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Against Sistema

Semi-state Rosneft positions itself for a power grab courtesy of long-time rivals. → Page 3

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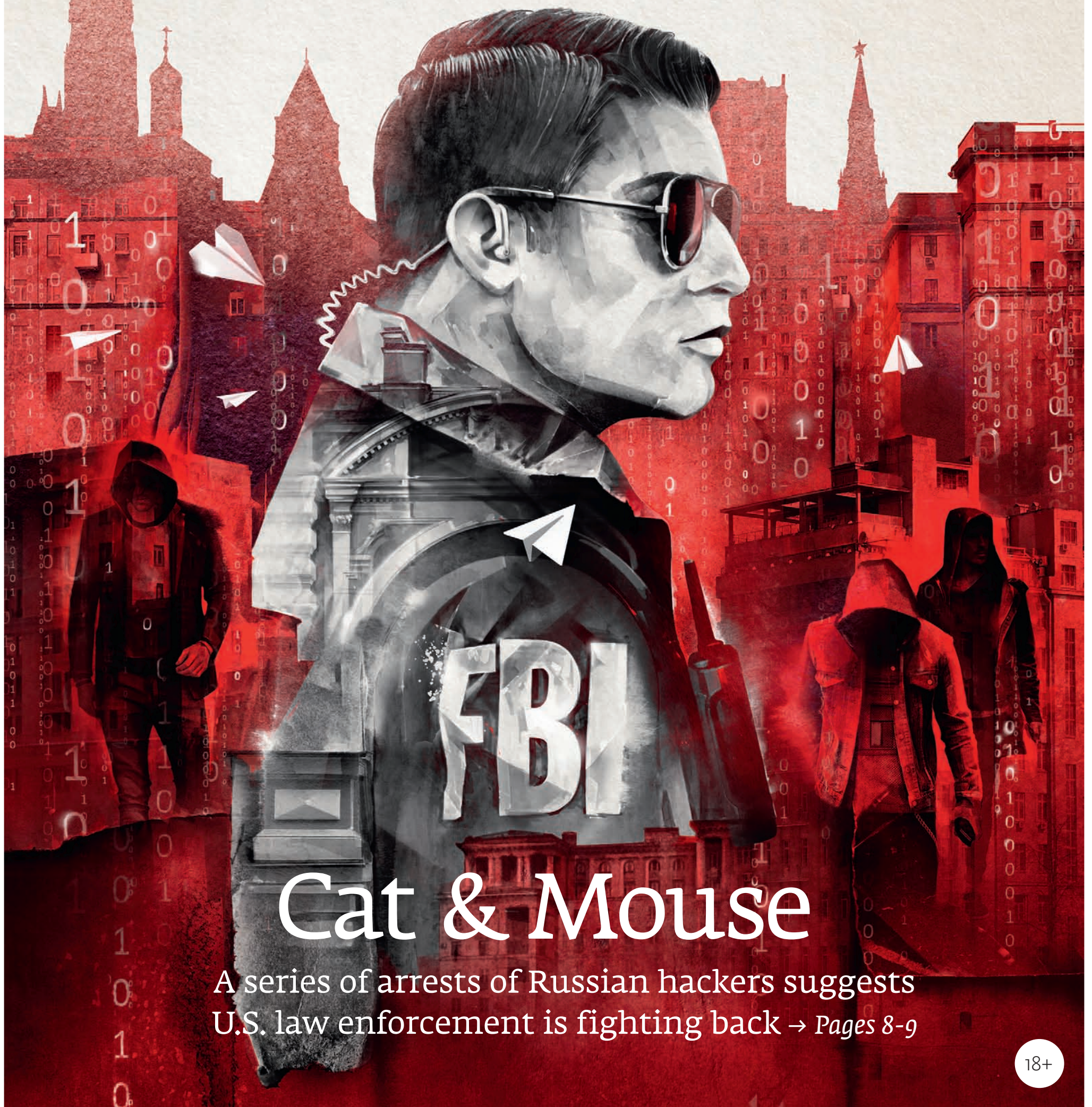
Popular messenger service Telegram is a platform for terrorists, claim Russian authorities. → Page 5



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“Not gonna fly, methinks” — political analyst **Vladimir Frolov** on Russia’s Korean “road map.”

\$11Bln

Putin wrote off North Korea’s Soviet debt in 2014

2011

Kim Jong-un becomes Supreme Leader after the death of his father.



North Korea has been under UN sanctions since its first nuclear tests in 2006.

Mutually Assured Distraction

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

Russia has proposed a “road map” amid growing tensions between the U.S. and North Korea. Spoiler: It’s not going to work

On June 12, North Korea released Otto Warmbier, an American student imprisoned for 17 months in the secretive country. But what should have been a victory for international diplomacy was hardly celebratory.

Warmbier returned home comatose, in a persistent vegetative state with no chance of recovery. He died only six days after arriving on U.S. soil. The death came as the latest incident amid rocketing tensions between Pyongyang and Washington. In March, North Korea test-fired four ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan. In response, the United States began to deploy THAAD anti-missile systems to South Korea. A month later, during a visit to the South, U.S. Vice-President Mike Pence declared that the “era of strategic patience” with Pyongyang was over.

“North Korea would do well not to test [Trump’s] resolve or the strength of the armed forces of the United States in this region,” he said.

Since then, however, missile tests have continued.

Enter Moscow. On Tuesday, the Russian Foreign Ministry announced that it has worked out a “road map” for regulating the situation on the Korean Peninsula. The plan reportedly includes a step-by-step scheme for bringing all sides to dialogue. It also calls for everyone to exercise restraint, avoid provo-

cation, and abandon threats of force, Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov told the RIA Novosti news agency.

Perhaps most importantly, the “road map” proposes providing Pyongyang with a security guarantee, thereby allowing it to halt its nuclear missile program. That may sound good on paper, but geopolitical analysts say it is unlikely to work in practice.

“It’s North Korea’s Santa wishlist,” Vladimir Frolov, a Russian foreign affairs expert, told *The Moscow Times* in an email. “And it’s Moscow’s PR move to appear relevant in the crisis without doing any heavy lifting.”

The plan is weak, lacking specific demands for Pyongyang to freeze — let alone dismantle — its nuclear and missile programs, Frolov said. It also articulates no punitive measures for violations by the North.

“It’s a coordinated move with China to cast the Trump administration as a reckless warmonger,” Frolov added.

The problem, he says, is that, despite perceptions to the contrary, the Kremlin lacks leverage over Pyongyang. After the Korean War, Moscow and Pyongyang were communist allies. Soviet financial and technological aid were key to building the North Korean economy. But that ended with the Soviet collapse.

In recent years, economic ties have picked up again. In 2014, for example, President Vladimir Putin wrote off Pyongyang’s \$11 bil-

lion debt to the Soviet Union. And North Korean laborers now toil in Russia’s Far East and even helped construct St. Petersburg’s Zenit Arena. Their work — essentially slave labor — provides much needed hard currency for Pyongyang, which confiscates up to half of their paychecks.

Beyond that, Russia controls only five percent of North Korea’s trade — much less than China does, according to Alexander Gabuev, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Moscow Center. As a result, it cannot impose limits on Pyongyang by economic pressure alone.

Any efforts to rein in North Korea will have to address the country’s fundamental concerns, Gabuev says. While the U.S. worries that Pyongyang’s missiles could eventually hit its west coast, the North Korean government views nuclear weapons as its only insurance policy against the U.S. It looks with alarm at events such as the overthrow of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. He had abandoned weapons of mass destruction and increasingly reconciled with the West, but was nevertheless killed amid NATO airstrikes.

Short of finding a way to enshrine a security guarantee — both for Pyongyang and Washington — in stone, no “road map” for the Korean Peninsula is likely to work.

“The lesson that North Korea took is that you must have a deterrent,” Gabuev says. “For them, that’s the nuclear bomb.” **TMT**



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CENTER STAGE

Je Suis Malobrodsky: Theater, Politics and Russian Scandal

By **John Freedman**
Theater critic of *The Moscow Times* from 1992 to 2015



The theater world may now be at the center of one of Russia’s most profound political scandals. The stakes are high: Can the government and its people coexist? And if not, where is the country heading?

Last week Alexei Malobrodsky, the former managing director of Gogol Center, one of Moscow’s most innovative theaters, was called to testify in an embezzlement relating to activities at the center’s innovative Seventh Studio in 2012.

Malobrodsky, who was also the general producer of Seventh Studio, entered court on June 21 as a witness but left shortly afterward in handcuffs. He was hauled off to Petrovka 38 where — in violation of Russian law — he was placed in a cell with a repeat offender. Dozhd TV later reported that this cellmate has made disconcerting, if not yet threatening, comments to Malobrodsky.

Officially, Malobrodsky was accused of embezzling 2.33 million rubles (approximately \$38,700, and considered “large-scale” fraud) from the budget of Kirill Serebrennikov’s 2012 production of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

In a claim that has already entered Russian theater lore, the prosecutor insisted that “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” never existed. Compelling evidence suggesting the contrary — posters, reports of performances in France, repertory schedules, the production’s nomination for a Golden Mask, etc. — was not admitted by the court.

In ensuing weeks the theater community has worked such words as “Kafkaesque” and “absurd” until they are white hot.

This incident is a continuation of a late May attempt to pin Gogol Center’s prominent artistic director Kirill Serebrennikov with similar charges. Following a flurry of highly publicized interrogations about embezzlement at Seventh Studio, a former bookkeeper Nina Maslyayeva was imprisoned, and the Studio’s former general manager Yuri Itin was placed under house arrest.

Serebrennikov, considered only a witness, was hassled for a couple of days, then, essentially, left alone. Perhaps one reason for this is that on the first day of Serebrennikov’s interrogation, the famed actor Yevgeny Mironov made use of an opportunity, while receiving an award from President Vladimir Putin, to say a word in his colleague’s defense.

Reportedly, Putin’s pithy response in regards to those conducting the investigation was “Fools!”

The investigators essentially let up on Serebrennikov and went after Maslyayeva, Itin and, now, Malobrodsky.

And this brings us to the crux of the problem. Navigating Russian fiscal laws is something akin to traversing the woods in a Brothers Grimm fairy tale. You have no choice but to do it, but the dangers lurking there are always unclear and far worse than you can imagine. I must have heard the following a thousand times: The laws governing Russian theater financing are so arcane and contradictory that even a mathematical genius could not run a theater and abide by the law.

Furthermore, all but a handful of Russian theaters cover the vast majority of their operating expenses by way of gov-

ernment grants or subsidies. If you violate a law paying your theater’s bills or financing its productions, you are not only liable to be accused of embezzlement, but of embezzlement from the state, a particularly serious charge.

In recent days we have seen a rare, coordinated public outcry. Letters of protest have been published by the Congress of the Intelligentsia, the Guild of Theater Managers, and by a coalition of prominent Moscow directors. Individual directors, composers, actors and other artists have published personal statements of protest. None believe Malobrodsky pocketed the sum he is accused of stealing.

A group calling itself In The Same Boat As Malobrodsky organized a nationwide act of solidarity by which representatives of theaters will inform audiences about the situation before performances on June 28.

But even here a problem arises. Many theaters will not admit beforehand that they will take part in the act — that old fear of biting the hand that feeds them again. Under the existing system, if you want to run your theater, you cannot refuse state subsidies or grants. Meanwhile, the state oversees a legal system that essentially makes potential criminals of everyone who accepts government funding.

This state of affairs is well known to many in Russia — from the world of cinema to that of small business, where it is equally debilitating.

Watch this case. Its repercussions may go far beyond the stages of Russia’s theaters. **TMT**



Bashneft's previous owner, Ural Rakhimov, is hiding from criminal charges in Austria. The Austrian state believes the case against him is "politically motivated."

170.6Bln

rubles total amount of damages claimed by Rosneft.



2 May 2017 - Moscow court registers initial Rosneft lawsuit against Sistema.

329.7Bln

rubles paid by Rosneft to acquire Bashneft in 2016.

Breaking Sistema

By Mikhail Fishman and David Kharebov newsreporter@imedia.ru

Leading tycoon Yevtushenkov once again finds himself the target of aggressive legal actions from powerful enemies

The Forbes list of top Russian billionaires is known for its high volatility, but even by its usual standards, the fall of Vladimir Yevtushenkov is impressive. As of June 27, the Russian tycoon's wealth had shrunk from \$3.5 billion down to \$1.9 billion in just four months.

The reason for the fall was simple enough: Yevtushenkov's conglomerate Sistema had been hit with a series of lawsuits, culminating in a June 27 court decision to arrest a number of its major holdings. Sistema's 31.76 percent stake in leading Russian telecoms operator MTS, the entirety of its 100 percent share in the Medsi chain of medical clinics, and its 90.47 percent stake in the Bashkirian Power Grid were all frozen.

The fallout sent shockwaves across global markets, with Sistema's shares free-falling from 14.00 on Friday evening to 12.10 on Tuesday.

Yevtushenkov's problems have stemmed from a long-running conflict with semi-state oil giant Rosneft over the future of regional oil producer Bashneft, previously under Sistema's control. The company was bought by Rosneft under highly controversial circumstances in 2016.

Rosneft is claiming that between 2009 and 2014, Sistema engaged in illegal asset stripping of Bashneft. They say the damages amount to 170.6 billion rubles (\$2.9 billion), a figure the Sistema conglomerate referred to as "unscientific fiction."

"In Russia, justice and fair trials are not guaranteed," economic expert Sergey Aleksashenko told The Moscow Times in written comments. "We might suspect Rosneft is looking to get a big stake at MTS."

Unorthodox procedure

Rosneft defended the court decision to arrest Sistema assets as "standard procedure." Company spokesman Mikhail Leontyev told reporters that the affected shares were only in equal in value to the oil company's claim: "We wouldn't have resorted to this measure if [Sistema] hadn't publicly demonstrated its contempt for the legal procedure."

In a written statement, Sistema labeled the move "outrageous [...] unlawful and unfounded."

The case hinges on allegations that Sistema illegally stripped local energy assets from Bashneft between 2009 and 2014. According to the Kommersant newspaper, Rosneft says it has evidence of a written exchange between Sistema and Bashneft top-managers, where Sistema managers allegedly indicate Bashneft would "suffer" from a reorganization prior to the forthcoming Rosneft takeover. In response, Sistema is litigating the mere fact of reviewing such an exchange.

Sistema has already suggested a friendly settlement. In fact, Rosneft may not need one — it has the Russian court system on its side. Sistema is currently fighting to receive income from the dividends generated by the arrested shares, which were also frozen under that court order.



More than two years after the state seized shares in oil company Bashneft, Vladimir Yevtushenkov is set to lose more of his wealth.

Experts agree that the move to freeze dividends is far from standard.

"A court will usually seize funds as an interim measure," said Denis Frolov, a partner in Moscow's BNS law firm. The court's decision to take an interim measure is unusual, he says, and the fact they arrested these shares and dividends is "doubly so."

A hopeless case

While lawyers believe that the dividend ruling will be overturned, such limited success is perhaps the best that Yevtushenkov can hope for. Rosneft's all-powerful CEO Igor Sechin is close to the Russian president and known to be extremely successful in Russian courts.

In Russia, oil is a political asset. It was reported that then-President Dmitry Medvedev helped Yevtushenkov, his ally, to secure control over Bashneft. After Medvedev stepped down in 2012, Rosneft became the prime candidate to take over the regional oil producer.

Things came to a scandalous head in 2014, when Yevtushenkov was placed under house arrest, and control of Bashneft was transferred to the state. It was rumored that it was Yevtushenkov's punishment for lobbying for Medvedev's second term as a president.

The battle for control over Bashneft led to another major scandal in 2016, when government officials tried to persuade Vladimir Putin that transferring Bashneft to Rosneft could not be qualified as privatization. They failed. In Nov. 2016, Russian minister of economic development Alexei Ulyukayev was arrested after allegedly receiving a bribe from Sechin to help Rosneft acquire Bashneft. Many considered the arrest to be a set-up.

In 2014, when Bashneft was taken from Yevtushenkov, many political commentators called it a state robbery. There seemed to be clear parallels with the fate of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and the state capture of his Yukos oil company in 2004 (though on a reduced scale.) Now, as Rosneft challenges

Sistema again, Yevtushenkov is arguably being robbed twice.

"It's not normal," says Sergei Aleksashenko. "Rosneft bought Bashneft from the state knowing what condition it was in. Historical changes [in its assets] should not make any difference."

But in this sequel to the original Bashneft saga, Igor Sechin, Putin's powerful ally, is

once again proving he is among the strongest players in Russia's system of state capitalism.

And those inside government say they are not surprised by his latest moves.

"Sechin is on a mission to build the largest oil and gas company in the world," one government official told the Moscow Times. "Don't expect him to act like a little mouse." **TMT**

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0+ ПЕРНАМА

4 Looking Forward

June 29 - July 5, 2017



"In a sense, [the Museum of Atheism in St. Isaac's] was a subtle mockery of peoples' religious feelings" **Vladimir Putin**

3M

tourists visit St Isaac's Cathedral every year.

1858

St. Isaac's was completed after 40 years.



In 1931, the Soviets removed all religious accoutrement and installed the anti-religious Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism.



The debate over the fate of St. Isaac's has pitted many in Russia's northern capital against the state.

St Isaac's: Ending the Separation of Church and Real Estate

By **Ola Cichowlas** o.cichowlas@imedia.ru

Vladimir Putin finally broke his silence on the ongoing conflict surrounding St Petersburg's iconic cathedral, but the city's residents remain far from satisfied

For months, St. Petersburg's main cathedral has been at the center of Russia's debate on relations between church and state.

The Cathedral, St Isaac's, has been a state museum for more than seventy years. But a conflict around the cathedral began in January this year, when St. Petersburg's governor Georgy Poltavchenko announced his decision to gift the landmark to the Russian Orthodox in an agreement slated to last 49 years.

The decision immediately sparked an uproar.

Protests erupted in Russia's second city, with residents furious that Poltavchenko took the decision without their consent. Petersburgers are concerned that the church will limit access to the UNESCO site, which draws thousands of tourists around the world. To protect its status, 200,000 people have signed a petition demanding a referendum on the future of St Isaac's.

City authorities flatly rejected it, and the Kremlin chose to remain silent.

This silence was finally broken on June 15 during Russian President Vladimir Putin's annual phone-in marathon. Echoing the church's position, Putin noted that the Vatican is a model example of landmarks operated by religious authorities.

But the president was cautious. "We need to de-politicize this problem and respect people's religious faith," he said. "We have a law on the transfer of religious buildings to religious organizations."

This sort of rhetoric enables Putin to avoid resolving conflict says Roman Lunkin, who studies Russian society's relationship with the church. "He has tried to distance himself from [the conflict] since it began," he says.

Referring to Russian law as a possible solution in the St Isaac's debate is also problematic: The Russian Orthodox Church has not filed an official request for the transfer so there can be no court decision on the matter. "Formally nothing has happened," says Lunkin.

It is widely believed that Patriarch Kirill, head of Russia's Orthodox Church, has already made a deal with Poltavchenko — as well as the Kremlin — on the fate of the iconic landmark.

"This was a political decision by the Patriarch," says Lunkin, who believes the transfer will take place around Autumn just prior to the centenary of the October 1917 revolution. In February, Patriarch Kirill said the Church's

ownership of the cathedral on the revolution's anniversary would act as a "symbol of reconciliation."

Putin acknowledged that St Isaac's never fully belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church: It belonged to the Imperial Interior Ministry when it was finally finished after 40 years of construction in 1858. "But it was built as a church, not as a museum," said Putin, adding that the Soviets did everything to "destroy our spiritual roots."

Patriarch Kirill is using the revolution's anniversary, and protests in St. Petersburg, to argue that the church is still fighting bolshevism in Russian society.

"They are framing this as a battle between the Reds and the Whites," says Lunkin.

But many in St. Petersburg believe there was no reason for St Isaac's being gifted to the church.

"It has never been a parish church because it is not in a residential area," says church expert Kseniy Luchenko. She likens St Isaac's to the churches inside the Moscow Kremlin, which are state museums used for religious sermons.

"This has become a political battle for the church," says Luchenko, adding that Patriarch Kirill's control over St Isaac's would demonstrate the influence of the church over Russian society.

But while Patriarch Kirill can ignore his opposition, Putin cannot.

"[St. Petersburg] is his native city, he cares about what people think there," says Luchenko.

A few days ago, Putin spoke about his love for his hometown: "When I come from Moscow to St. Petersburg, it's like a lift off my shoulders."

But siding with the church appears to be more important for him.

"It is not so much a rapprochement between the church and state, but a wish to mutually use one another," says Lunkin. **TMT**



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РЕСТАУРАЦИЯ



“Saying that Telegram was allegedly used to prepare an act of terrorism three months ago raises questions,”
Pavel Durov, founder of Telegram

6M

People use Telegram in Russia.



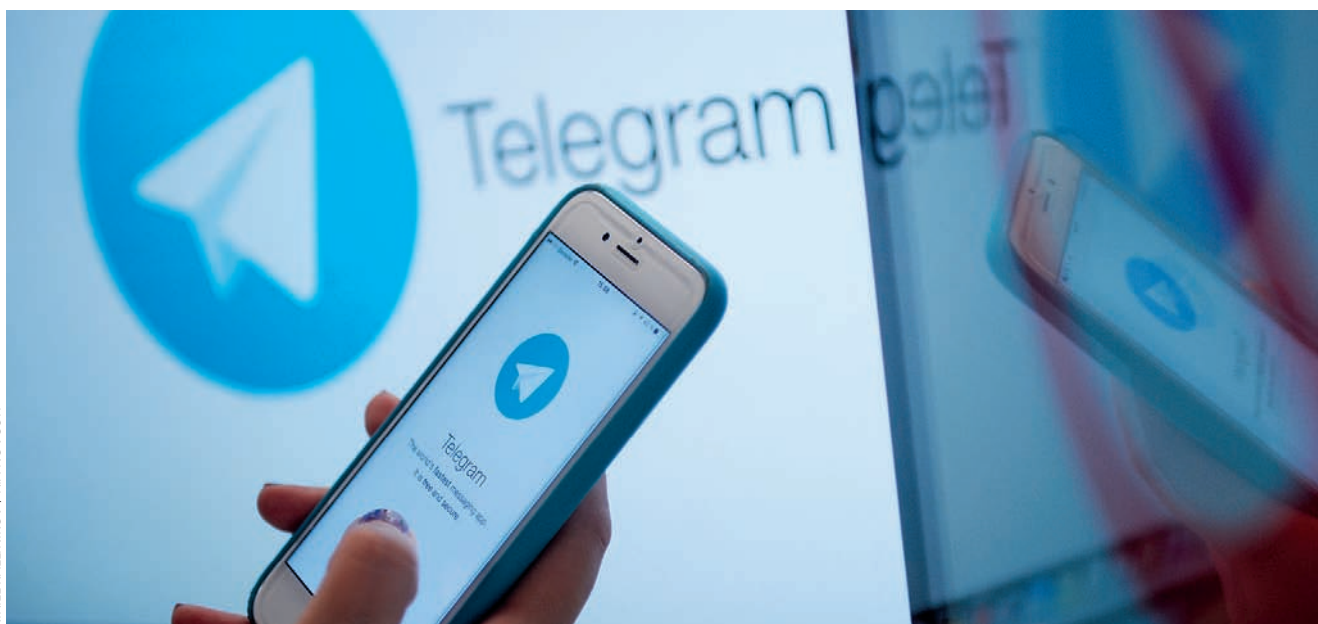
The FSB, one of Russia's security services, claims that Telegram messenger was used to organize the bombing of the St. Petersburg Metro this March.

2013

initial release of Telegram messenger app.

Channeling Anger

Russian authorities say Telegram helps terrorists but their attack on the messaging service is likely more political in nature



KIRILL KALLINIKOV / RIA NOVOSTI

According to Russian media regulator Roskomnadzor, Telegram's days in Russia are numbered.



Op-Ed by **David Khomak**
IT entrepreneur.

Earlier this week, Russian media regulator Roskomnadzor threatened to block Telegram, an encrypted messenger service allegedly used by the Islamic State.* The reality behind the decision is likely more political in nature.

It began in 2014, when state authorities established a registry of “information-dissemination organizers” — essentially a list of every website allowing the publication of user-generated content. By law, every such site must store records of all user activity for six months and provide it to intelligence agencies and the police immediately upon request.

In reality, however, very few organizations have complied. Only around 65 sites registered in 2015 and 2016.

Then, in April and May 2017, Roskomnadzor started actively blocking foreign sites that refused to comply. It began with the messenger service Zello, because striking Russian truckers were using it to communicate with each other. Roskomnadzor demanded that Zello register in Russia and hand over user information upon request. Zello's founder refused, and the messenger was blocked.

On April 28, Roskomnadzor blocked the messenger services Line, IMO and Vchat. The Chinese messenger WeChat was briefly blocked in early May before it agreed to register. Roskomnadzor also blocked BlackBerry Messenger and blacklisted 64 of its IP addresses. Of all these blocked messenger services, only WeChat has a moderately sized user base in Russia.

Telegram is an entirely different matter. The app was founded by internet entrepreneur Pavel Durov — Russia's answer to Mark Zuckerberg — after he was forced out of his own company, VKontakte — Russia's answer to Facebook. Durov used the money he received for selling his shares in VKontakte to create Telegram. And that's when the trouble started.

Durov takes a laissez-faire position toward his creations. This served VKontakte well. The site was only outwardly a social network. Behind that facade stood an enormous file-sharing network of pirated music and movies. Durov's consistent response to this problem — sitting back and doing nothing — helped the site transform into a platform for streaming content without paying for it.

In the same way, Telegram grew into something beyond a messenger service. It became a platform for “write-only channels” in which various people post texts and subscribers read

it, without the ability to respond or send comments. This soon morphed into collective blogs, including anonymous political blogs. That's when Russia's harsh political reality kicked in.

Telegram is the only popular platform in Russia that is not controlled by Roskomnadzor. It is also very important that, as a messenger, Telegram exists exclusively as a separate app. The Russian law for banning websites — either with or without a court order — requires a reference to specific offending web pages. There is virtually nothing like that in Telegram. Roskomnadzor and the courts were unprepared for this.

Of course, there are boundaries even Pavel Durov will not cross. Telegram moderators delete all suspicious public chats connected with the Islamic State for example. But the app's developers say they cannot monitor the content of encrypted correspondence between users.

Telegram does not store correspondence using end-to-end encryption on its server. This, of course, raises several questions: Unlike traditional cryptographic tools such as PGP, which publish their source codes, Telegram's server is closed. That might not be the best arrangement for someone who wants serious protection, but if you believe Pavel Durov, Telegram's security measures are currently strong enough to keep the authorities from nosing around in people's private correspondence. That seems to be enough for the Russian public. It believes Telegram is secure enough for sharing candid thoughts about the state of affairs in the country on anonymous channels and closed chats.

Then, last month, Roskomnadzor demanded that Telegram enter the “information-dissemination organizers” registry, which would require it to hand over user data at request. Specifically, the authorities demanded records of all its metadata. This is not correspondence per se, but information that can be even more revealing: when a specific communication was sent, from where, and using which device.

Roskomnadzor also demanded that Durov “hand over his encryption keys,” apparently presuming such universal “keys” existed. Of course, that is not the case. Each encrypted chat utilizes a uniquely generated key that is never used anywhere else. But Roskomnadzor nonetheless demanded these non-existent keys and began threatening to block Telegram in Russia.

Then, as if on cue, Kremlin-controlled media started publishing a series of cookie-cutter stories that claimed Telegram was the primary weapon of terrorists. They also insinuated that Durov had provided the encryption keys to the FBI.

This past Sunday, the authorities rolled out their heavy artillery: the evening TV news programs. Every major state-controlled channel — and several minor ones — told their audiences that Durov helps terrorists, that the suicide bomber

who attacked the St. Petersburg metro in April used Telegram, and that all forms of encryption are evil.

Those claims were followed by images of terrorist attacks and interviews with relatives of the victims. One of Durov's former classmates even told state television that, as a student, the entrepreneur had replaced the standard Windows 95 boot up screens with the message: “Must die.” Finally, the TV commentator asked meaningfully: “How many more deaths will Pavel Durov have on his conscience?”

The next day, Roskomnadzor announced that “only a few days remain before Telegram is blocked.” But nobody knows exactly what this means. Typically, messengers blocked in Russia have continued functioning without undue difficulty, and new versions of Telegram include settings that enable users to bypass all blocks to its servers. But the messenger service is bracing for a siege.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov had an interesting reaction to the case: “Of course, we also use Telegram,” he said. “But we can easily switch to another messenger.”

One wonders what prevents criminals from doing the same? After all, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger have yet to join the registry. **TMT**

*Islamic State is a terrorist organization banned in Russia

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“The illegal trafficking of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances continues to expand.” - **Vladimir Putin**

1990

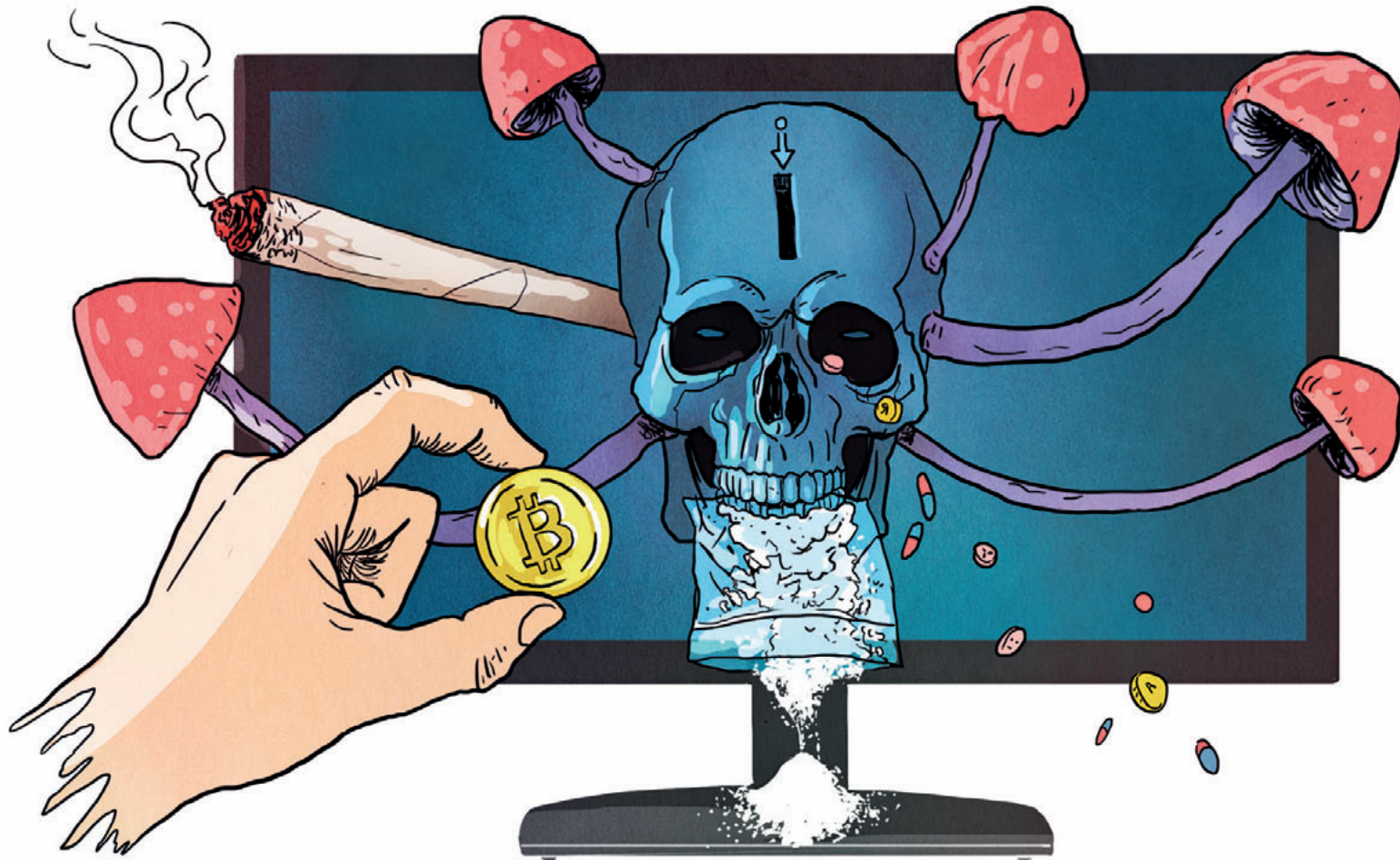
Russia ratifies UN treaty combating narcotics.

2016

Federal Drug Control Service dissolved, jurisdiction passed to Interior Ministry



Online drug markets feature ratings and feedback systems to discourage fraud and theft among users.



High on Moscow Hills

By [Alexey Kovalev](#) a.kovalev@imedia.ru | Illustration by [Yevgeny Tonkonogy](#)

As a new, anonymous online marketplace for drugs emerges, Russian law enforcement is struggling to cope

For years, Artyom had watched with concern as the park near his house turned into a popular drop spot for drug dealers. The shrubs provided the perfect cover for hiding narcotics their clients would later dig up.

At night, the young software engineer says, that park “looks like a fairy forest” with “fireflies lurking everywhere” as dealers and buyers navigated the shrubbery by the light of their mobile phones. But the danger of the situation only hit home when Artyom’s dog, Tosha, dug up one of these “deliveries” and accidentally overdosed on psychedelics.

After rushing Tosha to a nearby vet, it dawned on Artyom that he would have to take matters into his own hands. He had already informed the police about the park many times, but they did nothing.

The problem isn’t just in Artyom’s neighborhood. Every day, hundreds scour Moscow’s backstreets, the undersides of its park benches and its flower beds for zakladki — industrial-grade plastic bags filled with drugs. These dead drops are neatly sealed and equipped with small magnets so they can cling to rails, windowsills and drainage pipes.

While the goods are delivered to these unlikely corners of Moscow, the deals themselves now originate in an even more bizarre place. The transactions plaguing Artyom’s neighborhood begin in drug supermarkets hidden online in the deepest reaches of the “dark web.”

Here, hundreds of eager suppliers compete to satisfy their customers’ sophisticated palettes. Cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin are the legal tender here. In exchange, buyers are issued GPS coordinates to the spot where their purchases await in flower beds and drain pipes.

The anonymity these marketplaces provide and the fact that they remove the most troublesome link in any drug deal — the real-life meeting between dealer and buyer — have been a boon for Russia’s illegal drug sellers. As of January 2016, the narcotic industry was turning an annual profit of 1.5 trillion rubles (\$25 billion), according to Russia’s drug enforcement agency.

The online marketplace has also proven almost impossible to police. As a result, Artyom now spends his evenings patrolling his northern Moscow neighborhood to counter Russia’s dealers and junkies.

“We used to have a flower bed in our courtyard, and the flowers started disappearing” Artyom recalls. “At first, I thought some old women were taking them for their gardens in the country, but then I saw that it was these junkies digging them up and looking for their drugs.”

The markets

Hidden away from the “cleanet” indexed by Google, accessible only via specialist software, is one of Russia’s biggest online drug supermarkets.

The site’s front page is an epilepsy-inducing checkerboard of flashing, boldfaced banner ads: “Hashish! Highest Quality Cocaine! Every 5th Drop Free!” More than 100 suppliers sell everything from drugs and disposable “burner” phones and SIM cards to ready-to-move drug labs.

The site is part of a highly competitive and customer-oriented industry. Unlike in the pre-internet days, drug users are no longer forced to meet with shady characters prone to supplying low-quality products.

Dealers offer an exhaustive description of their wares, their chemical components and growing methods (for mari-

juana, mushrooms and other plant-based narcotics). And quality control is almost obsessive. In the de-monopolized, competitive market of the internet, suppliers are no longer motivated by the short-term benefits of diluting their product with cutting agents.

Even so, cheating is actively discouraged by the site. A market front page features a warning to suppliers in the form of a Biblical quote from Leviticus: “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgement, in meteyard, in weight or in measure; Just balances and just weights ye shall have.”

The most popular items are marijuana and amphetamines. Both have one major advantage: They do not need to be imported.

The producers

This is precisely what Sergei did. The online drug business owner, who spoke to The Moscow Times on condition of anonymity, is based in an industrial town in Russia’s “black earth belt.” He says that unemployment drove him to start his own narcotics business. He had already had some dealing experience in the pre-internet days.

“You’re looking for legitimate ways to make ends meet,” he explained. “And then you think: Screw this, I’m going to do the only thing I’m good at, which is selling drugs. It’s the only way to make the kind of money I want to make.”

Sergei is a logistics middleman. He coordinates operations between labs, wholesale dealers, and individual online stores. It’s still a small-scale operation compared to Russia’s major markets, Moscow and St. Petersburg, where a typical online business might employ dozens, including growers, chemists, shopkeepers, and couriers.



"It's the only way of making the kind of money I want to make."
- online dealer contacted by The Moscow Times

\$600

Ad price for one of Russia's largest online drug markets.



Traffickers often bury drugs in public areas like parks to avoid being intercepted in the postal system.

71,207

drug crimes were registered in the first four months of this year.

Nonetheless, Sergei says his small enterprise makes him around 600,000 rubles (\$11,000) a month — 30 times the average salary in his hometown.

He loses little sleep over the illegality of his business. It's the quality of his product that keeps him up at night, he says. "One of my hoarders started cutting my speed with aspirin. Clients started complaining," Sergei said. "I compared photographs of my stash to pictures they attached to their complaints — it was clearly tampered with. I had to let this guy go. He didn't mind."

The enforcers

While the online market may seem safer than the pre-internet days of in-person deals and narcotics with uncertain contents, it is proving a serious problem for Moscow residents and police alike. In areas especially popular with drug "hoarders," locals complain of constant foot traffic, strangers lurking around, destroying their communal gardens, and generally causing havoc.

These issues are not entirely new. Drug corners are a notorious feature of many urban areas. During the tumultuous mid-1990s, entire Russian towns were practically overrun with drug dealers and their clients in various stages of addiction and withdrawal.

But with the advent of online supermarkets, the drug dealers have sprinted far ahead of law enforcement, which is still struggling to adapt to the internet age.

Plagued by hoarders and frustrated by the flaccid police response, Muscovites like Artyom have begun running their own anti-narcotics patrols.

"My wife and I went to the police with photographs of [hoarders'] cars and hiding spots," Artyom told the Moscow Times. "The cops didn't even want to register a crime. They told us they weren't interested in small-time drug users. They said hoarders were difficult to catch."

Rather than ramping up efforts, Russia's drug enforcement authority — the Directorate for Drug Control — recently downsized. The organization was demoted last year from an independent government agency, the Federal Service for Drug Control, to a department within the Interior Ministry.

Aleksandr Mikhailov, a retired drug enforcement officer, is critical of recent reforms within the ministry. But he is prepared to cut his colleagues some slack.

"Don't shoot the pianist," he told The Moscow Times, quoting Oscar Wilde. "He is doing his best. The structure of the fight against drugs is still being formed."

And policing the online markets is an exasperating task. In an online discussion forum for law enforcement, one police officer complains it is ridiculous that a whole website can be shut down over an "extremist" joke, but it's impossible to shut down an entire online drug market generating millions of rubles of illicit revenue.

The Directorate for Drug Control declined to comment for this article, citing ongoing investigations. The new agency does not have access to its predecessor's data and could not compare drug-related arrests from last year. The department does not distinguish between online and offline drug offenses.



However, The Directorate's spokesman told the Moscow Times that 71,207 drug-related crimes were registered in Russia in the first four months of 2017.

The new challenges facing drug enforcement agencies are not confined to Russia, says retired officer Mikhailov. Rather, this is a global issue. Among most difficult challenges are new online drug markets and the increasingly dangerous substances filling their shelves.

According to a 2016 UN report, there has been a fivefold increase in seizures of new synthetic psychoactive substances worldwide.

The solution, Mikhailov says is not to chase after "hoarders" or to shut down online drugs supermarkets: if the Directorate shuts down one — like the FBI did with SilkRoad and its clones — dozens more will rush to fill the void, he says. Rather, he believes drug enforcement agencies should decrease demand by investing in programs that raise awareness about the dangers of drugs.

Regardless of the approach the police choose, Russia's authorities are likely to remain a few steps behind the drug dealers. The technology dealers are using is growing ever more innovative. Drugs can now be delivered by

drones. There are also Twitter bots promoting Chinese online stores selling methadone. These innovations show no sign of slowing.

The best cops can do, another online drug store owner told the Moscow Times, is to ambush a popular hoarding site in the hopes of filling their monthly arrest quota.

If detained, a hoarder might reveal the location of another popular dead drop site. Interrogating a random drug user in hopes of catching a dealer is pointless because online anonymity means they couldn't name names even if they wanted to.

And with their illegal industry growing more profitable and increasingly professionalized, few sellers express any qualms about their business.

"I don't care about the moral consequences of the work I'm doing," one told The Moscow Times. "If teenagers are buying drugs from me, it's their parents' failure, not mine. The only immoral part of it, perhaps, is that I'm not paying any taxes." **TMT**

Nina Abrosimova and Eric Woods contributed reporting for this article

18+

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DISHES ON THE FIRE ACCORDING TO ANCIENT RECIPES

реклама



“Hackers, if they read something about international relations, if they are patriotic, they make their contribution”. - **Vladimir Putin**

35

Length of prison term Pyotr Levashov is facing.

July 22, 2016

WikiLeaks published 19,252 emails from U.S. Democratic National Committee.



According to Kaspersky Lab, the proportion of spam in total email flows was 58.31%, which is 3.03 percentage points more than in 2015.



The Hacker Hunters Chasing Russian Shadows

By **Howard Amos** newsreporter@imedia.ru | Illustration by **Bojemoi**

U.S. investigators are stepping up the fight against Russian cybercriminals. But are they going after the right guys?

It was the middle of the night when a group of Spanish police came crashing into the Levashovs' vacation apartment in Barcelona.

“They broke the door down... and forced us onto the floor in front of our four-year-old child,” Mariya Levashova told the Kremlin-controlled RT television network in an interview given shortly afterward.

Mariya's husband, Pyotr Levashov, is now in a Spanish prison facing extradition to the United States on hacking charges. The U.S. maintains he is a spamming kingpin living a luxurious life in St. Petersburg. But Levashova says her husband is just an average computer programmer.

For many years, the U.S. has hunted Russian hackers accused of committing cyber crimes, targeting them with extradition requests when they leave the relatively safe confines of the former Soviet Union. But the game of cat and mouse took on a different dimension following alleged Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The arrest of Levashov in April and at least two other similar cases appear to be the result of a stepped-up effort by U.S. law enforcement.

Russian officials have repeatedly denied charges of meddling, and accuse U.S. authorities of kidnapping its citizens. In at least one instance, Russia has filed a counter-extradition request in a bid to nullify a move by the U.S.

The stakes of the hunt are high. Russian hackers who the U.S. succeeds in extraditing can expect long prison sentences if found guilty. Earlier this year, a Seattle court convicted Roman Seleznev, a Russian hacker, and son of a Duma deputy, to 27 years in prison. He was handed over to the U.S. by police while on holiday in the Maldives.

In a statement read out by his lawyer after the trial, 32-year old Seleznev, who has health problems, said he had been handed the equivalent of a “death sentence.”

The hunters

One of the key challenges for U.S. investigators is linking a hacker's digital footprints to a real person — and then proving the connection. Cyber-criminals often use dozens of online nicknames to throw investigators off the trail. According to the U.S. magazine *Wired*, Levashov was caught when he committed a basic error: he used the same

credentials to log into his criminal ventures as he did to ordinary sites and applications like iTunes.

Another challenge police face is coordinating sprawling investigations, which can involve criminals all over the world. Cyber-crooks work in closely-knit online units, and not necessarily in the same country. Such groups involve technical specialists and managers, as well as mules responsible for cashing-out after successful cyber-heists. In December, the FBI was one of 30 law enforcement bodies involved in the world's largest ever cyber-takedown, destroying an online crime platform known as *Avalanche*. At the end of the four-year investigation, police carried out 5 arrests, seized 39 web servers and removed more than 830,000 web domains.

At the same time as Levashov's arrest in Spain in April, U.S. agents were working to dismantle the *Kelihos* botnet, a global network of infected computers. *Kelihos* was reportedly used to harvest login information, blast out millions of spam messages, implant malware and artificially elevate the price of certain stocks (so-called pump and dump schemes). The U.S. Department of Justice says Levashov had been running *Kelihos* since 2010.



The hacker group Shaltai Boltai (“Humpty Dumpty”) rose to prominence by releasing Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev’s private correspondence.

500M

Yahoo email accounts stolen by hackers in 2014.



“The Kremlin is directing cyber attacks to influence our election.” **Hillary Clinton**, October 9

June 27, 2017

Ransomware attacked IT systems in companies in Russia and Ukraine.



“The ability of botnets like Kelihos to be weaponized quickly for vast and varied types of harm is a dangerous and deep threat to all Americans,” U.S. Acting Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Blanco said in a statement announcing the arrest.

Alongside FBI agents, cyber-security firm CrowdStrike was closely involved in the Kelihos operation. The firm also played a prominent role in publicizing what it says are the Russian fingerprints on hacks designed to sway the U.S. elections.

Media reports have identified FBI Special Agent Elliott Peterson as a key figure in pursuing the case against Levashov and Kelihos.

A veteran of the FBI’s crack cyber force based out of Pittsburgh, Peterson has been involved in a number of high-profile Russian cyber-crime cases. He was part of a team that dismantled the GameOver Zeus malware network, which was designed to steal user credentials.

The network was supposedly run by Yevgeny Bogachyov, a Russian programmer who masterminded the alleged theft of hundreds of millions of dollars worldwide. Bogachyov has been linked to Russian cyber-intelligence gathering operations in Ukraine, Georgia, and Turkey. Despite a \$3 million FBI bounty on his head, the programmer is reported to be living openly in the Russian Black Sea resort town of Anapa.

The hunted

There have been at least three recent arrests of men the U.S. claim are Russian hackers. In addition to Levashov, they include Yevgeny Nikulin, 29, a Moscow resident reportedly accused of password hacks on LinkedIn and Dropbox and arrested in Prague in October. Stanislav Lisov, a 32-year-old from the southern Russian city of Taganrog, was detained in Spain in January for allegedly developing and using the computer virus NeverQuest.

U.S. law enforcement does not explicitly link any of these three cases to election hacking, but both Nikulin and Lisov have claimed they are being pressured to admit to such crimes.

In a letter written from prison, Nikulin said that an FBI agent had raised election hacking with him during an inter-

rogation. Lisov told his wife, Darya Lisova, by telephone on a program broadcast in February by RT that he was asked if he had “hacked the Pentagon, FBI, and CIA.” There is no way to confirm either man’s account.

Little was publicly known about Nikulin or Lisov before their arrests. But both men appear to have led very comfortable lives. A now-disabled Instagram account run by Nikulin shows he socialized with the children of Russia’s political elite, including the daughter of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, and was a lover of expensive sports cars. Despite living in the small town of Taganrog, near Russia’s border with Ukraine, Lisov’s social media accounts show that he spent a lot of time abroad, with frequent holidays including trips to the Maldives.

Levashov has a more prominent public profile. The European anti-spam organization Spamhaus describes Levashov as “one of the longest operating criminal spam-lords on the internet.” In his 2014 book *Spam Nation*, U.S. cyber-security journalist Brian Krebs links Levashov, via the online pseudonym Peter Severa, to the Waledec spam botnet, which, at its peak, blasted out 1.5 billion messages a day.

Hackers and the FSB

There is speculation that the timing of the arrests of Levashov, Lisov and Nikulin means that they have been caught up in a broad cyber-struggle between Washington and Moscow.

Russian security services have long maintained close ties to the cyber-underworld. The FSB is said to prefer informal agents, which can be easily disowned, and a complex web of intermediaries of hackers, cyber-security experts and rogue programmers. Russian police, meanwhile, follow a policy of turning a blind eye to cyber-criminals who work outside of Russia and cooperate with the intelligence services.

“It’s not that difficult to make these connections: the FSB know where these guys are and they know where they can find them when they need to,” says Nigel Inkster, a former British intelligence officer and the director of Future Conflict and Cyber Security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

In a 2017 indictment relating to the theft of 500 million Yahoo email accounts in 2014, U.S. prosecutors identified two

FSB officers, Dmitry Dokuchaev and Igor Sushchin, accusing them of paying hackers for their work. It was the most public demonstration of links between the Russian hacking community and security services.

33-year-old Dokuchaev, currently under arrest in Russia on separate treason charges, appears to have worked as a hacker before joining the FSB.

In a 2004 interview with the Russian newspaper *Vedomosti*, a hacker called Forb boasted of making money from credit-card fraud and breaking into U.S. government websites. Seven years later, the Russian-language *Hacker* magazine identified Dokuchaev as Forb.

Blackmail apparently often also plays a role in recruitment. Another Russian programmer, Dmitry Artimovich, who was jailed in 2013 for hacking offenses, said in an interview that the FSB had made repeated attempts to co-opt him. The first time, he said, was via his cellmate when he was in prison awaiting trial. According to Artimovich, the man told him that if he cooperated he would be released immediately — a deal he refused. Since being released, Artimovich said he has been asked dozens of times to carry out hacking operations. Most of these approaches are made via social media. He says the offers are designed to tempt him to break the law and become vulnerable to FSB pressure.

The exposure of a hacking group called Shaltai Boltai (“Humpty Dumpty”) earlier this year has also highlighted the links between Russia’s security services and cyber-crime. Shaltai Boltai blackmailed top Russian officials after stealing personal information and leaking details to the press if payments were not made. Alexander Glazastikov, a member of the group who escaped arrest, said earlier this year they would give FSB officers material from hacked email accounts in exchange for protection.

There is no public evidence that the recent arrests are connected with espionage operations or attempts to influence the outcome of the U.S. presidential election. But with such complicated interdependencies present between Russia’s spy agencies and its hackers, the thought that they might know something about such operations must have at least have crossed the minds of FBI agents. **TMT**



Moya Planeta is Russia's leading TV channel devoted to educational programs about nature, history, travel, science and people.

606

Number of factories in Nizhny Tagil.

520

Hours of original TV made by Moya Planeta annually, including 300 documentaries.



Nizhny Tagil is an industrial city of 360,000 in the Urals, 1,400 kilometers east of Moscow. One of Russia's most polluted cities, it has serious health and drugs problems.

UNFAIR OBSERVER

Putin's Perfidious Gunship



Unfair Observer is a secret Russian journalist offering a satirical take on the worst and most absurd developments happening in Russia.

Across the Russian media, one headline dominates: State censorship authority Roskomnadzor has declared war on Telegram, one of the dozen encrypted messaging apps available in 2017. The reason? Uh, you know, terrorists can use it.

Meanwhile, Aeroflot is playing the angry ex-spouse, saying it won't rehire pilots who desert the Russian airline for better-paying jobs in China. And on the radio, an Orthodox priest claimed that the right to anonymity online is satanic because it leads to "harmful opinions."

But all this fluff pales in comparison to the real news of the hour: President Vladimir Putin starred in a movie — about himself, of course.

Filmmaker Oliver Stone has finally released his long-awaited "Putin Interviews." I have it on good authority that there are people who sat through the entire four hours. Because you can never get enough Putin.

We won't talk about Stone here. This is a column about Russia, and Stone doesn't give a damn about it. As with his documentaries on Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez and Yasir Arafat, he makes movies to troll America. And there are currently few better ways to offend Western public sentiment than saying that Putin may have a point.

But the Putin documentary has attracted public attention for depicting a major presidential blunder. The Russian leader, defying rumors of his technical incompetence, showed Stone a smartphone video of — Putin claimed — Russian pilots bombing ISIS. Only it later turned out to be a U.S. gunship blasting the Taliban, overlaid with conversations by Ukrainian pilots fighting pro-Russian separatists in the Donbas.

Mute embarrassment all around? Maybe not! More than anything, this awkward episode shows Putin's long-term genius and strategic wisdom. The president has been avoiding the Internet for a long time — and he's quite proud of it, judging by his older statements.

Of course, we — the hacks and internet users — have long been making fun of Putin's distrust of technology more complex than a typewriter. At our most generous, we called it the paranoia of an old KGB spook. At our least, we said it was a grandfatherly fear of the 21st century.

Then Putin tried the Internet for the first time (at least publicly). And what happened? It failed him perfidiously. If only he'd stuck to the red folder that faceless security operatives give him every day as a news briefing, nothing of the kind would have happened.

But no worries! Apparently, there was no error, because Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said so. He insists the video was real. This raises an interesting question: Is there any way at all to get the Kremlin to admit wrongdoing? From MH17 to doping and hacking, it seems impossible.

I digress. The important thing is that the Internet betrayed Putin. Of course, Putin takes much of the credit for making the Internet a place of half-truths and disinformation — a spy habitat instead of a community.

And now the 21st century has bitten the hand that shapes it. We can only hope that Putin will exercise his wisdom again and heed that lovely Orthodox priest, stopping Satan in his tracks.

Make the Internet trustworthy again! Cue official ID-based internet access and log-on permits in the future.

And if the future won't comply, they can always just ban that too. **TMT**

MY MOSCOW

Free Spirit

By **Emily Erken** artsreporter@imedia.ru

French-Russian actress, ice skater and DJ Cecile Plaige revels in unpredictability



CECILE PLAIGE / PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Cecile Plaige is a character actor who plays foreigners in Russian films and TV series.

Born to a French father and Russian mother, Cecile Plaige grew up in Paris. After pursuing competitive figure-skating in Moscow as a teenager, she made an acting career as a "foreigner" in Russian cinema. Her current project is "Cecile in Wonderland," a documentary television series that presents the people of "deep Russia" through the eyes of a foreigner.

My father was really, really into Russia, he had a phase when he was young. He found a year study [abroad program] in Moscow, and he met my mother, fell in love, and the rest was history.

I moved to Moscow to pursue my ice-skating career. I began to ice skate when I was 11, and things went well. My mother proposed that I go to Moscow to train. When my father began to work with the European Council of Something-ish, and to work with the former USSR countries, we thought, why not just move?

I'm not a competitive person at all. I like ice skating, but I didn't like the competition. I love people watching me, and that's all. So I told my parents: "I want to try acting."

I like to be funny. It's my thing. One of my favorites is comedy. When I moved to Moscow and went to GITIS [the Russian University of Theater Arts], I had a language barrier. Being funny was a step-by-step goal for me. I love to make people laugh. I wanted to show people that I can be funny. For me it's a full-time job, exploring humor. For me it's a joy.

Do I consider myself French or Russian? That's the major question of my life. I consider myself both. Depending

on the situation I see my Russian side coming out, and then my French side. When I'm in Moscow I miss Paris; when I'm in Paris, I miss Russia.

People say that I have an accent, but it's not an accent. In Russian, it's a "melodiya rechi," the melody that's in the phrase, the intonation. Which I don't mind.

I don't call myself a DJ, I call myself a selector, because I just select music that I like. I do it for [bars and restaurants] LaBoule, Café Tazhin, Noor Bar, 3205. I've done a lot of events, private events, but these four places are my "carte generale," my base.

Café LaBoule, Gorky Park, 9 Krymsky Val, Metro Oktyabrskaya
Café Tazhin, 15 Ulitsa Trubnaya, Metro Trubnaya

The idea for ["Cecile in Wonderland"] was to show a foreigner traveling in Russia. My favorite thing about the project is that I can go to places I could never go. I have a chance to really see Russia. In Nizhny Tagil, I was in a metal factory. I would never have seen that in my whole life. I see really, really nice people in their own way.

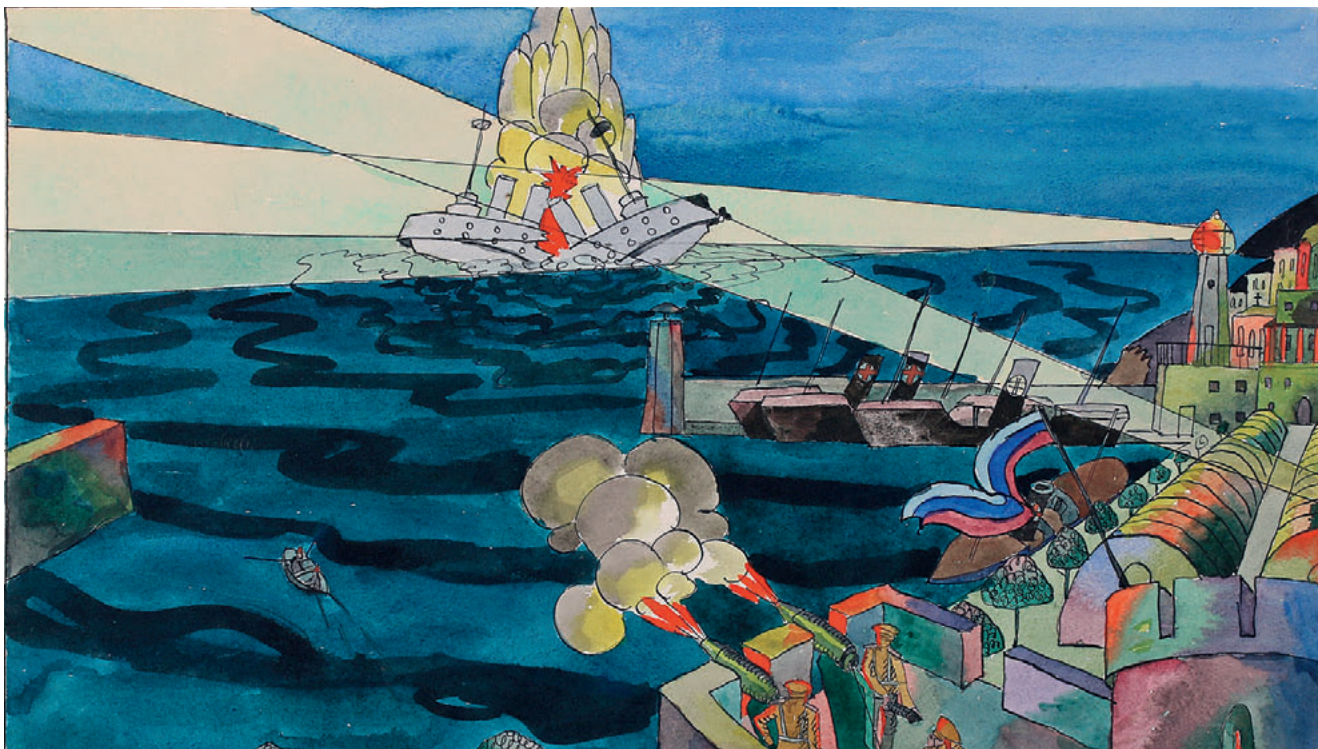
[The thing about] living in Moscow for me is that you don't know [what comes next]. I have no idea what to expect, [it's] the element of surprise. My friend Asya Dolina called me one day and said: "You know what, Cecile? TV Planeta wants to make a new show." And in one day, my life changed. And that's the thing about Moscow that I love. In Moscow you have that sense, for good or bad. The crises are coming like hurricanes, but it keeps your life [interesting]. **TWT**

Telekanal Moya Planeta's series "Cecile in Wonderland" will premiere in September.

Out & About



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



Much of Lentulov's work shows the stylistic influence of 'lubok' prints and investigates the play of light.

Socialism in Color: Aristarkh Lentulov at the Bakhrushin

By [Andrei Muchnik](mailto:a.muchnik@imedia.ru) a.muchnik@imedia.ru

Vladimir Mayakovsky used to say that what he did with literature, Lentulov did with art

A comprehensive retrospective of Aristarkh Lentulov, one of the most important figures in the Russian avant-garde movement, opened at the Bakhrushin State Central Theater Museum a week ago. Devoted to the artist's 135th anniversary, it encompasses works from all periods of his life, from the turn of the century to the 1940s.

The exhibition presents 250 artworks from 20 museums around Russia and 11 private collections, including the artist's great grandson Fyodor Lentulov. It's the first exhibition of Lentulov's work of this scale in 30 years, and it was organized in record time: just four months and two weeks.

The title of the exhibition, "Mystery-Bouffe," refers to the play by Russian avant-garde poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. The author himself called it "the revolutionary road" and set the tone for much of post-1917 art. Although Lentulov did not design the stage sets (they were developed by Suprematist avatar Kazimir Malevich), the idea of a "mystery-bouffe" or comic opera reflects his ideas about art. Mayakovsky used to say that what he did with literature, Lentulov did with art.

Born into a poor priest's family in a small town 100 kilometers from the central Russian city of Penza, Lentulov studied art in Kiev and St. Petersburg before moving to Moscow in 1909. He was one of the founders of the Jack of Diamonds, a group of Moscow avant-garde artists that included turn-of-the-century greats like Malevich, Robert Falk, Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova.

Although one of the major figures in Russian avant-garde movement, Lentulov found inspiration in lubok (Russian popular prints), store signs, icons and ancient Russian ar-

chitecture. Lentulov also had access to the Western art collections of pre-revolutionary entrepreneurs Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Mozorov, so you can see some allusions to Van Gogh, Gauguin and early Matisse.

"We wanted to show how he changed various styles: Behind every painting exhibited here there's a whole group of similar works that we are just not able to show," says Svetlana Dzhafarova, the exhibit's curator. Lentulov's paintings show the influence of styles including Cubism, Primitivism, Fauvism, Expressionism and Futurism. He was a painter who liked to play with light.

"He's most interested in how nature changes due to different light, different positions of the sun. Later he started painting theater floodlights for the same reason. It's his justification for the transformation of reality that we see on his paintings," says Dzhafarova.

Since it is being held at a theater museum, the exhibition draws parallels between Lentulov's paintings and his works for theater — stage sets and costume designs. This allows us to see the close connections between the two artforms in the first few decades of the 20th century.

"He had a certain theatricality in all of his works, even those that had nothing to do with theater," says Dzhafarova. Russian theater in the early 20th century was different from that in Europe, because Russian theaters started inviting high-profile professional painters to produce backdrops, rather than ordinary set designers.

About 70 costume and stage decoration sketches for 10 theater productions are exhibited, including "Hoffmann's Fairytales," "Stepan Razin" and the model of the set for Lermontov's "Demon," for which Lentulov received the Diplôme de Medaille d'Or at the

Paris International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in 1925.

With time, Lentulov started using decorative elements in his paintings, too, gluing on bits of fabric and pieces of embroidery, or using bronze, silver and even gold paints. This is especially true for his female portraits. One of his favorite subjects was his wife, Maria Petrovna, whom he painted in different outfits and at different ages. Several of these portraits are at the exhibition, including Maria as Venetian socialite Luisa Casati, as well as a Cubist double self-portrait in which he poses with his wife both en face and in profile.

Lentulov liked to paint monasteries. At the exhibition you can see a series of paintings depicting the New Jerusalem monastery complex and the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius in Sergiev Posad, as well as a monastery in Nizhny Novgorod and the Strastnoi monastery in central Moscow, torn down in the 1930s.

During the Soviet era, Lentulov turned to Social Realism. Dzhafarova explains this by his tendency to follow the latest trends in art: "It's not like it only happened in Russia. Avant-garde vanished in Europe, too and not because it was destroyed by the government."

His paintings from this period include canvases depicting the building of the metro, new constructivist architecture and factories.

"Lentulov was inspired by industry," adds Dzhafarova. "You can't paint something like this artificially — he was a very organic artist." **TMT**

Until August 27, Bakhrushin State Central Theater Museum
gctm.ru
31/12 Ulitsa Bakhrushina
Metro Paveletskaya



Many of Lentulov's paintings show Moscow through an Expressionist prism.

Tsaritsyno: Moscow's Most Distinguished Imperial Estate

By [Daria Demidova](#) artsreporter@imedia.ru | Illustration by [Lida Iva](#)

This landscaped park is a popular spot to listen to music or stretch out on the lawns



1) Temple of Ceres Pavilion

This eight-pillar rotunda on top of a hill was dedicated to the harvest and the opulence of nature – the golden sheaves of grain crowning the dome are the clue. Initially, there was a marble statue of Ceres, the Roman goddess of the harvest, in the middle of the pavilion (hence why it was called a temple), but the original sculpture was lost in the mid-19th century. In 2007, the statue of a stately dame holding a sickle took the place of the ancient goddess.

The emblematic three-trunked pine tree standing on the lawn behind the Grand Palace was planted in the middle of the 19th century.

2) Milovida Pavilion

In the early 19th century, a run-down wooden park house designed by Vasily Bazhenov was replaced by a classical archway between two small pavilions. The structure lost much of its sculptural décor over the decades, but not the grisaille painting on the ceiling, which imitates stucco reliefs. The name of the pavilion, which translates as “endearing sight,” is entirely justified by the serene views from the steep slope – no wonder aristocrats loved to waste away the hours here drinking tea.

3) Bread House

This building owes its name to the tell-tale white stone emblems on the facades featuring loaves of bread. The building has over 40 rooms in two parallel aisles – these chambers were originally intended to serve as kitchens and food stores. Over its history, the building has been everything from a hospital to communal apartments. A glass ceiling was recently put over the atrium and a pipe organ installed, and the house is now a hall for exhibitions and concerts.



4) Grand Palace

A sprawling Pseudo-Gothic gallery with two wings, this is considered a gem of Moscow architecture. Catherine the Great was disappointed by architect Vasily Bazhenov's creation and handed the project over to his pupil Matvei Kazakov. He continued Bazhenov's general concept, but the project was frozen after Catherine died. Reconstruction in 2005-2007 turned the ruin into a museum, but many say the romantic air of the abandoned palace was lost and the concept misinterpreted.

5) Figure (Grape) Gate

The buildings on the Tsaritsyno estate have both beautiful appearances and appealing names – the Figure, or Grape Gate, another work by Bazhenov, is a good example of this. The gateway owes its name to the intricate plasterwork rimming the archway between the two towers. The bunch of grapes on the tip of the ornamentation gave the structure its nickname. The gate marks the division between the formal and wild parts of the park.

The fountain in the middle of the central pond at Tsaritsyno has 915 water jets and is the largest dancing fountain in Moscow.

6) Cavalry Quarters

In summer 1775, Catherine the Great and her favorite Prince Grigory Potyomkin stood on the top of the hill here and watched a firework show celebrating Russia's naval victory over Turkey. A year later, Bazhenov erected a rectangular pavilion with a semi-rotunda featuring his trademark Pseudo-Gothic style. However, it was never finished – the empress suspended Bazhenov from the project. The building has served various purposes over two centuries, but is now an exhibition space.



BUTLER / FACEBOOK



Butler offers innovative contemporary variations on dishes from Sicily.

Butler: Sicilian at Your Service

By [Grace Watson](#) artsreporter@imedia.ru

This new Ginza Project establishment focuses on seafood classics from southern Italy

With Butler, a recent offering of the ubiquitous Ginza Project, Chef Giuseppe Davi brings his contemporary interpretations of Sicilian classics to the fashionable Patriarch's Ponds area.

The dining space occupies a two-story mansion and sprawls out lavishly onto a peaceful, spacious veranda. Well-heated and awning-covered, it's not hard to imagine either a date or a meeting here, no matter the weather. The interior has a cozy feel, with historical touches – architectural molding and shelves crammed full of books—though you may find it has been reserved for a private party.

Saturday diners included both silent patrons plugged into bluetooth headsets and young ladies having apparently traded their yoga mats for stilettos, all here for the pleasures of wine and pasta.

Butler's website promises seafood and Sicily, done up with innovative accents, from grapefruit to potato foam. As we waited, we were brought small nibbles of tomato and baba ghanoush topped with cheese foam, compliments of the kitchen.

Such touches always help in making guests feel welcome. We were also made to feel welcome by the very attentive staff—who at times were a little too attentive. Waiters and waitresses kept swooping by to remove menus still in use, which became a bit of a comical relay.

The assortment of tuna, snapper, and red Sicilian shrimp tartare (1,300 rubles/\$22) came with passion fruit and basil dust toppings—an intriguing addition. Though small, the trio was an elegant and fresh opening to the heavier plates to come. Paired with an ample basket of warm, crusty breads given upon request, we were well taken care of while waiting for more.

Deciding the next direction was a slight challenge, since Butler offers a number of pasta, meat, and fish options. Certain I wanted to continue on the promised seafood route, but also curious as to what their purportedly hand-crafted pasta had to offer, a happy combination presented itself in the sea bass bottoni with crudaiola sauce and red shrimp (850 rubles).

The pockets of pasta were plump with fish and, unexpectedly, black—maybe that's the innovative accent, here—offset by fresh tomato sauce. Spaghetti aglio e olio with anchovies and sun-dried tomatoes (780 rubles) was supposed to be served al dente, but this was taken a bit too far and the spaghetti would have benefitted from another minute of cooking time. That said, the dish was balanced and bright but hearty.

We had planned to try out a main after the pasta courses, but the carbs were so filling that

we instead went straight for sweets. Always tempted by a boozy dessert, I settled for the Limoncello Baba with Strawberry Sorbet (520 rubles). The small cake was exquisitely moist, and the presentation was quite a spectacle—it was stuffed with whipped cream and the entire plate adorned with a playful stripe of cereal crunchies.

On this occasion, alcohol consumption was confined to the dessert course, but there's no doubt that those wishing to imbibe can find something to their taste here. Whether dry or with drink, Butler is a welcome addition to the neighborhood, treating with admirable delicacy a cuisine that is all too often taken for granted. **TMT**

+7 (495) 150 4586
ginza.ru/msk/restaurant/butler
15 Tryokhprudny Pereulok
Metro Mayakovskaya

NEWS & OPENINGS



ONEBUCKS COFFEE

OneBucks Coffee

1\$ coffee and good pastries

OneBucks Coffee started from a small place around Avtozavodskaya last year and grew into a chain with seven locations, including a kiosk on Tverskaya, right across from Pushkinskaya Plushchad. The concept is very simple: All standard-sized espresso based drinks cost one U.S. dollar, in accordance with the current exchange rate. OneBucks uses Arabica beans from its own roastery. There are also handmade sandwiches and pastries that are sold off cheap every evening. onebuckscoffee.com
19 Tverskaya Ulitsa
M. Pushkinskaya, Tverskaya



SMILE OFF

Experience Space

One-to-one theater

This summer theater project opens its doors on July 1, offering two immersive theater productions by Belgian company Ontroerend Goed. Both are meant for just one spectator. "A Game of You" takes you on a journey through a maze of mirrors and video screens. In "Smile Off" the spectator is in a chair, bound and blindfolded. The experience is sensory, with the story told through scents, touches and sounds. Call in advance to order a performance in English. smile-off.ru
4 Pushechnaya Ulitsa, Bldg. 2
M. Kuznetsky Most



CAFE CENTRAL / FACEBOOK

Cafe Central

'New' old Russian cuisine

This cafe on Nikolskaya is another attempt at reviving traditional Russian cuisine. Chef Yuriy Bashmakov used to work at Oblomov, another Russian cuisine establishment. There's an extensive fish menu: Try the stuffed carp with walnut sauce and pickled vegetables (450 rubles/\$7.60). Meat dishes on offer include duck breast with baked pumpkin and cherry sauce (690 rubles). There are also pirogi and blini. **+7 (495) 363 3474**
facebook.com/cafecentral.moscow
10/2 Nikolskaya Ulitsa
M. Lubyanka



PHO PHO / FACEBOOK

Pho Pho

Pho, pho – let's go!

Pho soup has become so popular that Coffeemania has decided to have a go at it, too. The ubiquitous upscale chain has opened a new food stall called Pho Pho at the popular Usachevsky Market. The chef has been invited from Vietnam. Pho soup is 400 rubles (\$7), while fried nem rolls with crab cost 250 rubles. The drinks menu includes Vietnamese coffee with condensed milk (200 rubles) and cold bubble tea (250 rubles). **+7 (499) 638 6928**
facebook.com/phopho.ru
26 Ulitsa Usacheva
M. Sportivnaya

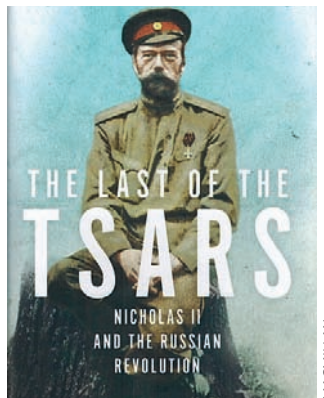
Summer Reading: 7 New Books On Russia, Past and Present

BY CONSTANTINE PLESHAKOV

The Crimean Nexus: Putin's War and the Clash of Civilizations

Yale. \$28.00 (Hardcover) \$14.99 (Kindle)

A native of Yalta, in this book Constantine Pleshakov explores Russia's motivation in seizing the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. Pleshakov argues that today's Ukrainian conflict has been exacerbated by a civilizational clash between two incompatible worldviews. To the U.S. and Europe, Ukraine is a country struggling for self-determination. To Russia, Ukraine is a "sister nation," where NATO expansionism "threatens" Russia's own borders. The picture is further complicated by the situation in Crimea itself, where the native Tatars still retain the memories of their independence and a stand-off with Moscow that lasted three centuries, from the times of Ivan the Terrible to the rule of Catherine the Great – not to mention their deportation by Stalin during World War II. "The Crimean Nexus" provides readers with a clear, even-handed account of a major international crisis that is yet to be resolved.



BY ROBERT SERVICE

The Last of the Tsars

Macmillan. \$18.37 (Hardcover) \$30.44 (Kindle)

The book follows Russia's last tsar Nicholas II from a year before his abdication to the day he died. Robert Service, an acclaimed historian, provides quotes from the tsar's diaries and recorded conversations to draw a portrait of the Russia's last emperor – a difficult, unsympathetic man torn by contradictions. The author argues that a gradual transition to a more balanced constitution couldn't have happened in Russia because of Nicholas II's psychological complexities and autocratic beliefs. Service specifically sheds light on the last days of the royal family, the political, economic and social environment around the Romanovs' places of detention. He also describes the policies of The Provisional Government before it was overthrown by the Bolsheviks, who implemented an "even more radical set of revolutionary objectives."



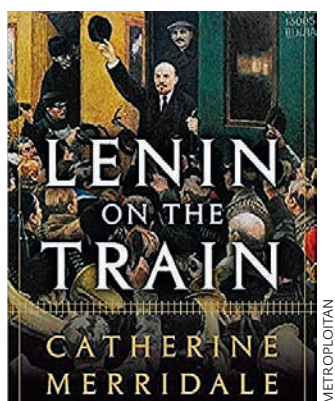
With 2017 marking the centennial of the Russian Revolution, The Moscow Times has collected a list of seven influential new books about Russian history – both modern and old – by authors from Britain, the U.S. and Russia.

BY CATHERINE MERRIDALE

Lenin on the Train

Metropolitan. \$23.99 (Hardcover) \$14.99 (Kindle)

Russia's history is full of unintended consequences. But arguably no other event can surpass Germany's miscalculation in April 1917, when it agreed to transport the Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin from Zurich to Petrograd. The German High Command was hoping Lenin would start a revolution in Russia, thus helping Germany win the Great War. Yet Germany lost the war, while Lenin succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams. Listed as The Times Best Book of the Year, "Lenin on the Train" draws on a vast array of sources and rare archival material, providing an exhilarating account of this fateful train ride.

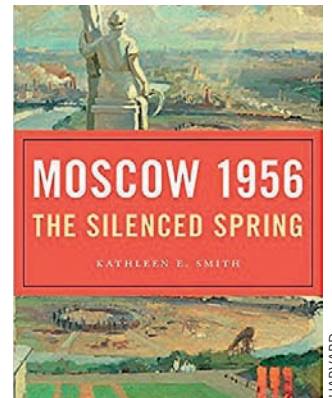


BY KATHLEEN E. SMITH

Moscow 1956: The Silenced Spring

Harvard. \$29.95 (Hardcover) \$29.95 (Kindle)

Smith builds her story around Khrushchev's "Secret Speech," in which the new Soviet leader denounced the crimes of Stalinism. The author gives a rigorous, month-by-month account of the events of 1956, revealing the lives of ordinary citizens, former Gulag prisoners, persecuted intellectuals, and idealistic students. Smith shows that Khrushchev's initiatives – releasing political prisoners and "loosening" the Iron Curtain – sparked important cultural changes in Russian society. This first liberal thaw was short-lived, but the 1956 speech, the author argues, started the chain of events that eventually led to the fall of the USSR 35 years later.

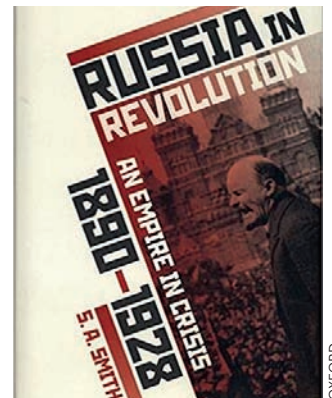


BY S. A. SMITH

Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis, 1890 to 1928

Oxford. \$34.95 (Hardcover) \$23.99 (Kindle)

This academic analysis provides a fresh approach toward the big questions of the 1917 Revolution: why the tsarist government's attempt to implement political reforms after the 1905 Revolution failed and why the attempt to create a democratic system after the February Revolution of 1917 never got off the ground. Smith gives a panoramic account of the history of the Russian Empire, paying close attention to the impact of the Revolution on different social groups: peasants, workers, non-Russian nationals, the army, women, young people and the Church.



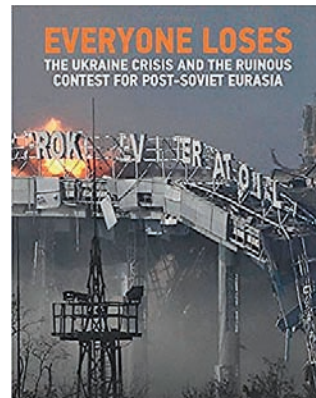
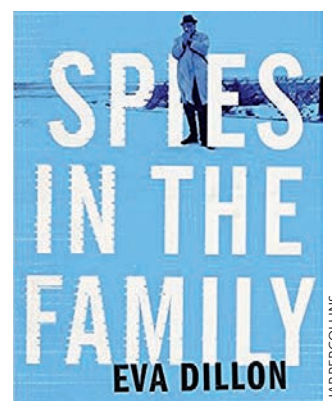
The centenary of the Russian Revolution has seen the publication of a host of new books evaluating Russian history over the past 100 years.

BY EVA DILLON

Spies in the Family: An American Spymaster, His Russian Crown Jewel, and the Friendship That Helped End the Cold War

HarperCollins. \$28.99 (Hardcover) \$14.99 (Kindle)

Sophisticated spycraft flourished during the Cold War, and only now are many of those stories coming to light. Eva Dillon is the daughter of a CIA spy who was active in the 1950s. In her debut she tells the story of her father and his asset—Dmitry Polyakov—a Soviet general who gave the CIA information on Soviet intelligence. Dillon crafts a moving story of friendship and betrayal that challenges ideas of black-and-white patriotism, showing the similarities between people of opposing political-economic systems.



BY SAMUEL CHARAP AND TIMOTHY J. COLTON

Everyone Loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia

Routledge. \$21.95 (Hardcover) \$7.99 (Kindle)

As the title suggests, this book argues the Ukrainian crisis has left everyone worse off. This outcome has resulted from years of zero-sum behavior on the part of Russia and the West in post-Soviet Eurasia, say the authors – a rivalry that has become bitter and entrenched. Charap and Colton provide recommendations on how to move forward: All states involved must recognize that long-standing policies aimed at achieving one-sided advantage are at a dead end, and commit themselves to finding mutually acceptable alternatives through patient negotiation.

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16 What's On 29.06—5.07

29.06

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Moscow Flower Show
Landscape designers from all over the world present flower installations on the theme of roses, including a water garden and a molecular garden.
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muzeon.ru
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M. Oktyabrskaya

30.06

Strelka Bar
Austra
Canadian synth-pop band known for frontwoman Katie Stelmanis's vocals and LGBT themes. The group will present their new album.
barstrelka.timepad.ru/event/517055
14 Bersenevskaya
Naberezhnaya, Bldg. 5
M. Kropotkinskaya

01.07

Planetarium
Ambient & More
This festival inside the Planetarium is for fans of ambient, downtempo and atmospheric electronica. Accompanied by psychedelic installations and video.
+7 (495) 623-66-90
vk.com/ambient4
5v Pushkarev Pereulok
M. Trubnaya

01.07

Arkhangelskoye
Usadba Jazz
Moscow's favorite summer jazz event. Headlining are Georgian singer Nino Katamadze and Israeli soul musician Ester Rada.
usadba-jazz.ru
Krasnogorsky District,
Moscow region
Buses from metro
Strogino, Tushinskaya

02.07

Teatr Skazka
The Frog Princess
In this puppet show, Ivan Tsarevich battles Baba Yaga and Koschei the Immortal to free his Frog Princess Vasilisa from an evil spell.
5+
+7 (495) 912 5206
teatr-skazka.ru
18 Bolshoi Fakelny
Pereulok, Bldg. 2
M. Taganskaya

02.07

Flacon
All of Georgia Festival
Georgian food, folk dancing, and music, designer clothing, art and pop music, all rolled into a two-day festival at this renovated factory.
+7 (495) 790-7901
flacon.ru
Bolshaya
Novodmitrovskaya
M. Dmitrovskaya

03.07

5 Zvezd na
Paveletskoi
2.22
Movie thriller about a New York air traffic controller's mysterious psychological trauma which recurs daily at 2.22 p.m after a near-catastrophe.
+7 (495) 916 91 69
5zvezd.ru
25 Ulitsa Bakhrushina
M. Paveletskaya

The Art of Alienation: Garif Basyrov, the USSR's Chronicler of the Absurd

By **Alastair Gill** a.gill@imedia.ru

A highway with a lone lamppost stretches off into an infinity of desert dunes. Two guards in fur hats and overcoats stand smoking in the midst of a vast, boundless steppe. A man squats before a pool, peering into the water, nothing but sky and a distant flat horizon behind him.

For Garif Basyrov, empty space was a source of meaning, an artistic idiom that he used to transform his simple graphic depictions of everyday Soviet activity into a deeper and more universal reflection on the human condition.

For the first time since his death in 2004, this Tatar artist's work is being shown at the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. The museum has devoted two rooms to Basyrov's surreal, sparse explorations of life in the late Soviet period, alongside a series of etchings and a body of sculptures produced in the 1990s.

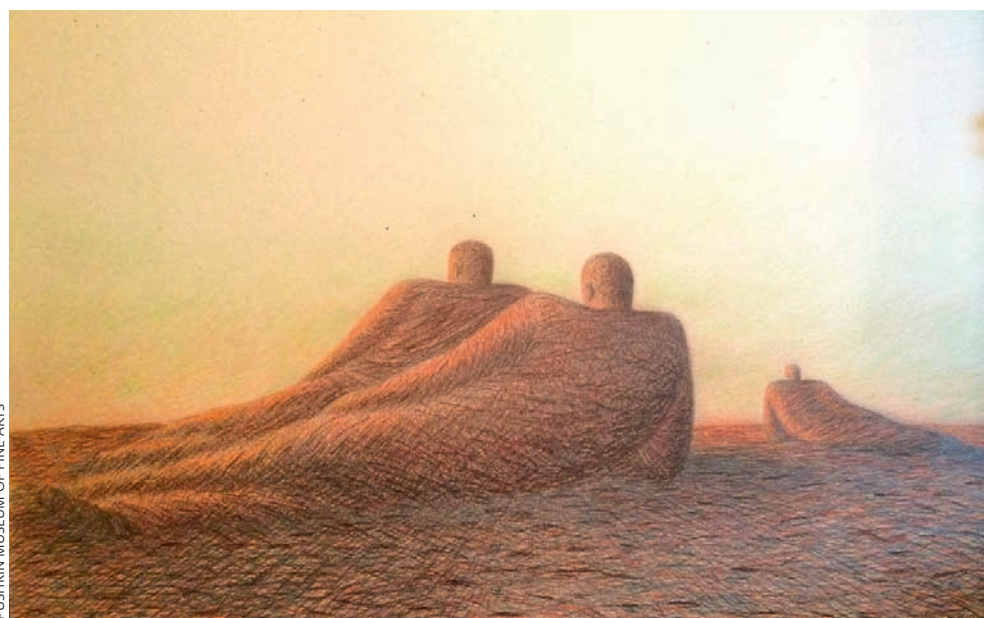
Basyrov's early years possibly hold a clue to the themes the artist developed as a grown man: He was born in a colony for "wives of traitors to the Motherland" in what is today northern Kazakhstan.

Given these circumstances, perhaps it is no surprise that so many of his drawings are dominated by empty space and flat horizons. Indeed, those familiar with Kazakhstan will find a clear echo of the steppes and huge skies of Central Asia in the vacant backgrounds, boundless horizons and huge skies of many of his graphic works.

A master of technique

Titled "Inhabited Landscapes," the exhibition is dominated by works from the series of the same name, a large body of drawings mostly executed in colored pencil and pastel on cardboard during the 1980s and early 1990s. The subjects may be simple, but Basyrov demonstrates a virtuosity of technique that places him clearly among the most technically accomplished of Soviet artists.

Up close, these graphic works turn out to be based on a form of hybrid pointillism. Using complex cross-hatching and sharp strokes of variegated color, Basyrov builds up an effect of prickly motion that creates the effect of soft, even textures from afar.



Works like 'In the Field' (1989) are typical of Basyrov's sparse, lonely aesthetic.

"He makes it look so easy," says curator Alexi Savinov. "True professionalism is when you don't see the artist's labor. You see the image created, but not the work the artist has put into it."

Soviet animator Yuriy Nortsein (creator of "Hedgehog in the Fog") said that Basyrov's lines and strokes were so well laid that you could make a fabric from it.

Yet there is little sense in trying to pigeonhole Basyrov via his style or genre — he neither fits the term "graphic artist" (he also made sculptures) nor is his work easily classified — is it abstract? Surrealist? Absurdist?

Essays on isolation

Many of the works in "Inhabited Landscapes" appear to be bleak, reductionist pictures of Soviet life in the 1980s. Here the gaping spaces and lack of detail and color often appear as a reflection of the monolithic, drab reality of late-Soviet society: A cross-country skier puts his head down as he moves grimly forward along an infinite alley of blind walls; men roll

giant snowballs in a driving blizzard, a game that seems more Sisyphean than winter fun.

Meanwhile, in "Subbotnik" a giant pile of felled trees rises against a background of blank white apartment blocks in what could be read as a metaphor for the striving of the Soviet state to shape the world to its will.

"Garif had an inherent, sharp feeling for history. His characters are both timeless yet at the same time firmly attached to our reality," says Savinov.

At times there are hints of something darker: Are the indistinct figures lurking in a birch wood in "April II" just out for a weekend stroll or is there something more sinister at hand? Is one of them knocking another to the ground among the trees, or is this a depiction of some altogether more innocent activity?

Other pictures verge on surrealism: A suited man lies on his side, slowly submerging in rising water; a sleeping figure hovers in a pale night sky above a city.

While the exhibition is dominated by "Inhabited Landscapes," it also acquaints the

viewer with 40 pieces from Basyrov's "Incubi" cycle, a series of small sculptures produced in the mid-1990s. These take the form of discarded fragments of wood, some left unworked, others carved into torsos or robed figures. They are adorned with a range of miniature household junk: handles, hinges, bolts, electrical parts, even a ring pull.

Unlike the sexually predatory male demons of myth, Basyrov's incubi are more reminiscent of idols, the avatars of a multifarious, atomized new society built on the offcuts of a vanished civilization.

Indeed, says Savinov, most of the social archetypes presented in Basyrov's work disappeared with the USSR.

"What resulted was the illustration of a vanished country. They remain universal as characters, but their 'entourage' has changed a little," he says.

A universal idiom

Now, liberated from their original social context and geography, his art stands outside space and time: It has acquired a rare universality. These scenes have become archetypal situations of human experience: isolation, introspection, striving for liberty, peace, complacency — conditions with which we can all identify. The beauty of Basyrov's art is that it is as capable of speaking equally to a tribesman with no knowledge of the modern world as it is to an inhabitant of the city.

And while the voids that permeate Basyrov's work may speak to many of loneliness, in a way this space creates room for interpretation, for thought, and at times, for hope.

In his picture "Sky and Stars," a group of men wearing suits and ties stand rooted to the ground, heads craned skyward. Above is a vast gulf of empty space, but sprinkled across the very top of the picture is a narrow band of stars. And as that well-known aphorism by Oscar Wilde goes, we may all be in the gutter, but some of us are staring at the stars. **TWT**

"Inhabited Landscapes" runs until Sept. 17
Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts
arts-museum.ru
10 Ulitsa Volkhonka, Metro Kropotkinskaya

For more information about this and other cultural events, go to our website, www.themoscowtimes.com



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Songs of Oblivion: On July 3, 4, 5 and 6 the Stanislavsky Electrotheater stages an English-language version of playwright Inna Dulerain's play based on the 17th-century Chinese novel "A Supplement to the Journey to the West," or "The Tower of Myriad Mirrors." The action takes place in the present day and focuses on a girl's struggles to liberate her consciousness by participating in a high-tech TV talk show.

Tickets available at the theater at 23 Tverskaya Ulitsa or online at electrotheatre.com/