concert halls.

Where to hear Pärt

The Satirikon theater is showing a “movement play” titled “NEBALET, which sets contemporary choreography to the music of Bizet, Mozart and Pärt. It will be performed on July 27, Sept. 10 and Oct. 15.

The exhibition at the Prokofiev Museum runs through Aug. 31.
Get Out of Town: Some Recommended Travel Spots

Krasnoyarsk
Krasnoyarsk is considered the capital of central-eastern Siberia. Founded in the early 17th century, it gradually grew into a large industrial center. After a rough period in the 1990s, the city has cleaned up nicely, with restored parks, churches and an interesting mix of wooden architecture, art nouveau, constructivism and Soviet modernist buildings. It has also become an important center of contemporary art, with its own biennale.

Yuri Nikulin, famous for his large-scale historical paintings, was born in Krasnoyarsk and there is a street, a square and a museum named after him. Located in a splendid art nouveau mansion, the Surikov Museum has a strong collection of local icons, paintings and sketches by the artist.

The Paraskeva Pyatnitsa chapel was built in 1855 in place of a wooden watchtower. Located at the top of the Karaulnaya (Sentinel) Hill, it is one of the main symbols of the city with great views of the city center.

If you are interested in culinary tourism, try Siberian specialties and great cocktails at the Budgakol restaurant (12 Ulitsa Suntsova). For an outing, go to the right bank of Yenisei River to the “Stolby” (Pillars) nature reserve.

Khabarovsk
Khabarovsk is the furthest east outpost, just 30 kilometers from China. In fact, the area was controlled by China until 1858, when it was ceded to Russia. Named after the Amur River region, Yerofei Khabarov, the town was founded as a military outpost, but quickly grew into a major industrial center. After a rough period in the 1990s, the city has cleaned up nicely, with restored parks, churches and an interesting mix of wooden architecture, art nouveau, constructivism and Soviet modernist buildings. It has also become an important center of contemporary art, with its own biennale.

Painter Vasily Surikov, famous for his large-scale historical paintings, was born in Krasnoyarsk and there is a street, a square and a museum named after him. Located in a splendid art nouveau mansion, the Surikov Museum has a strong collection of local icons, paintings and sketches by the artist.

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Yaroslavl
Yaroslavl is the largest city in the Golden Ring. Founded by the legendary Kievan Rus prince Yaroslav the Wise around 1010, it is also the oldest city on the Volga River, with a historic center listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. A beautiful park now covers the place of a wooden watchtower. Located at the top of the Karaulnaya (Sentinel) Hill, it is one of the main symbols of the city with great views of the city center.

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Kaluga
If you are tired of Moscow’s hustle and bustle, get on an express train at Kiyevsky Station and visit Kaluga, a quaint old town with vibrant artistry, gastronomy and nightlife. Founded in the mid-14th century, it became a major trading city on the Oka River during the reign of Catherine II. In the 20th century Kaluga became a major industrial center while managing to keep its small town appeal.

Wealthy merchants filled the city with architectural masterpieces. The former estate of merchant Pyotr Zolotaryov now houses a regional history museum, while the mansion of Ivan Bilibin is the now local fine arts museum. The recently restored pseudo-gothic market arcade on Staraya Torg (Old Market Square) is the hub of the city, with souvenir shops and Gastronom, a great gastropub offering traditional Russian dishes “with a twist.” On the other side of the square is the city park with the magnificent Trinity Cathedral.

Moskovskaya and Moskovskaya streets preserve the provincial atmosphere of past centuries and are great to walk around. Café 1554 has the best coffee and breakfasts in the city (18 Ulitsa Moskovskaya).

Saratov
Saratov was founded in 1590 near the spot formerly occupied by Ovek, a major Golden Horde city. In the 16th and 17th centuries Saratov became an important shipping port and the center of the Volga German population; it then became a “closed city” during the Soviet period due to its military importance.

The pedestrian street Prospekt Kirova runs through the center of the city with all the main sights clustered around it. Don’t miss the beautiful Reineke mansion (now a hospital) designed by art nouveau architect Pyodor Schekhtel, whose parents were Volga Germans. Walk around the lilac (linden trees) and catch a concert at the pseudo-gothic Saratov Conservatory. Get your caffeine fix at Coffee 3 (14 Ulitsa Nekrasova) or Trista Barista (10 Ulitsa Kirova).

The Radishchev Museum is one of the first public museums in Russia with a fine collection of 19th century Russian art and interesting temporary exhibitions. Come in the summer to stroll along the Volga embankment, take a boat ride to an island or bask in the sun on one of the city’s beaches.

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Chapayev and Void

July 12-15

“Chapayev and Void” is probably the most popular production at Praktika, one of Moscow’s most experimental theaters. It’s based on a novel by Viktor Pelevin, also known as “Buddha’s Little Finger” in the English translation. Whether you have read this modern Russian literary classic or not, this production by Maxim Didenko will leave you spellbound. The first and longest act is a bona fide musical with a live band on stage. Ivan Kushnir, Didenko’s longtime collaborator, wrote the music. The second act is devoted to one of the scenes of the novel and the third is a contemporary dance performance.

Praktika
30 Bolshaya Kozikhinsky Pereulok. Metro Mayakovskaya.
praktikatheatre.ru

Exhibition Test of Strength

Through Sept. 9

“Test of Strength” is the first “Resident” project at VDNKH, during which various museums present parts of their collections. Located at the Rabochyi i Kolkhoznitsa museum, itself an extraordinary monument with the giant “Worker and Collective Farm Girl” by sculptor Vera Mukhina, “Test of Strength” brings to Moscow some masterpieces from the collection of the Yekaterinburg Museum of Fine Arts. Yekaterinburg developed as the industrial powerhouse of the Urals, and many local artists depicted everyday life at the steel mills and factories. There are paintings by such renowned artists as Yuri Pimenov and Alexander Labas, as well as works from the Yekaterinburg non-conformist scene of the 1970s and 80s, including some by Misha Bruslovsky. There’s a section devoted to the famous Nevyanik icons, produced by “old believers,” an ancient branch of the Russian Orthodox Church. The courtyard hall houses a replica of the Kural Cast Iron Pavilion, which won an award at the Paris Expo in 1900. The Rabochyi i Kolkhoznitsa Pavilion 12/38 Prospekt Mira. Metro VDNKh. vdnkh.ru

Exhibition General Rehearsal, Act Two

Through July 22

“General Rehearsal” at MMOMA is literally a rehearsal for the grand opening of a new museum in Moscow—V-A-C Foundation’s space at the revamped GES-2 power plant in the heart of Moscow, slated for 2019. “General Rehearsal” combines masterpieces from three art collections—V-A-C, KADIST and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art. It’s also a rehearsal in a different sense, as it follows the structure of a theatrical production and will be divided into three acts. Act One, based on Chekhov’s “Svagoz,” has already taken place, and Act Two has been launched. It is based not on a play, but rather a series of questions and answers by Austrian philosopher Armén Avanessian, entitled “A Philosophical Play in 11 Thought-images.” The questions range from metaphysical to futuristic, and the answers are played out by the artworks on display.

Moscow Museum of Modern Art
25 Ulitsa Petrovka. Metro Pushkinskaya, Chekhovskaya.
momoma.ru

Exhibition Rodchenko and Stepanova: Football

Through July 11

This small exhibition includes paintings, graphic artworks and photographs related to football and sports by the great Soviet avant-garde constructivist artists Alexander Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova. Both were advocates of the cult of athleticism, with sport motifs recurring in their works from the late 1920s until the ear-
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