

The Moscow Times

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11 Dead in Boat Tragedy

Eleven people, including one minor, died late on Monday when a river cruise boat collided with a tugboat near the city of Volgograd, rescue services said.

Preliminary reports suggested that the captain of the cruise boat had been drinking alcohol and that the boat didn't have the required transport license.

Emergency services were notified of the incident on the Volga River at around 10 p.m. on Monday.

Of the 16 passengers on board the pleasure craft, all of whom were Russian citizens, five people were rescued by Tuesday afternoon.

A rescue operation for a

missing passenger led by an estimated 1,400 emergency workers was abandoned after the passenger's body was discovered when the boat surfaced.

An investigation has been opened into the cause of the collision, with preliminary reports indicating water transport safety violations.

According to state TV channel Rossia-24, the passenger vessel was overloaded and its marker lights were off when the collision happened.

On Tuesday, a local health services official told journalists that the captain of the cruise boat had recorded blood alcohol levels of 2.17, indicating a moderate level of intoxication.

Meanwhile, Russia's Ros-

transnador travel watchdog reported that the river boat did not have the necessary transport license and had no life jackets on board.

The Volgograd regional governor canceled celebrations planned for Russia Day on Tuesday following news of the tragedy.

Volgograd, known as Stalingrad from 1925-1961 and site of the largest and bloodiest battle of World War II, will host World Cup opening round matches involving England, Tunisia, Nigeria, Iceland, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Japan and Poland.

The first is the June 18 game between England and Tunisia.

Reuters contributed reporting.

Soaring Hotel Prices Make Tents Hot Property

BY LENA SMIRNOVA  @LEN_SMIRNOV

More than a million football fans are expected to descend on Russia this summer, shooting average rental prices for apartments up by hundreds of dollars per night.

In most of the 11 host cities, budget accommodation is hard to come by. A government proposal to set up a large campsite in Saransk has failed to materialize, pushing private companies to fill the gap by offering their own sites for fans desperate to find lodging.


In Russia's exclave of Kaliningrad, which will host four group stage matches, a camping ground for fans has opened in nearby Zelenogradsk. Another company in the city has put up 18 small wood cottages for rent, each with enough space to accommodate up to ten


people. Although the houses are basic, they do have electricity, water, gas and plumbing.


In Nizhny Novgorod, city authorities are setting up several tent cities to accommodate an additional 5,000 visitors, the Kommersant business daily reported.

After scrolling through intimidating prices on the booking start-up Airbnb, Robin Starling from Sweden discovered a spartan yet affordable option:

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Wednesday  20°C

Thursday  19°C

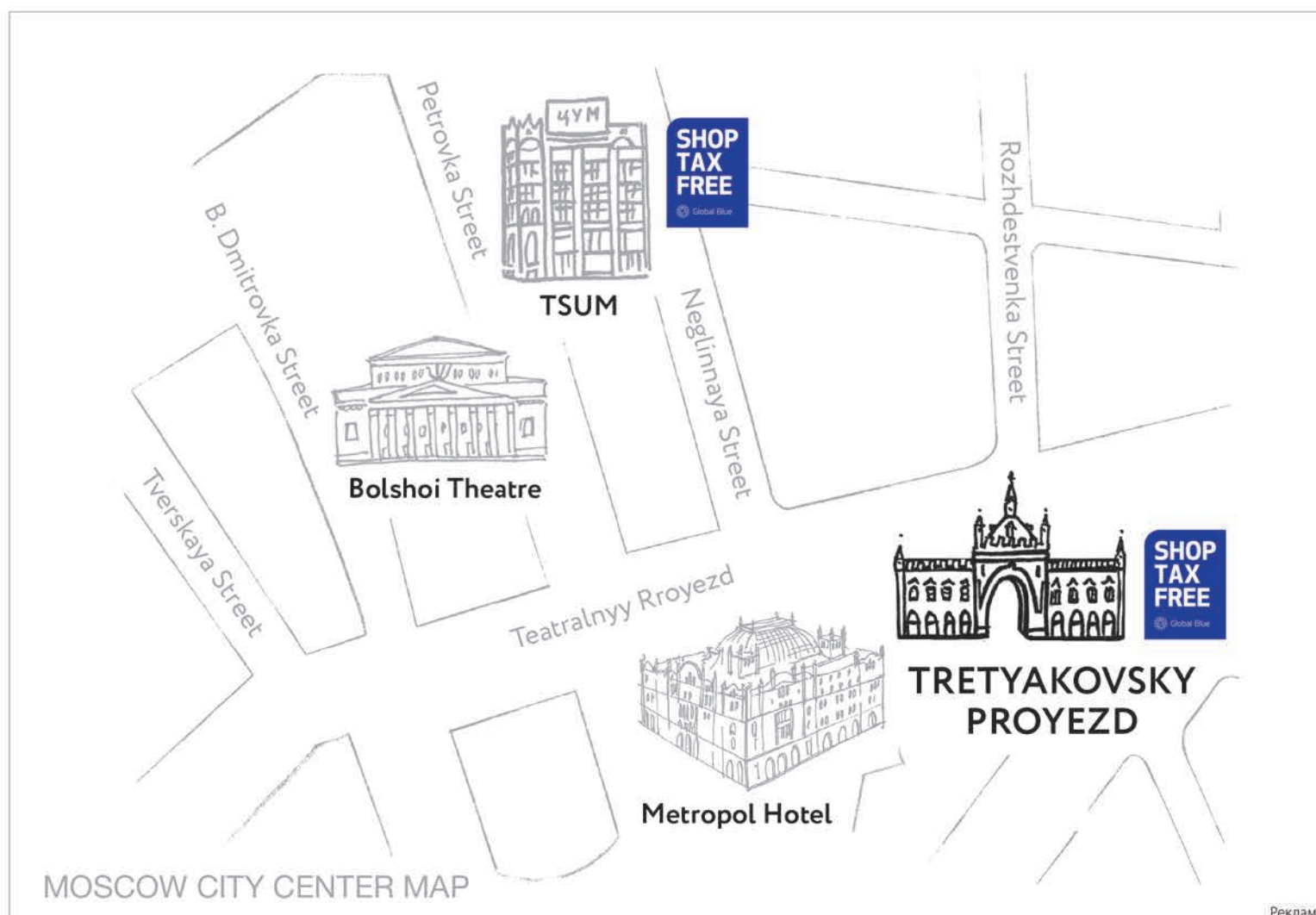
Friday  21°C



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By Mark Galeotti

Fear Not, the Honey-Pot

It's World Cup time, and suddenly everyone is an expert on Russia — and what awaits visiting fans. Mafia “honey traps,” sneaky spies, salivating terrorists, vicious hooligans; it all sounds quite scary. Yet these warnings say more about how the West looks at Russia than the reality on the ground.

For most fans the security risk is minimal: The Kremlin wants its prestige project to go off without a hitch.

The British press has, for example, run warnings that Russian gangsters might use “gorgeous Russian girls” to blackmail fans or even influence players. Mikk Marran, head of the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, went further, suggesting that Russia's attractive intelligence agents are being groomed for this purpose. And while “it doesn't mean every fan is a target... high-level officials visiting Russia might be possible targets.”

Kompromat — compromising information — has been a staple of Russian intelligence activities (and not only theirs), but blackmail is one of the hardest kinds of criminal gambit to carry through, especially transnationally. For the overwhelming majority of fans, the risk is minimal.

This is not least because it is clear that for Putin, this is a prestige project intended to rebuild Russia's depleted stocks of soft power. The Krem-

lin wants the World Cup to go smoothly. As with the Sochi Winter Olympics, the word has been put out to the country's godfathers that it will be very displeased if visitors' experiences are soured.

As well as being able to enforce a degree of security through its informal authority, the government is going to deploy a massive security operation to try to ensure that threats from jihadist terrorists and violent football hooligans are as controlled as possible.

Russia is a state with formidable security assets at its disposal. Much of their time may be wasted dispersing anti-government protests, shaking down innocent travelers from the North Caucasus and eavesdropping on opposition leaders' phone calls. But for a month this summer, they will instead be devoted to ensuring that Putin's football party goes smoothly.

Of course, none of this guarantees a perfect or positive outcome. Electronic devices, from phones to laptops, will certainly be snooped through by Russia's spooks. Terrorism, while still mercifully rare, is always a risk in today's world of internet-radicalized “lone wolves.” Even the largest police operations cannot prevent every brawl or deter the kind of overt racism and homophobia that are, regrettably, part of Russian football culture.

This is hardly unique, though. The scale and tone of the coverage and warnings — only likely to escalate as the games draw closer — say a good deal about how the West views Russia, as well as the impact of Putin's increasingly aggressive geopolitical campaign to assert his country's status as a great power.

Constrained by the very real limits of Russian economic and even military strength, but liberated by the divisions and often timidity of the West, Putin has unleashed a campaign of disinformation, subversion and intimidation. He does not appear to expect to win friends, but instead, like a global bully, wants to look too formidable, too unpredictable, too dangerous to ignore. His hope is that this persuades enough of the West that it has to make a deal with him and accept his terms.

This has terrible long-term costs and risks, though. Putin risks making Russia into an international pariah, betraying many Russians' hopes that they can find a peaceful place in the global community.

The readiness of Western commentators and politicians to portray Russia as an unmitigated hotbed of hostility and intrigue — ignoring the very real positive aspects of the country and its culture — is not some cynical Western plot, as the more unhinged Russian propagandists claim. Rather, it is largely a depressing by-product of a campaign of deliberate destabilization. Hopes that a month of football can dispel this miasma seem pretty unrealistic.

Mark Galeotti is a senior research fellow at the Institute of International Relations Prague and the author of “The Vory: Russia's super mafia.”

[@MarkGaleotti](#)

Russia Defiant After New U.S. Sanctions

Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday that the latest round of U.S. sanctions will have “zero” effect on its policies.

The U.S. Treasury imposed sanctions on three Russian individuals and five firms on Monday for allegedly working with Russia's Federal Security Service, the FSB, to “jeopardize the safety and security of the United States and our allies.”

The Treasury said that Russia's “malign and destabilizing cyber activities” included attacks on the U.S. energy grid and network infrastructure, including routers and switches, as well as the global “NotPetya” attack last year.

Reacting to the announcement in an online statement on Tuesday, Russia's Foreign Ministry accused the United States of being “under

the illusion it is the world's policeman, and every unsuccessful attempt to put pressure on our country puts on display its own helplessness.”

“As previously, the effect will be zero: [the U.S.] won't succeed in changing Russia's independent course in the international arena,” it added.

The ministry also criticized the timing of the new sanctions, pointing out that “the last two times Washington expanded sanctions was ahead of important national holidays: Victory Day and Russia Day,” referring to May 9, when Russia celebrates the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany, and June 12, when Russia celebrates its sovereignty.

“We'll remember this,” the statement warned.

Activists Detained in Raid

At least five Open Russia pro-democracy activists have been detained in a police raid during the opening of a new office in Russia's Far East, the OVD-Info police monitoring website reported, citing activists.

Founded by exiled opposition politician Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Open Russia was blacklisted by Russian prosecutors as an “undesirable organization” last year. The raid coincided with Russia Day, a national holiday which marks Russia's declaration of sovereignty from the USSR.

“We opened an Open Russia branch in Vladivostok. Eleven police officers stormed in at the end and detained five people,” the group's chairman Andrei Pivovarov tweeted Tuesday.

Open Russia spokeswoman Natalia Gryaznevitch wrote on Facebook that several police officers “grabbed me by the arms, pushed me into a car and hauled me to a police station.”

Earlier this year, masked men attacked an Open Russia activist in St. Petersburg in what appeared to have been a scare tactic ahead of presidential elections in March.



Open Russia chairman Andrei Pivovarov

ANDREI PIVOVAROV

Swimsuit Rebellion

Teachers across Russia have launched a social media campaign in defense of a colleague who was reportedly fired for posing in a swimsuit photo-shoot.

Middle school history teacher Viktoria Popova, 26, from the Siberian city of Omsk, was let go last week for a pin-up photo series posted by a plus-size modeling school.

Teachers on social media

launched a #TeachersAreHumansToo campaign in support of Popova, asking educators across Russia to submit photographs of themselves in swimsuits.

“Teachers are unjustly picked on for their personal, private life, to which they are entitled like everyone else,” the ‘Education Ombudsman’ community wrote on social media over the weekend.

The community page collected scores of submissions from both male and female teachers in under three days. One user submitted a swimsuit photo of President Vladimir Putin on a fishing trip with Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu.

Following the massive response, the Omsk regional administration reportedly offered Popova her job back, Russian media reported.



Steven Mnuchin accused Russia of “jeopardizing the safety” of the U.S. and its allies.

PICKER

Word on the Street

On the eve of the World Cup kick-off, The Moscow Times asked locals how they feel about the big event.

Daria Bogatyryova, fitness club administrator, 21

"I think hosting the World Cup is great because it's good for the country and for its image."

Olga Kirillova, piano teacher, now retired, 70

"Sport has no borders — like music. I don't think there will be any losers or winners."

Gellada Andreyevna, teacher, 48

"The plus is that Russia built new infrastructure and repaired many stadiums. These things are going to remain afterwards. And many guests will come and see that we don't have bears walking in the streets here."

Andrei Yefimov, programmer, 31

"I'm of two minds here. Knowing our country, half the money will be stolen, but on the other hand, I see how everything's transforming now — they've done a lot that's good. To be honest, I'm not a football fan, but it'd be nice if Russia won."

Bayr Badmayev, tax inspector, 25

"It's good, probably. An influx of tourists, an influx of money. Maybe Russia can even win the first match."



Spoons of Victory

Move over vuvuzela players. The musical instrument to master for this year's football World Cup is the Russian spoon.

Eight years after South Africans blared away on their plastic vuvuzela horns when they hosted the contest, Russians are hoping fans at the tournament will celebrate by clacking their *lozhkas* — spoons that beat out an insistent but

quieter rhythm.

Folk musicians using the traditional instruments — two wooden spoons held back to back and struck by a third — have already become a feature at official receptions.

The "Spoons of Victory" have been recognized as the tournament's official instrument. (Reuters)



Traditional Russian spoons have been recognized as the World Cup's official instrument.

Referee Bikes from England



Martin Atkinson.

English Premier League referee Martin Atkinson has announced that he will ride his bicycle 2,735 kilometers to reach the FIFA World Cup in Russia, the BBC reported on Monday.

He is joined by the Whistle Stop Tour group, a bicycling squad that is raising money for four different charities during the 18-day ride.

They set out from England's training base in Staffordshire and will arrive in Kaliningrad

by June 28, just in time for England's final group match against Belgium.

"It's going to be a huge challenge, but it's one I think we're all relishing," Atkinson told the BBC. "In 2016 we cycled to all 20 Premier League grounds, which totaled around 1,000 miles (1,609 kilometers), so we're really upping the ante for this one."

At the time of departure, the group had already raised \$70,000 of its \$80,000 target.

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For \$65, he and his friend could stay in a two-person tent on an indoor football field in Moscow. "I stumbled across it online and thought: This looks like fun," Starling told The Moscow Times. "You can meet people from all around the world and just have a good time."

Two young entrepreneurs based in the capital came up with the initiative to convert two indoor football fields into a site for 80 tents.

In winter, they rent out the football fields to teams, but in warmer months, the fields lie idle. Now, half of the pitch will be used to house tents — decorated with the national flags of their occupants — and the other half will be used to stage football tournaments between fans.

Most of those who have booked tents are from France, Scandinavia and Latin America. Among them is Mexico's Jose Orozco, who traveled to Moscow with seven friends and plans to follow his team around the country. "I thought it was an original idea to camp on a football field with a lot of people who are also excited about the World Cup," Orozco said. He added that he does not expect any clashes with other football fans, despite potential team rivalries.

"Mexican fans are peaceful and always eager to make friends," Orozco said. "We look

forward to creating strong friendships with people of other countries so we can travel together and talk to people who are passionate about football. That will unify us." Curiously, Russians are not into the camping initiative, the organizers say.

For those who are late even to the camping game, rough sleeping — which is illegal in Russia — might be the only option left.

"It will be summer. I could even sleep on a bench in the park," a fan who couldn't find accommodation wrote on the online Pikabu forum.

World Cup Set for Glitzy Opener

Tens of millions of fans are set to watch Russia kick off the World Cup on June 14 at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow.

The star-studded event will feature performances by English singer Robbie Williams and Russia's opera diva Aida Garifullina, as well as the appearance of Ronaldo, Brazil's legendary striker. Around a dozen foreign heads of state are expected to attend the ceremony, which will start thirty minutes before Russia's opening game against Saudi Arabia at 6 p.m. local time.

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Russian Police Sounds Alarm Over Shortages

The deployment of Russian police to bolster security at World Cup venues has led to staffing shortages in other areas of the country, a police union leader has warned.

Several police officers in cities across Russia said their staff were working long hours, patrols have been reduced and response times to incidents have slowed.

"The situation is very dangerous ... This could have grave consequences," said Vladimir Vorontsov, a representative of Russia's Interregional Police Trade Union.

"You could get to a situation where there are simply not enough police to do the work. And the only people who benefit from that are criminals."

Russia has deployed thousands of police officers to the 11 cities hosting matches to deal with an influx of potentially rowdy fans and other security threats, such as the risk of Islamist terror attacks.

Football's governing body FIFA said it had confidence in the Russian authorities.

"As demonstrated during the FIFA Confederations Cup last year, the high security standards already in place in Russia have been adapted to meet the specific needs of such major sporting events," a spokesperson said.

A senior regional police officer said that officers were on call 24 hours a day and, even when not working, needed permission to leave



ANTON VAGANOV / REUTERS

their accommodation. He said the working day typically lasted around 14 hours.

"The food is dreadful, the conditions are spartan," the officer said.

Vorontsov said officers were paid a per diem allowance of just 200 rubles (\$3.23) on top of their regular salary.

"Staff are unhappy, the actions of the commanders are ill-thought out, [staff] are completely wrung out, there's a big staff shortage, no one wants to join," he said.

Two other police officers gave a more positive picture. They said detectives and special units were working effectively.

Reuters contributed reporting.

Russian policemen stand guard near Pulkovo Airport in St. Petersburg.

By Anna Borshchevskaya



While Egypt Sleeps in Grozny

It's no secret that Vladimir Putin uses prestige sporting events to bolster Russia's image at home and abroad. Look no further than the Sochi Olympic Games in 2014. But by hosting the FIFA World Cup this year, Putin is playing a more subtle geopolitical game: shoring up ties with regimes in the Middle East at the West's expense.

In May, a luxury hotel called The Local opened in the capital of Russia's restive and predominantly Muslim republic of Chechnya. It is the first hotel in the North Caucasus region to be sponsored by a foreign funder — namely, the Fabulous Abu Dhabi Hotel Management Company. The Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed attended the opening ceremony. Probably not coincidentally, the hotel is also where Egypt's national football team will stay during the World Cup.

For years, Moscow has been wooing Cairo on a number of political, military and economic fronts. Last year, Russian special forces deployed to Egypt in an effort to buttress a Moscow-backed warlord in neighboring Libya. In December, Moscow signed a \$30-billion deal to build a nuclear power plant in the Muslim world's largest country.

One of the most important tools in the Kremlin's courtship of Cairo — and a host of other capitals in the Middle East — has been the head of the Chechen republic, Ramzan Kadyrov. And now, he is playing host to the Egyptian squad and its star striker, Mo Salah.

Football is the most popular sport in the Arab world. It evokes strong emotions that intersect a range of political and societal issues. Some analysts say that football in this region can indicate the course of its political events.

It's hard to imagine that Moscow is ignorant of this, and the success of Egypt's stay in Chechnya — as well as a now iconic photo of Kadyrov posing with Salah — will resonate back home.

Two years after Putin installed Kadyrov in 2009, his horses began racing in the Dubai World Cup. Posing with his prize animals, Kadyrov began to cultivate a compassionate image with leaders throughout the Middle East, all the while extending little

compassion to his own people.

Business has been another avenue. In May last year, the UAE-funded Sheikh Zayed Fund opened in Grozny, pledging \$300 million for small and medium business enterprises in the republic for a decade. Kadyrov has, in turn, been funding humanitarian ventures in the Muslim world. Most notable is the reconstruction of Syria's historic Umayyad Mosque, destroyed in Aleppo in 2013.

Some of those humanitarian efforts, however, function as fronts for intelligence operations. In Syria, Moscow has predominantly used Muslim Chechens as part of Russia's military police to keep law and order in areas retaken by Syrian government forces.

During the Saudi King's historic visit to Russia last year, Kadyrov praised Salman bin Abdulaziz's leadership in the Muslim world. Saudi Arabia is currently discussing a deal to jointly increase oil production, which indirectly raises Moscow's influence both within OPEC and specifically over Saudi Arabia.

Russia's closest strategic partner in the region, Iran, was the first national team to arrive in Moscow for the World Cup. The two countries have been fighting side by side in Syria, and Russia has strengthened ties with Tehran by rallying European allies to salvage the Iran nuclear deal scrapped by U.S. President Donald Trump this year — all without visibly ruffling the feathers of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom's regional rival.

Russia's Middle East power plays, often leveraged through Kadyrov, erode U.S. influence in the Middle East. They create a perception of Russia as the sole power that can talk to everyone in the region without upsetting the Middle East's delicate geopolitical balance.

Just as during the Sochi Olympics, the absence of strong Western opposition to Russia's hosting the World Cup will only embolden Putin by granting him the international legitimacy he craves. Moreover, it will likely only increase Russia's already growing influence in the Middle East — at the expense of the West.

Anna Borshchevskaya is the Ira Weiner Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy [@annaborsh](#)



MOHAMED ABD EL GHANY / REUTERS

Mohamed Salah is recovering from a shoulder injury in time for the World Cup.

Salah Under Fire For Photo-Op

Egyptian football star Mohamed Salah has drawn criticism from human rights activists this week for posing in photos with Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov. The photos were taken on Salah's first day on Russian soil ahead of the World Cup.

The U.S. designated Chechnya's president a human rights abuser last year following a report alleging that gay men were being detained and tortured in secret Chechen prisons, a claim denied by local authorities.

Kadyrov was seen shaking hands with Salah and posing

for a picture during Egypt's training session on Monday in the Chechen capital of Grozny, where the Egyptian squad is based during the tournament.

"As expected, torturers and murderers are being praised on the world stage," HRW European media director Andrew Strohlein tweeted Monday, criticizing

"We'll use this opportunity in full."

Ramzan Kadyrov

ing FIFA's decision to authorize Chechnya as a training base.

Kadyrov, who is seen as Vladimir Putin's de-facto envoy to the Muslim world, said the World Cup would advance football's popularity.

"We'll use this opportunity in full. Russia's enemies have poured a lot of bile trying to trip up Russia on its way to the tournament," Kadyrov wrote Sunday after the Egyptian team landed.

"But Russian President Vladimir Putin and his team have proven that there are no challenges that our great motherland Russia is powerless against."

Reuters contributed reporting.



Russia could become the first host country since 1930 not to advance out of the group stages.

Destined for Defeat

Critics say the squad is drawn from the worst generation in the history of Russian football

BY EVAN GERSHKOVICH @EVANGERSHKOVICH

With just over 30 minutes left to play and leading Turkey by a goal, Russia's fans could taste victory. Then the team lost its focus.

Two of Russia's defenders — the lumbering Sergei Ignashevich, who will be the third oldest player at the World Cup, and Ilya Kutepov, who was playing in only his seventh international match — left a Turkish forward alone and free. The attacking player scooped up a long pass delivered from his team's half of the field, calmly dribbled down the middle of the pitch and slotted the ball into the lower corner of Russia's net.

When the final whistle sounded, jeers and whistles rang out from the stands, which were filled almost entirely with home supporters.

Going into its first domestic World Cup, Rus-

sia has now gone without a win in its last seven matches. After drawing against Turkey and losing to Austria — both of which failed to qualify — in its final two preparatory matches, Russia became the lowest ranked team in the tournament.

If Russia, which qualified automatically as the host, cannot muster a win against Saudi Arabia in the opening match on Thursday, the team will equal a winless record going back to 1912, when the country was still ruled by Tsar Nicholas II.

With fans' hopes all but assured to be dashed over the next few weeks, the question many have been asking is this: How did Russia, with one of the world's largest populations from which to draw talent and eight years to prepare to host the World Cup, end up with such a weak football team?

A lack of vision

It's a question that Russia's only successful manager in recent history anticipated eight years ago.

"It was known when I was getting ready to leave [in 2010] that Russia might be awarded the World Cup," Guus Hiddink, who led Russia to the 2008 European Championship semi-finals, told The Moscow Times. "And I said, 'This is such a huge country. Why don't we start preparing and scouting now for the top 15- to 19-year-olds and work properly with them?'"

Although Hiddink said he doesn't know what

has been done since he left, Russian football journalists filled in the gaps. "In essence, Russia has never taken youth football seriously, including over the past eight years," said Denis Romantsov, an editor at the Sports.ru site.

Namely, according to Igor Rabiner, a Russian football journalist, the nation suffers from systemic issues at the grassroots level: poor scouting, a dearth of quality youth coaches and too many players accepted into the top youth academies simply because their parents are wealthy or have connections.

If Russia had put an emphasis on youth development back in 2010, football pundits say, it would have been able to field a more competitive team. Those who spoke with The Moscow Times lamented that Russia did not take to heart the example of Germany, which hosted the World Cup in 2006.

Coming off a disappointing 3-0 loss to Croatia at the 1998 World Cup and a group stage exit at the 2000 European Championships, Germany had hit a low point just as it was awarded a domestic World Cup. But by immediately opening 121 regional youth development centers throughout the country, developing wide scouting networks and placing quality

With its huge population, and eight years to prepare, how did Russia end up with such a weak team?

coaches at the youth level, it was able to build a team that came in third place at the 2006 tournament.

Russia, however, is afflicted with a culture of what Rabiner calls “consumption football” rather than “development football.”

“Our coaches are worried first and foremost about not getting fired by directors who put an emphasis on immediate results, so they won’t risk giving younger players playing time,” Rabiner said. “There’s no view of the future, no perspective.”

Focused on winning rather than developing players, club coaches end up giving very little playing time to new players. Accordingly, said Toke Theilade, editor of Russian Football News, Russia’s coach Stanislav Cherchesov is then left to pick players he thinks will get the job done in the short term.

The result is a team that will, paradoxically, be both the seventh oldest and the ninth least experienced (counting average matches played at the international level) of the 32 total World Cup teams. The youth that has made it into the ranks is inexperienced: The senior players — the likes of Ignashevich, Yuri Zhirkov, Igor Akinfeyev — are fading stars past their prime.

The curse of comfort

Before the winless streak that started in October of last year, many Russian fans placed their faith in the young stars who broke out over the past two seasons in Russia’s top professional league. Some are still holding out hope.

Pavel Zanozin, who will be commentating World Cup matches for state-run television’s Channel One, said he still believes that those younger players — especially Alexander Golovin and the Miranchuk brothers, if the latter are afforded playing time — can “individually create some special moments.”

But many football analysts suggest that this view is overly optimistic. Theilade pointed to the example of midfielder Roman Zobnin, who many fans were expecting to boss the center of the pitch after his recent run of form in the Premier League. Against Austria, though, “he was outclassed,” Theilade said. “He looked much slower in his thinking and in his movements when playing against better competition.”

The crux of the issue, experts say, is that Russian players tend to stay in the domestic league rather than seeking out higher levels



Former coach Guus Hiddink led Russia’s national team to the semi-finals of the UEFA Euro in 2008.

of competition in Europe’s top five leagues. Of Russia’s 23 players, only two play outside of Russia’s borders: Denis Cheryshev, who grew up in Spain, and Vladimir Gabulov, the team’s third-string keeper who plays in Belgium. “They don’t have week-in week-out experience against the world’s best players,” said Alexander Dobrski, a football blogger for Sports.ru.

Ironically, Russian players have also been dissuaded from playing abroad by the very Russian Football Federation policy aimed at helping them improve. In an effort to ensure playing time, the federation introduced a rule in 2005 and tightened it in 2015 that requires at least five of the 11 players fielded by Premier League teams to be Russian citizens. “Do the math,” said former Sports Minister and Russian Football Union President Vitaly Mutko in 2015. “You can see how many Russians are playing.”

Simply playing against each other, however, has only lowered the level of play over the past few seasons, experts say.

After the loss to Austria, Russia’s previous coach, Leonid Slutsky, pointed to the policy as the reason for the national team’s dismal state. “Because of the limit on legionnaires” — the Russian term for foreign footballers — “players don’t have an incentive to play abroad,” Slutsky said. “And the level of the Russian Premier League is simply not high enough.”

Baby steps

Russia, since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, has never advanced past the World Cup’s group stages. On Thursday night, the team will kick off its quest against the tournament’s second-lowest ranked team: Saudi Arabia. “Russia will win,” predicted Dobrski, the blogger. “If they don’t, they will be burned at the stake. I’m sure of it.”

But after that, Dobrski, along with thousands of Russian fans, believes that their team — despite having a home field advantage — will tumble out early, as always. Of nearly 65,000 respondents to a Sports.ru poll on how far Russia will advance in the tournament, 73 percent said the national team will fail to exit the group stage. By contrast, only one previous World Cup host since 1930 has not advanced.

If there is anything Russian fans are pinning their hopes on, it’s the scheduling. The team’s group stage matches against Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Uruguay, respectively, will each be increasingly challenging. By starting against the weakest team in their group and finishing with the strongest, Russian fans hope their inexperienced young stars can grow into tournament play.

“If they start well against Saudi Arabia,” said Zanozin, the commentator, “then they’ll certainly build up some confidence. And if they do, then we’ll just have to see what can happen.”

Stats



Russia Team

FIFA ranking: **70th**

Average age: **28** (7th oldest team)

Coach

Stanislav Cherchesov, 54

Russia’s captain in the 1994 World Cup.

Key players

Fyodor Smolov, 28

Striker

The team’s one and only consistent striker. Smolov netted 14 goals in 22 games in the Russian Premier League last season for FC Krasnodar.

Alexander Golovin, 22

Midfielder

Considered the best prospect of his generation, CSKA’s creative midfielder has been slated for a big-team move following the tournament this summer.

Sergei Ignashevich, 38

Defender

The third-oldest player in the tournament and Russia’s most-capped player (122 games).

Igor Akinfeyev, 32

Goalkeeper

Russia’s captain has been the country’s chief goalkeeper since EURO 2008.

Did you know?

- Russia is considered the successor state of the Soviet Union, and has appeared in 10 World Cups in total. The team has failed to progress from the group stage since 1986.
- Russia’s last three victories in the World Cup all came against African teams: Cameroon (4-0 in 1990 and 6-1 in 1994) and Tunisia (2-0 in 2002).
- 21 players in Russia’s 23-man squad play in the Russian Premier League, the second highest domestic league representation after England.
- Dmitry Cheryshev, Russia’s winger who plays for Spanish club Villarreal CF, raised a media storm earlier this month for refusing to answer a journalist’s question in Russian.
- Brazilian-born defender Mario Fernandes, who has played for CSKA Moscow since 2012, accepted Russian citizenship to play for the national team.
- Russia’s best performance at the World Cup came in 1966 when the Soviet Union reached the tournaments semi-finals.



Triage: Pundits say that Russia’s coach Stanislav Cherchesov (left) has been left picking players he believes can get the job done in the short term.



MOSCOW, LUZHNIKI

The largest venue at 81,000 seats, Luzhniki will host the opening and final matches.

LEGION MEDIA



MOSCOW, SPARTAK

Home to the Spartak football club, this stadium's decor is inspired by the armor of the gladiator Spartacus.

SERGEI BOBYLEV / TASS



SAMARA

Samara's enormous 65.5-meter-high dome roof is composed of 32 panels.



ROSTOV-ON-DON

After the World Cup, local authorities are planning to turn the area into a sports and health center.

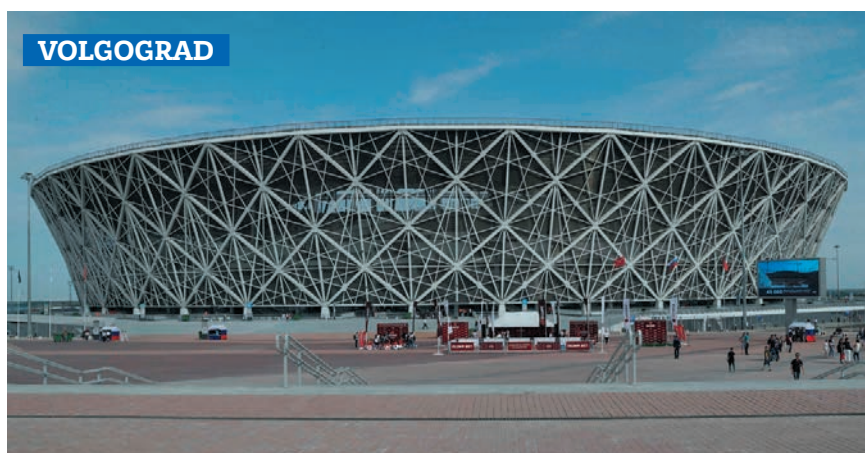
SERGEI PIVOVAROV / REUTERS



YEKATERINBURG

Original Stalinist architecture from 1957 is preserved in Russia's easternmost stadium.

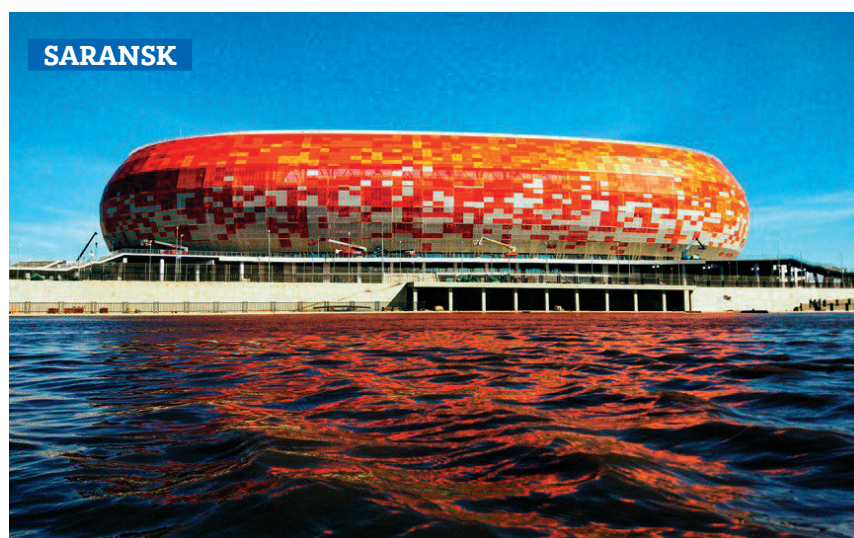
DONAT SOROKIN / TASS



VOLGOGRAD

The facade, which resembles a woven basket, overlooks the Volga River.

TATYANA MAKEYEVA / REUTERS



SARANSK

Architects designed Mordovia Arena in Saransk to look like a hot air balloon.

WIKICOMMONS



KAZAN

The Kazan Arena features

of Football

ms specifically for the World Cup this
adiums were completely overhauled.



YEGOR ALEYEV / TASS

panels.



YEGOR ALEYEV / TASS

NIZHNY NOVGOROD



STANISLAV KRASILNIKOV / TASS



SERGEI KARPUKHIN / REUTERS

Decked out in blue and white, this Volga River city's stadium was inspired by the local surroundings.

ST. PETERSBURG



LEGION MEDIA

St. Petersburg's space-age stadium features a retractable roof and pitch.

SOCHI



LEGION MEDIA

Resembling a mountain peak, Fisht Stadium got a test run during the Sochi Olympics.

KALININGRAD



WIKICOMMONS

The smallest venue (35,212 seats) was built on the previously untouched Oktyabrsky Island.



features one of the largest sports stadium screens in the world.



Host City in the Spotlight: Yekaterinburg

Founded by Peter the Great, Russia's fourth-largest city prepares to welcome guests from around the world

Yekaterinburg is ready for the World Cup. The current Yekaterinburg Arena was completed in 1957 and is a historical landmark for the city, especially for its sports fans, having hosted some of the city's most important sporting events. Major renovations on it were completed this year.

The defining feature of the stadium is its facade, preserved from the original 1957 construction. The magnificent Soviet neoclassical entrance, topped by a hammer and sickle, supports a giant steel cylindrical structure that rises far

above the facade itself. For the World Cup, additional temporary seating was set up outside the stadium, making room for spectators who will have a bird's eye view of the action on the field. Once the games are over, the extra seating will be taken down, reducing the capacity from 35,696 to 23,000.

The location is ideal for both sports fans and those interested in history. Like St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg is a city founded by Peter the Great. But if St. Petersburg was a "window to Europe," then Yekaterinburg was planned as a "window to Asia."

The first human settlements appeared in the area around 8,000 B.C., but it was only in the early 17th century that it officially became Russian territory; in the latter half of the 17th century, a village was founded near Lake Shartash.

In 1720 Peter the Great sent his emissary Vasily Tatishchev to oversee mining factories in the Urals. Tatishchev quickly antagonized the Demidovs, a family of influential industrialists, and was replaced by a German, Wilhelm de Gennin. Tatishchev and Gennin are considered Yekaterinburg's founding fathers and a statue of the two stands in the very heart of the city.

Yekaterinburg's official founding year is 1723, when the new iron factory opened on the bank of the Iset River. The town was named after Catherine I, Peter the Great's wife, who became Russia's first empress after her husband's death.

Yekaterinburg gradually became a center of mining and metal-works. By the end of the 19th century, it was also an important railway junction. It was one of the first cities to accept the October Revolution in 1917 because of its large working-class population, but the city changed hands several times during the Russian Civil War.

In April 1918 the former Tsar Nicholas II and his family were relocated to Yekaterinburg as prisoners of the Bolsheviks. They were kept in a house in the center of the city, which formerly belonged to the Ipatiev merchant family. The basement of that house was where the tsar and his family were executed in July 1918. The Ipatiev House was later demolished and the Church on

the Blood was built on its site in the early 2000s.

In 1923 Yekaterinburg became the capital of the newly established Ural region, and a year later the city was renamed Sverdlovsk after a prominent Bolshevik Yakov Sverdlov. Sverdlov had lived in the city, but he had another connection to it: He had signed the tsar's death sentence.

In the 1930s, industrial development of the city began in earnest. Uralsmash, a heavy machine production facility that took up an entire district, was completed in 1933. The Uralsmash district and other neighborhoods in the city center were built in accordance with constructivist ideas about communal housing and living.

During World War II, Yekaterinburg became a major evacuation center. More than 50 factories were moved there from the western territories of the Soviet Union. This solidified the city's status as the industrial capital of the Urals. In 1967 the city's population reached 1 million people. In 1976 Boris Yeltsin became the first secretary of the Sverdlovsk Region Committee of the Communist Party. Yeltsin stayed in that position until 1985, when he went on to serve on Moscow's Committee and eventually became Russia's first president. Sverdlovsk was renamed Yekaterinburg in 1991, but the surrounding region is still called Sverdlovsk region.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a deep economic recession led to chaos in Yekaterinburg, as it did in all major Russian industrial cities. A gang war ensued, with several organized crime groups fighting for control of Uralsmash. In the 2000s the city made a recovery and its economy continues to perform relatively well. Yekaterinburg is now the fourth-largest city in Russia, with a population of almost 1.5 million.

HOSTING:

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June 21



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June 24



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June 27



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JAGANNATH

Much is changing in Russia's culinary habits with the growing interest in healthy diets and new ways of eating.

A Herbivore's Delight

By Andrei Muchnik

The tables are turning for vegetarians in Moscow

Not so long ago, the idea of opening a vegetarian restaurant in Moscow seemed like a most unprofitable venture. Vegetarianism was something exotic — something other, something a bit strange — though not a winning formula amid the Moscow cornucopia of popular Italian restaurants and sushi places and a population of carnivores.

But a recent gastronomic revolution, ubiquitous street food markets and an evolving obsession with healthy lifestyles has changed all this. Now “vegetarians” aren’t lumped all into a sin-

gle vague grouping: Most Muscovites can distinguish between vegetarians, strict vegans and pescetarians. There’s even a television channel called “Pervy Vegetariansky” (First Vegetarian) and a smartphone app “Veget Table” — a guide to vegetarian cafeterias, shops, restaurants, delivery services and even secret vegetarian spots at markets.

Several vegetarian chains have opened, suiting every price-range. Jagannath has been the most successful, with eight locations throughout Moscow, as well as other cities, from Sochi to Novosibirsk. It even publishes its own magazine, *Vegetarian*. Fresh is another, pricier

restaurant, which recently opened a second location, expanding under the slogan “healthy is the new sexy.” Moscow-Delhi, another vegetarian startup, managed to move from a dilapidated building to the posh Patriarchs’ Ponds neighborhood.

Soon most restaurants jumped on the bandwagon and developed their own, sometimes extensive, vegetarian menus. Georgian restaurants, for example, are now known not just for *shashlik* and *khinkali* dumplings, but also their exquisite vegetarian dishes like *pkhali*, *lobio* and *adjapsandal*. The newly renovated markets frequented now by Moscow foodies have at

least one stall devoted to vegetarian food. Even restaurants catering to the most carnivorous of Muscovites, like burger joints, generally offer some kind of vegetarian burger.

Fasting during the Orthodox Lent has also become more popular in past years, and many consider this as a way to cleanse the body and not solely a religious ritual. So for a few months every year, most restaurants supplement their regular menus with “Lent” menus, including dishes that will meet basic vegetarian requirements.

Herbivore times are moving quickly in Moscow.

RECOMMENDED



AVOCADO

Avocado

For vegetarian cuisine, Avocado is something of a Moscow institution. With two restaurants — the second one is on Tverskaya Ulitsa — it lifts the spirits of Muscovites and visiting herbivores with a mouth-watering range of soups, salads, tofu steaks, rich juices and teas galore. There are also many vegan and raw options, as well as meatless variations on Russian cuisine. Both locations are central and close to the action.

12 Chistoprudny Bulvar, Bldg. 2.
Metro Chistiye Prudy, Sretensky Bulvar.
avocadocafe.ru



MOSCOW-DELHI

Moscow-Delhi

For many Russian vegetarians, the adventure with meat-free cooking began with trips to India. Those enamored with Indian culture vouch for this restaurant’s authenticity, with its food prepared in front of customers, organic spices straight from the subcontinent and an informal atmosphere reminiscent of southern India’s teashops. Keep in mind that you may be asked to take off your shoes. You’ll enjoy the new location at Patriarchs’ Ponds.

7 Yermolayevsky Pereulok.
Metro Mayakovskaya.
facebook.com/MoscowDelhi



FRUITS AND VEGES

Fruits and Veges

Affectionately known as “the bunker,” this inexpensive vegan cafe is nestled by the entrance of an old bomb shelter in the middle of the Artplay Design and Architecture Center. But the location is not the only thing that makes Fruits and Veges stand out: Fans swear it is the best falafel place in town. The staff is friendly and generally speaks English.

Artplay Design and Architecture Center
10 Nizhnyaya Syromyatnicheskaya Ulitsa, Bldg. 12.
Metro Kurskaya.
facebook.com/fruitsandveges



JAGANNATH

Jagannath

Jagannath is serious about vegetarianism, healthy eating and all things Indian. Apart from eight central, vegan-friendly cafes, the franchise offers cooking classes, an online veggie and vegan store specializing in hard-to-find ingredients and a range of cultural events, often coinciding with Hindu festivals. The staff is proud of the selection of handmade sweets and desserts, some even prepared with weight-watchers in mind.

11 Ulitsa Kuznetsky Most.
Metro Kuznetsky Most.
jagannath.ru



Soviet-era rock hero Viktor Tsoi performing with his band Kino in the 1980s.

'Summer'— A Film About Love and Friendship

By Andrei Muchnik

The life of Soviet rock icon Viktor Tsoi continues to inspire

Kirill Serebrennikov was arrested on highly contested fraud charges last August in the middle of filming "Summer" ("Leto"), his long-awaited biopic about the late Viktor Tsoi, a 1980s Soviet rock hero. When the arrest happened, the film crew thought that soon the charges would be dropped and he'd be back at work. But Serebrennikov has been under house arrest ever since.

At the time of Serebrennikov's arrest, about three-quarters of the film had been completed and only two scenes remained to be filmed. A scene that had been rehearsed the day before was filmed the next day. The second scene was shot a month later following the director's precise instructions and with videotaped rehearsals. Later, Serebrennikov's lawyer gave him a hard drive with the raw footage, and the director personally edited the entire film while under house arrest.

The film is therefore very much the product of one man's vision, as script copywriter Michael Idov told The Moscow Times. "I want to emphasize that this is first and foremost Serebrennikov's film. Every last frame is his. Even those scenes that follow the script directly are colored by his vision and style."

Tsoi in life and on screen

"Summer" is a story about life in and around a famous Leningrad rock club in 1981. It explores the relationship between three real people: Mike Naumenko, the front-man of the band Zoopark and one of the key characters in the Leningrad rock scene, his wife Natalya Naumenko and Viktor Tsoi, who founded and led the band Kino.

Mike Naumenko is played by rock musician Roman Bilyk from the group Zveri, while up-and-coming Russian film star Irina Starshenbaum plays Natalya and Korean actor Teo Yoo plays Tsoi. Since Yoo doesn't speak Russian, one actor



A scene from Kirill Serebrennikov's "Summer"

dubbed his speaking parts and another dubbed his singing.

The film is a flashback for anyone who lived in the early 1980s and was a part of the rock scene.

It's shot in black and white until the first musical numbers, which are in color and reminiscent of early homemade music videos. The music includes covers of Western artists, including the Talking Heads, Iggy Pop and Lou Reed. But most of the musical numbers in the film are covers of the original songs by Tsoi and Kino, as well as Zoopark. "Summer" tells the story behind the creation of such early Kino hits as "Vosmiklassnit-sa" (High School Girl) and "Bezdelnik" (Loiterer). Both became part of Tsoi's first album, called "45." The recording of the album, produced by

1980s rock veteran Boris Grebenshchikov, is also part of the film.

Grebenshchikov himself publicly stated that the movie is "all lies" after reading an early version of the script. Although the script was loosely based on Natalya Naumenko's memoirs, the story is fictional. Lily and Michael Idov, the screenwriters, did not consult Naumenko, although Serebrennikov did.

But the story is never presented as truth. In the kind of twist that Serebrennikov's theater productions are known for, Skeptic, an anonymous character who seems to be from our times, keeps commenting on the videos and holding up a sign that reads: "This didn't really happen."

"For me, it's not a movie about Tsoi or Mike,

and not even about the Leningrad rock club. I understand that this sounds tacky, but it's really a film about love and friendship," Idov said.

Breaking the code

Although many guests at the Cannes Film Festival wore "Free Kirill!" T-shirts, the film didn't earn any awards. This may be partly due to so many references that are easily understood for those who grew up in the Soviet Union but might be lost on foreign audiences. For example, there are references to the dangerous *kvartirnik* — an illegal concert that took place in someone's private apartment. Or the lines that get laughs from older Russians in the audience, like "There's only two types of wine: good and very good." This is a joke about the scarcity of good quality wine under Leonid Brezhnev.

But another theme of the film is more universal, or at least as relevant in today's Russia as it was in the late Soviet era: the inability to pursue the life that one wants to lead. When Mike is trying to convince Grebenshchikov to produce Tsoi's album, he urges him to do it quickly. Grebenshchikov wonders what the rush is, and Mike responds that anything can happen: "Army, alcoholism, suicide, wife and kids, indifference to life — what else can happen to people in our country?"

"It's a film about young people who are trying to live a free life of their own, regardless of the circumstances," Idov said. "This movie could easily have taken place in America in the mid-1960s or in Thatcher's England. And if this story happened in Russia in 2018, I have a feeling that it would have taken place at the Gogol Center [where Serebrennikov was artistic director at the time of his arrest], which in many ways serves as a modern Leningrad rock club."

Viktor Tsoi died in a car crash in August 1990. Mike Naumenko died in August 1991 of a cerebral hemorrhage under suspicious circumstances. Kirill Serebrennikov has been under house arrest since August 2017.

When Convicts Are Given a Voice

By Alex Feinberg | [@afeinber](#)

A new anthology showcases works by former Russian prisoners

In late April, the Sakharov Center in Moscow was filled with the sound of laughter. The mood was festive, especially when Ariella Katz, a college senior at the University of Chicago, flickered onto a laptop screen via Skype.

Katz organized the event to present a new book, "Does the Sun Have an Off-Switch?" Many in the room had contributed to this anthology, all being members of "Freedom Words," a creative writing workshop organized by Katz for those with what she describes as "prison experience" — that is, former inmates.

This was not Katz's first time working with people who had found themselves on the wrong side of the Russian law. Katz, whose mother is from Russia, has been an ardent critic of the Russian government's prosecution and incarceration of opposition activists. In 2016, she was detained on Manege Square for protesting the case of Ildar Dadin, an imprisoned political activist. After receiving a warning and being released, she returned the same day with a new poster, only to be detained again.

But this was her first time working with "regular" prisoners. She had become frustrated that her activist colleagues put most of their energy into defending other activists, while ignoring the rest of society. "If you want liberalism to work outside the handful of people involved in Moscow and the big cities," she told The Moscow Times, "you have to show that you care about not just activist intellectuals." Her argument convinced the Davis Foundation to provide \$10,000 in funding, and Katz flew to Moscow in summer 2017 to work on the "Freedom Words" workshop.

Obsessed with Plato

The workshop was held twice a week for two months. Katz and the participants would meet to discuss their prison experiences, creative writing theory, texts that Katz had assigned and theater. Although many participants lacked a comprehensive education, Katz chose materials that would fit a college curriculum. One class, Katz recalled, was about love: "We read Aristophanes' speech in [Plato's] 'Symposium' and we contrasted it with a passage from Milan Kundera's 'The Unbearable Lightness of Being,' and then we wrote our own love letters."

Katz has a mild obsession with Plato. The anthology of writing that came out of the workshop, "Does the Sun Have an Off-Switch?" be-



"Does the Sun Have an Off-Switch?" is the result of Ariella Katz's creative writing workshop.

gins with five pages taken from the Greek philosopher's "Republic." When she was arrested in Moscow during her Dadin protest, the police asked her if anyone "put her up to it." She responded that Plato had. She writes, in the section of the book devoted to describing the 14 dramatis personae, or participants, of Freedom Words, that she created the workshop with the "sole goal of making everyone read Plato."

The format of the book has much in common with Plato's dialogues. Each small story is followed by a number of materials that respond to the piece, creating a back-and-forth between the authors and the rest of the group. Katz calls this "polyphonic writing."

"One of the theoretical directions I took this from," she said, "was that of putting voices together to construct a bigger 'I.'" This approach leads to a collection of materials that is far more than a sum of its parts. It doesn't read like an anthology of 14 different authors, but more

like a diary, an intimate view into the workshop itself.

Prison politics

One of the most difficult parts of the process was finding a publisher for the materials produced during the workshop. She places much of the blame on the political climate in Russia, where many turned down the project due to perceived political elements. When she did finally find publishers, they only agreed on the condition that they remain anonymous (the book contains no reference to the publishers).

Yet the collection does not seem overly political or oppositional. In fact, Katz was surprised to find herself defending the book from friends who asked her when she began writing "pro-Putin propaganda." She explained that she was trying to present as wide a selection of viewpoints as possible. "If it's just a bunch of moderate liberals like myself, it'll make for much flatter writing."

But there is indeed a political element: "I have a very pointed aim of elevating voices that are systematically marginalized by a prison system that really breaks people's lives. We have a goal of making that system better, which is unavoidably a political goal."

In Russia, there are relatively few organizations devoted to helping prisoners. One of them is Russia Behind Bars, where Katz found support, two volunteers and some participants for her project. Katz's niche is helping with the transition out of prison. "You might think the worst part is behind you," Katz says, "but it's really disorienting." There is virtually no support system for Russians coming out of prison, and Katz based her workshop in part on similar ones in the United States.

Healing process

The participants were grateful for the role the workshop played in their healing process. Alexander Margolin, who wrote about the day he was released after three years in prison, called the workshop a form of "group therapy." Sergei Yegorov, who spent a total of eight years in the Russian prison system, said that "you just want to speak, to say that you're not a second class person."

At the Sakharov Center presentation, participants fought for Katz's attention. One presented a bouquet of white flowers radiating around a central red rose, symbolizing Katz. Once everyone was seated and quiet, participants began to read their stories. Margolin spoke about the ambiguous feelings he had on the day he was released from prison. Yegorov read his story about a romantic liaison with a female prisoner in a neighboring cell. Oksana Krutitskaya recited upbeat poetry.

In general, the participants avoided the darkest aspects of their prison experiences. "In all that filth, people look for something bright, kind," Yegorov said.

Katz learned recently that she received a Fulbright grant to continue her work after she graduates. She is planning to work in part with the same group through a series of three seminars.

"I will be very happy if this project continues," Yegorov said.

"Does the Sun Have an Off-Switch?" can be purchased at Falanster. 12 Maly Gnezdnikovsky Pereulok. Metro Tverskaya. Falanster.su

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

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Bolshoy Deviatinsky Pereulok 8
+ (7) (495) 728-5577 or + (7) (495) 728-5000 (after hours)
moscowacs@state.gov

CONSULATE GENERAL YEKATERINBURG

Ulitsa Gogolya 15
+ (7) (343) 379-3001 or + (7) 917-569-3549 (after hours)
consulekac@state.gov

CONSULATE GENERAL VLADIVOSTOK

Pushkinskaya Ulitsa 32
+ (7) (4232) 300-070 or + (7) (914) 791-0067 (after hours)
vladcons@state.gov

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www.fifa.com/worldcup/organisation/ticketing/index.html

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Pull Back the Curtains on the Lives of Russia's Literary Giants

The Marina Tsvetayeva House Museum

Marina Tsvetayeva is considered one of the greatest poets of 20th century Russian literature. She had a tragic life: Her daughter died of starvation after a period in a state orphanage, she emigrated before returning to the Soviet Union where she was widely ostracized and she eventually committed suicide in 1941. Yet her poetry is acclaimed for its passionate lyricism. The Tsvetayeva House Museum opened on the 100th anniversary of Tsvetayeva's birth, following interventions by public and cultural figures to stop the building from being demolished. The museum now houses a collection of Tsvetayeva's possessions, including photographs, poetry and books.

6 Borisoglebsky Pereulok, Bldg. 1. Metro Arbatskaya.
dommuseum.ru



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FLICKR

The Gorky House Museum

Even if you harbor lukewarm feelings toward Maxim Gorky, this astonishing Art Nouveau mansion on Malaya Nikitskaya is still worth a visit. Purportedly gifted to Gorky by Stalin on the author's return to the Soviet Union, it was designed by the renowned architect Fyodor Shekhtel for banker Stepan Ryabushinsky. The most interesting feature is the magnificent marble staircase, which climbs to the first floor like a sea wave. For someone who was such a proponent of the proletariat, Gorky lived out his life in a most lavish home. The walls are decorated with a mosaic frieze of the paradise garden while stained glass windows filter in colorful light from the garden. Gorky's study provides a more personal insight into the author's life: You can see the original worn-down coloring pencils he used when marking his manuscripts. 6/2 Malaya Nikitskaya Ulitsa, Bldg. 5. Metro Arbatskaya.
museum.ru/M402

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The Chekhov House Museum

Anton Chekhov's house on the Garden Ring is a vibrant red color, a feature to which he jokingly attributed his liberal thinking in a letter to one of his acquaintances. The modest house gives you some impression of what life might have been like for the writer, who battled both ill health and poor finances. Chekhov received patients at his house while working as a doctor to supplement his writing, although apparently only between the hours of noon and 3 p.m. He left the rest of his time for creative exploits. Visitors can see the writer's desk and inkwell, as well as rare photographs of Chekhov and his friends and family. 6 Sadovaya-Kudrinskaya Ulitsa. Metro Barrikadnaya.
museum.ru/M309

The Gogol House Museum

The Gogol House Museum on Nikitsky Bulvar is a unique architectural and cultural monument to the writer. Nikolai Gogol worked on his second manuscript of "Dead Souls" in the house—a work intended to provide virtuous and moral characters who set an example to Russian readers after his darkly satirical first part. Frustrated by his efforts, he famously burned the work in the fireplace just before his death. You can still see the fireplace, along with items like Gogol's death mask and the last letter he wrote on his

deathbed. The Gogol House Museum has made efforts to make itself as accessible as possible, with audio guides and touch-screen computers.

7A Nikitsky Bulvar. Metro Arbatskaya.
domgogolya.ru



TOLSTOY ESTATE MUSEUM

The Tolstoy Estate Museum

Leo Tolstoy's winter residence is an island of calm in central Moscow. The author moved to the house in 1882 so that his children could benefit from better school-

ing. Nonetheless, the wooden structure and its surrounding garden hark back to a simpler, countryside lifestyle. Hints of the author's strict moral philosophy and simple aesthetic can be seen throughout the house, which despite its generous size had no electricity or running water. Visitors can see the desk where Tolstoy's wife Sofia transcribed his manuscripts and the reception room where the writer socialized with the likes of Sergei Rachmaninov. 21 Ulitsa Lva Tolstogo. Metro Park Kultury.
tolstoymuseum.ru

The Bulgakov Museum

There is always something kind of funky going on in the Bulgakov Museum, which befits a place dedicated to "The Master and Margarita" and its author, Mikhail Bulgakov. Though often censored during his own lifetime and prohibited from publishing, his most famous novel was published posthumously to international acclaim, even developing a large cult following. There's an art center and theater on the first floor of the old apartment building, and a small museum where he and his wife, Tatyana Lappa, lived. The walls of the stairwell of the building are covered in graffiti commemorating Bulgakov, a devoted ritual begun during perestroika. 10 Bolshaya Sadovaya Ulitsa. Metro Mayakovskaya.
bulgakovmuseum.ru

Ibeyi

June 13

This concert by the Ibeyi duo is one of the most anticipated events of the Mosaic Music program series' third season at the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art. Ibeyi means "twins" in the Yoruba language, and the band consists of actual twin sisters, born in Paris to a Cuban father (who played percussion with Buena Vista Social Club) and a West African mother. Last year they issued their second release, "Ash," a mix of ethnic, electronic, jazz and soul.

Garage Museum of Contemporary Art

9 Krymsky Val. Metro Oktyabrskaya.

garagemca.org



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MOSCOW LIFEHACK

Can I Drink the Water in Moscow?

Is it a good idea to drink water from a Moscow tap? The answer depends on who you talk to.

Conflicting advice about water quality in Moscow is rife. On the one hand, you have authorities at water companies vehemently assuring us all that the water is safe, sanitized and fine for consumption. On the other, restaurants only serve bottled water, most Russians drink bottled water and most guidebooks scream "don't drink the water!" So which is it?

While there is proof that the St. Petersburg water supply has contained giardia, a nasty intestinal parasite, there is no conclusive link

to Moscow. The yellowish tinge that you may notice in your bathwater is apparently from additional groundwater run-off in the spring when the snow melts. While unsightly, it is not necessarily harmful.

That said, pre-Soviet era pipes remain in use and there do seem to be raised nitrate levels in Moscow's water. That isn't terribly bad for your health; but if you're pregnant, then it's not advisable. And with a basic supermarket water filter costing very little, you're better safe than sorry. But for brushing your teeth, washing fruit and general things like that, you'll be absolutely fine.



THEATRE OF NATIONS

Theater The Audience

June 14-17

"The Audience," an adaptation of British playwright Peter Morgan's play by the same name, returns to Moscow's Theater of Nations this week. It's based on the weekly meetings between Queen Elizabeth II and her prime ministers, going back to the days of Winston Churchill. Inna Churikova, one of the most revered Russian actresses of her generation, plays the Queen. The director is Gleb Panfilov, best known for his work as a film director. Panfilov asked Morgan to rewrite sections of the play to add more focus on Britain's relations with the U.S.S.R. and Russia.

The State Theater of Nations

3 Petrovsky Pereulok. Metro Chekhovskaya. theatreofnations.ru

Concert Diplo

June 14

Diplo, one of the most prolific and prominent electronic musicians in the world, will play a concert at GIPSY on Thursday. Known for his solo work and his dancehall project Major Lazer, as well as various collaborations, Diplo's performance will open a new Moscow pop-up project – BUD Club, which will reside in GIPSY during the World Cup from June 14 to July 15.

GIPSY

3 Bolotnaya Naberezhnaya, Bldg. 2. Metro Polyanka, Kropotkinskaya.

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Concert Black Rebel Motorcycle Club

June 13

Black Rebel Motorcycle Club (or BRMC), American rockers from San Francisco, will play their first Moscow concert at Glavclub on Wednesday. They recently released their eighth studio album, "Wrong Creatures," to positive reviews. They will be performing their traditional mix of noise-pop and garage rock, with a tinge of psychedelic.

Glavclub

11 Ulitsa Ordzhonikidze. Metro Leninsky Prospekt. glavclub.com

Exhibition Sergei Sapozhnikov: DANCE

Through June 17

The Moscow Museum of Modern Art is presenting a solo exhibition by Sergei Sapozhnikov built around his DANCE series. Sapozhnikov recounts a love story through experimental dance, including photography, video and an installation. The performance is a creative collaboration with dancer Alexander Kislov. The exhibition will be accompanied by performances by Kislov and guided tours with Sapozhnikov.

MMOMA

10 Gogolevsky Bulvar. Metro Kropotkinskaya. mmoma.ru

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