The Moscow Times

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The Moscow Times

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Moscow Guardian staff: It's time for the Moscow Times

With this issue, the Moscow Times launches a new newspaper in English, written, produced and managed by most of the same people who worked previously at the Moscow Guardian.

The Moscow Times, published by the Independent Press will appear on Tuesday and Friday mornings.

Most of the staff of the Moscow Guardian left their old jobs last week to form the Moscow Times with the idea of greatly expanding on the work begun one year ago when the Moscow Guardian first appeared as the "news source for Moscow's foreign community."

The Moscow Times offers a "Community" section filled with the same foreign community news that constituted the basis of the Guardian — including the Community Bulletin Board and columnist Michael Hetzer's "Moscowville" column. But coverage builds upon that foundation to include city news, national news, investigative news features, a much expanded business section, as well as a more complete calendar. Even the broadsheet format reflects the staff's desire to offer a newspaper with a more diverse coverage of Moscow.

As with the Guardian, the Moscow Times will be delivered free throughout Moscow, its commercial operation supported by advertising. Shortly, however, the newspaper plans to launch a subscription drive for home delivery.

The offices of the Moscow Times are located on the fourth floor of the Radisson Slavjanskaya Hotel, beside Kievsky Vokzal, 2 Berezhkovskaya Naberezhnaya, 121059, Moscow. Telephone: 941-8945 for editorial.

Fighting moves closer to western Azerbaijan

DEBORAH SEWARD
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Azerbaijan — An emergency session of the Azerbaijani parliament opened yesterday in the capital of Baku amid reports that Armenian shelling had killed 10 people overnight in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Radio Moscow said the lawmakers gathered to discuss the escalating violence in the embattled enclave in the

Gunmen fired into the air to clear a path for ambulances and trucks carrying the wounded to a World War II-era hospital train outside Agdam, where the surgeons sometimes operate without anesthetic.

"Sleep. Food. They don't matter to me," said Dr. Yegubov Sattar. He said on Wednesday there were 300 wounded people on the train.

"We need antibiotics, blood, and all

George Kellogg clowns around with adopted daughter, Valentina. (Photo: O. Pohl)

Learning from Romania

Party archives open but offer few surprises

BY BETSY MCKAY
STAFF WRITER

An American journalist wanted to research the Cuban missile crisis. A Russian historian was looking for material on the Soviet Union's 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. And a Russian woman thought she might find out about her family.

Each of these hopefuls thought they would find what they were looking for when the Soviet Communist Party Archives opened to the public on Monday. But all three came away disappointed. The American was told that the archives didn't have what he wanted. The historian learned that every-

#last print issue

5811 issues, 9253 days, 25 years.

These were The Moscow Times →Pages 2-5

Going down in flames

Is Russia's fire service fit for purpose ? →Pages 8-9

18+

"He called me up and said, 'Hey, want to create a newspaper?'" former news editor ***Meg Bortin*** *on starting The Moscow Times.*

24
pages were in the first issue of The Moscow Times.

1992
newspaper publishes first bi-weekly issue before switching to daily.

The Moscow Times has served as a training ground for a number of Pulitzer Prize winners and future newsroom chiefs.

Goodbye.

By The Moscow Times | Photos by Archive The Moscow Times

From 1992 to 2017, from biweekly to daily to weekly newspaper, from black and white to full color, The Moscow Times made history.

Twenty-five years ago, the Moscow Times was born — abruptly, unexpectedly and chaotically, just like independent Russia.

It was 1992. The Soviet Union had just collapsed, and a generation of young businessmen, diplomats and adventure seekers were eagerly descending upon the Russian capital.

The Moscow of early '90s was an unstable, topsy-turvy metropolis teeming with long pent-up energy. Fresh ideas, foreign business, and new mores flowed into Russia. But the Russian economy fell into a near-tailspin, victim of the turbulent transition from the communist planned economy to the free market. GDP plummeted and unemployment skyrocketed. Meanwhile, criminality flourished. It was a dangerous time.

The Moscow Times' fledgling first staff waded into these uncharted waters. Young and full of energy, much like the 'new Russia,' the first team of reporters and editors laid a foundation that has persisted for a quarter of a century.

Since 1992, The Moscow Times has grown into a Russian institution and a major source of English-language news from Russia. It has also become a training ground for some of the world's top foreign correspondents. Four Pulitzer Prize winners got their start at TMT, and TMT alumni work in newspaper and agency bureaus both in Moscow and around the world.

"There were a lot of rogues and geniuses and fugitives from justice around in those days," says Ellen Barry, a former TMT journalist who now heads the New York Times' South Asia Bureau. "What I value so much about that time was that, as brand-new reporters, we were thrown into big-league stories."

But whereas the juggernauts like the New York Times and the Washington Post had researchers, stringers, and translators, TMT journalists went at it alone. They mastered the Russian language, researched the backstories, and immersed themselves in the life of this newly-born country.

Editor-in-chief Meg Bortin discussing the Oct. 2, 1992, issue of The Moscow Times at the printing house as newspaper founder Derk Sauer listens.

Like modern Russia, The Moscow Times has seen significant changes since its foundation. It has watched expats come and go, adapted to the rise of the internet and transitioned from a daily newspaper to a full-color weekly broadsheet. Now, as the paper prepares for a new incarnation with a new team, and operating as a web-only publication, we look back at the The Moscow Times' 25-year history.

The first editor

For Meg Bortin, the paper's first daily news editor, it all began with a phone call from Derk Sauer, the paper's Dutch founder and owner.

"He called me up and said, 'Hey, want to create a newspaper?'" Bortin said. "It was the kind of offer you don't refuse."

The plan was to launch a daily paper on the foundation of the bi-weekly Moscow Guardian. With experience reporting in Moscow for Reuters, Bortin was tasked with recruiting reporters.

"I'll never forget that first summer, in '92, when we were about to launch the daily Moscow Times," Bortin says. "All of the senior staff, except for me, turned 30 and we experienced a collective [midlife] identity crisis."

Getting older was not the only reason to worry. The Moscow of 1992 was unpredictable and the fledgling TMT staff was embarking on a new and risky project. Bortin recalls one driver, Pasha, kept a gun in his car during those early years. "It was a very Wild East atmosphere at the time," she says.

Sauer insisted that the TMT should be free and distributed in stores, hotels and other places that Moscow's new expat class frequented. Bortin admits she had her doubts about TMT's viability. She felt the paper had value and should cost something. But Sauer insisted that advertisers would be attracted by TMT's broad circulation.

"And circulation did blossom," she says. "The paper was new, and the staff was young so they knew all the hotspots."

1990-1994

1991 - The tearing down of a statue of secret police founder Felix Dzherzhinsky became a symbol for the collapse of the Soviet regime.

1992-93 Foreign currency exchanges appear on every street corner following "shock therapy" and hyperinflation.

Oct. 4, 1993 - Troops storm the White House, then home to parliament, at the height of the Russian constitutional crisis. Shortly after, tanks opened fire on the building, and as many as 1000 people were reportedly killed.

Oct. 2, 1993 — President Boris Yeltsin's walks down Arbat before constitutional crisis erupts.

Oct. 15, 1994 - British Queen makes her first state visit to the Russian Federation.

"People stood outside and watched it all like a spectator sport, even after they started taking fire," alumni ***David Filipov*** *on covering the 1993 Constitutional Crisis*

130,000+

articles are archived on The Moscow Times website.

The Moscow Times focused on the expatriate community in Moscow, quickly becoming the go-to paper for travelers, businessmen, and diplomats alike.

1993

TMT meets first anniversary with a helicopter evacuation of one of its journalists.

TMT photographer Vladimir Filonov took up position in the Mir hotel in front of the White house during the coup of October, 1993

1993 constitutional crisis

David Filipov, The Washington Post's Moscow bureau chief, was a young The Moscow Times reporter when he heard gunshots outside the White House.

It was Autumn 1993 and the newly formed Russian state was thrown into a bitter constitutional crisis. It ended in armed confrontation, with the army shelling the White House on President Boris Yeltsin's orders on Oct. 4, 1993.

"Tanks blew huge holes in the buildings and people watched like it was a sports event," Filipov, who was reporting on the ground for The Moscow Times, remembers. "It was the first time I saw people get shot and die."

The young reporter fled the office that day and ran down Moscow's Novy Arbat street, dodging gunfire. "There were snipers on the roof outside our newsroom on Ulitsa Pravdy" he says.

For Filipov, the image of the burned out White House the next morning stuck out as a prelude to the difficult times ahead.

"Russian democracy was never the same," he said. "But The Moscow Times was just getting started."

David Filipov was at The Moscow Times from its first issue, March 1, 1992 until August 1994.

First Chechen War (1994-1996)

The outbreak of the First Chechen War on Dec. 11, 1994 brought new challenges for The Moscow Times.

"Our owner [Sauer] got worried that we should have insurance for reporters who went down [to Chechnya]," says Geoff Winestock, who spent seven years at the paper in the 1990s, latterly as editor-in-chief.

At the time, Winestock called up TMT reporter Carlotta Gall, who was reporting from Grozny, capital of the Chechen Republic.

According to Winestock, his reporter was less concerned about safety. She had more pressing matters in mind: having bought opera tickets in Moscow for that weekend, she was afraid she might not make it back in time to use them.

Winestock persisted: Are you safe, he asked again.

"She said yes, no problems, that she was with Chechen insurgent leader Shamil Basaev," the former editor says. "I didn't mention that to the loss adjuster."

The gray cardinal

The almighty Olga Loseva arrived at the paper in 1995. In the ensuing 22 years, she made sure everyone was paid on time, all paperwork was in order and the newsroom was comfortable for the people working in it.

In the "wild 1990s," Loseva recalls, the paper was at a completely different place financially. It had 21 drivers on staff that took journalists to press conferences and interviews. In 1997, the owner of the paper Derk Sauer awarded every employee with $100 for every month they worked for the company.

"It was at a New Year's party — he came onto the stage and showed us a banner that said '$1,000,000'," Loseva recalls. "He said we all worked well and that was the result. He said he wanted to share it with us!"

Sauer had not predicted that Russia would experience a ferocious economic crisis within the year. The 1998 default hit the paper like most of the businesses.

"It was dramatic for a couple of weeks," Sauer said in an interview. "But then things started to normalize, especially for The Moscow Times."

Olga Loseva Office Manager for Moscow Times from 1995 to the very last print breath

Enter the strongman

Two events that changed Russia forever marked reporter Yevgeniya Borisova's time at The Moscow Times: the Second Chechen War and the election of Vladimir Putin.

In 1999, Borisova traveled to Chechnya in disguise, using a fake document with a Chechen name. Journalists were meant to be accredited by the Russian authorities, which only allowed reporters to travel with the Army.

"Being free, I saw the worst of the war," Borisova says. "I spoke to village elders who had to bribe Russian generals $5,000 not to destroy their village, to Chechen mothers who said their sons had been found without organs, to a young man locked in a cage because he had gone mad from the bombing. I gave most of the money The Moscow Times gave me to women in hospitals."

Later, Borisova investigated election fraud at the 2000 March presidential election in which acting President Putin, who had been appointed by Yeltsin, sought a four-year term in the Kremlin. "In Dagestan alone, I documented around 87,000 votes stolen from other candidates [and] given to Putin," she says.

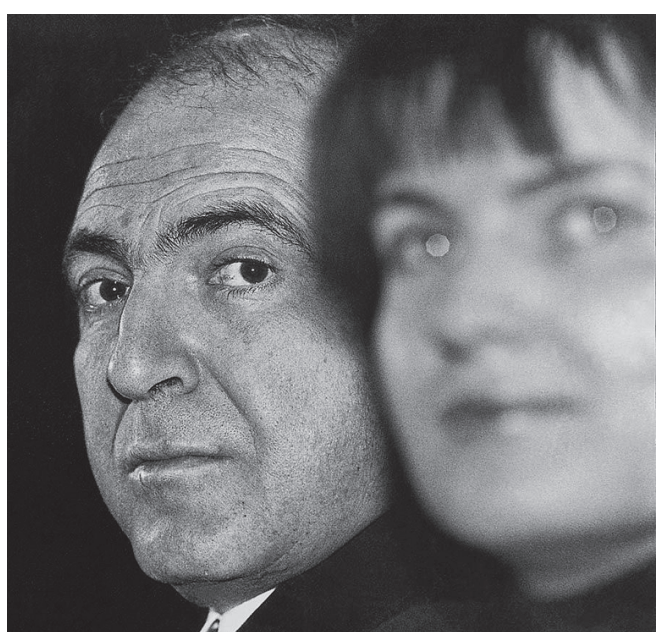
The story was published in September 2000 and was extensively cited in the Western media. "There was a deafening silence in the Russian media," she remembers. Publisher Independent Media awarded Borisova the "Best Newspaper Story" award for her investigation. Later, the story mysteriously disappeared from the archives.

Yevgenia Borisova reported for The Moscow Times from 1998-2003.

1995-2001

1995-6 — Mikhail Khodorkovsky aquires Yukos oil company as part of controversial loans for shares scheme, catapulting him to prominence.

Oct. 1997 - British Prime Minister Tony Blair visits Moscow at the peak of Russo-British relations.



Feb. 1997. Oligarch Boris Berezovsky was a dominant member of Yeltsin's inner circile. Exiled under Putin, he commited suicide in 2013.

2000 - President Vladimir Putin rose to absolute power on the back of perceived success in the Second Chechen War.

Sep. 8, 2000 - A group of fighters rest in an underpass at Pushkinskaya metro station after a bomb planted in a briefcase killed 13 people.

"Lobbying hard for stories is something I learned at The Moscow Times which I carry with me throughout my career"
Simon Ostrovsky

5811
print issues published over 26 years

$250,000
in wages stolen from office by armed robbers during the 1998 financial crisis.

The original daily edition featured Business, Sports, Leisure, and Classified sections.

"The Moscow Times has always been a small paper covering a really big story" ***Lynn Berry,*** *editor (2001-2006)*

Putin consolidates

In the year 2000, the world looked to Moscow as a new man settled in the Kremlin.

"It was a really exciting time to be in Russia," remembers Lynn Berry, who joined The Moscow Times as an editor in 1998 and became editor-in-chief in 2001.

This was a time of booming oil prices and the rise of Russia as an energy power. The Moscow Times was also booming: the paper had between 15-20 reporters and 5-10 editors.

"It was quite an operation," Berry says.

But as standards of living in Moscow improved, Putin began consolidating his power in the country. The first major event after Berry became editor was the 2001 takeover of independent television channel NTV, which marked the beginning of Putin's long crackdown on the media in Russia. Two years later, The Moscow Times reporters were busy covering Russia's show trial of the decade: that of oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky who was subsequently jailed for ten years.

"When I look back, these were history-making events," Berry says. "The Moscow Times has always been a small paper covering a really big story."

Lynn Berry was editor of The Moscow Times between 2001 and 2006

Four Pulitzers

The Russian financial crisis of 1998 may have been a blow to The Moscow Times' business model, but it proved a boon to its former journalists.

In 1999, three TMT alumni — Steve Liesman, Betsy McKay and Mark Whitehouse — were part of the Wall Street Journal team that won the Pulitzer Prize in international reporting for their in-depth coverage of the crisis.

Two years later, TMT alum Ellen Barry and her New York Times colleague Clifford Levy won the international reporting prize for a series of investigations into Russia's faltering justice system. Their reports focused on extrajudicial killings of journalists, corruption in the court system and the security agency's retaliation against regional politicians.

Barry, who worked at TMT from 1993 to 1995, credits the newspaper for preparing her for her later reporting from Russia.

"At The Moscow Times, I learned to do interviews in Russian, to write like an expert on subjects that were utterly new to me and to confront a system whose leaders felt no compulsion to answer questions about their actions," she says. "I think those are probably the hardest things I've ever done."

"It was an exceptional proving ground," she adds.

Head of NY Times South Asia bureau, Ellen Barry is one of TMT's most successful alums -a Pulitzer Prize winner who has covered top stories in Russia, India and the United States"

Battle for natural resources

Current BuzzFeed News World Editor Miriam Elder joined The Moscow Times in 2006. Within a week, she was on a plane to Sakhalin Island in Russia's Far East, to cover a conflict between the Natural Resources Ministry with a Shell-run energy project.

For the next few days, she inspected LNG plants and pipelines, spent hours talking to officials and activists.

"I fell in love with what it meant to report on Russia for The Moscow Times," she says.

The Sakhalin story turned out to be a turning point for Elder's journalism career.

"It was a trial by fire," she recalls. She describes reporting on energy as the Kremlin mounted a campaign to win back key assets from foreign investors as one of the most interesting times of her career. "It was the most intense beat on the most intense paper," Elder says, adding that many wanted to plead their case to The Moscow Times, which was read both in Moscow and in Washington.

"The paper gave me the education of a lifetime and made me the reporter I am today."

Miriam Elder reported for The Moscow Times between 2006 and 2008

Hope and terror

Simon Ostrovsky, currently with CNN's Investigation Team and formerly the face of Vice News in Eastern Europe, began his career at The Moscow Times in the early 2000s.

Ties between Russia and the West were better at the time and many emigre Russians, including Ostrovsky, had returned to Moscow where they saw opportunity and hope.

Before long, Ostrovsky found himself covering the wave of Chechen War related terrorist attacks in Russia. In September 2004, he covered the Beslan school siege in North Ossetia which lasted three days and ended with the death of at least 385 people.

The paper had little money to send reporters anywhere. But Ostrovsky says it only strengthened his ambition: "Lobbying hard for stories is something I learned at The Moscow Times which I carry with me throughout my career."

Simon Ostrovsky worked at The Moscow Times between 2001 and 2004

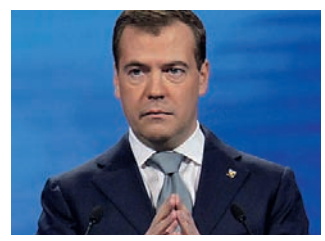
2000-2010

2001 - Putin dismantles leading independent TV channel, paving way for other hostile media takeovers by the state.

Oct. 24, 2002 — a sniper takes position during the Dubrovka Theater hostage crisis. 174 civilians died, mostly the result of a botched rescue attempt

Apr. 6, 2010 - Mikhail Khodorkovsky's decision to cross Vladimir Putin by acting on political ambitions resulted in a prison sentence. His case has served as a warning to others, but Putin's standing in the West suffered greatly as a result.

Oct. 7, 2006 - Journalist and activist Anna Politkovskaya is murdered at her Moscow home

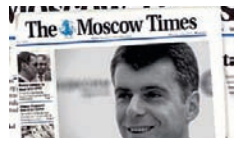


2008 - Medvedev temporarily replaces Putin in an arrangement known as "castling"

*"I could happily ignore business news and write features about Soviet singers and television," alumni **Anna Malpas** on covering the arts*

2015

The Moscow Times reverts to weekly publication



Despite several years of cuts, The Moscow Times continued to publish groundbreaking feature articles and investigations on life in Russia.

2011

Alumni Ellen Barry wins Pulitzer Prize for work on criminal justice system.

Shrinking resources

Nabi Abdullaev joined The Moscow Times in 2001 as a reporter.

"It was the place to be for a rookie," he recalls. "We learned the craft from sensible people who edited our scribble into decent articles."

Abdullaev witnessed the paper at its peak in the early 2000s, before the 2008 financial crisis led to deep cuts in the paper's staff and operations. "By then, it had become something of a natural habitat for me," he says. "I left several times, [but] always returned."

Abdullaev returned for the final time in 2014 when he became the final editor-in-chief of The Moscow Times' daily edition. His goal was to quickly shift TMT's editorial strategy and build an online international audience.

"It was a daunting task, given our resources, but I think we succeeded," he says.

Nabi Abdullaev was editor of The Moscow Times between 2014 and 2015

Russia on the edge

Howard Amos worked at The Moscow Times on four separate occasions. He says a tradition of in-depth reporting at the publication kept pulling him back.

Amos was manning the newspaper's business desk alone on Dec. 14, 2014: the day when the Russian ruble crashed by 12 percent.

"They'd raised interest rates the night before and it was obviously going to be a big day. But no-one had any idea just how far it would go," Howard says. "Sanctions added to the panic. Analysts, ministers, and journalists were all wildly wrong in their predictions."

Howard Amos worked at TMT between 2010 and 2017. He shares the record for number of returns to the newspaper with Kevin O'Flynn, who refused to be interviewed for this piece, citing vanity issues.

The Moscow Times Weekly 2015-2017

In October 2014, Russia passed new laws barring foreign investors from owning more than a 20% stake in Russian media outlets. A year later, The Moscow Times was sold to Russian media manager Demyan Kudryavtsev, who set out to modernize the publication.

The paper was transformed from a daily paper to a weekly magazine. Prominent Russian journalist Mikhail Fishman was appointed as editor-in-chief, with British journalist Oliver Carroll later joining as Managing Editor. Other prominent hires included reporter Ola Cichowlas, and internet pioneers Alexey Kovalev and Kevin Rothrock.

The new formats and new hires saw the paper adapt. In print, there was a greater emphasis on in-depth reporting and political analysis. Online, the publication became an original go-to resource of breaking Russian news.

In June 2017, it was announced that the publication's remit would be significantly changed, with the print edition scrapped, and with a single focus on digital from a much reduced team.

Not Going Anywhere

A Note from the New Publisher

Dear Moscow Times reader,

After almost 25 years, this issue will be the last print edition of The Moscow Times for the foreseeable future.

But we're not going anywhere. Our website, themoscowtimes.com, will continue to publish news and in-depth features on current affairs.

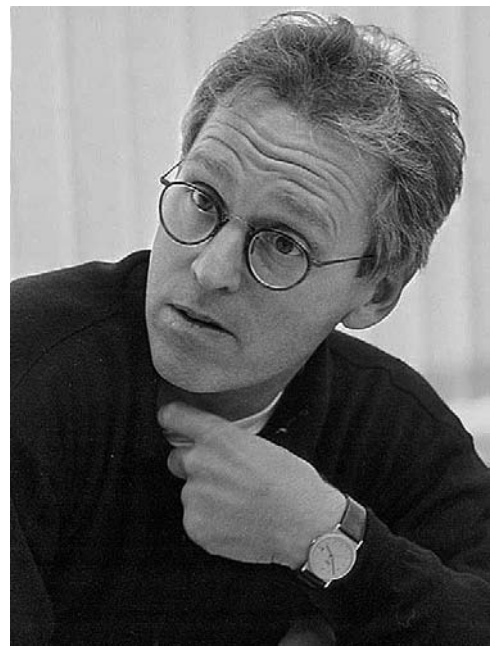
We will also continue to cover the best of Moscow's culture scene, both online and in several seasonal magazines, the first of which will appear in the fall.

For you, our local readers, we're working on several exciting new projects, including live walking tours and lectures. And in October, MT will celebrate its 25th anniversary, with a special print issue and online project.

If you don't already, follow us on Facebook for the latest updates.

We look forward to seeing you online!

Derk Sauer



2011-2017

Dec. 2011 — Anti-corruption activist and opposition figure Alexey Navalny prepares to lead anti-Putin protest.

Boris Nemtsov (r) was another key opposition figure at the 2011-2012 rallies. He was shot dead in central Moscow three years later.

March 2012 - tycoon Mikhail Prokhorov challenges Putin for the presidency. Most assume he does so with the agreement of the Kremlin.

Jun. 5, 2012 - riot police crack down on mass protests at Bolotnaya Ploshchad. Hundreds were arrested and dozens imprisoned.

July 17, 2014 - the downing of a passenger plane over eastern Ukraine marks a turning point in the conflict and highlights Russian involvement.

I think the people of Russia will embrace democracy as the least costly institution to help them to solve their problems.
Garry Kasparov, *(April 3, 2005)*

2024

Putin's second formal presidential term will end.

In 2017

only 16% of seats in Russian parliament occupied by women. Europe's lowest.

Alexandra Kollontai was the first female government minister in the world, being appointed People's Commissar for Social Affairs of Russia in 1917.

Winds of Change

By Mikhail Fishman m.fishman@imedia.ru | Illustration by Sofia Miroedova

Vladimir Putin's power is secure for now. But a backlash is brewing

Officially, Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny lags far behind President Vladimir Putin in popularity. But if measured by influence, Navalny is Putin's only major competitor. Unlike anyone else, he challenges the Kremlin and forces it to react, thus shaping the political agenda.

This is an important Russian phenomenon: Change and authority do not necessarily grow from wide support. What matters is the ability to interrupt the status quo.

Navalny's major achievement this year was a series of mass protests that swept across Russia. His ability to mobilize huge crowds took the political elite by shock. Those who took to the streets at Navalny's call were younger than ever before.

Still, from Putin's perspective, the stage is set and the 2018 presidential election should be a smooth ride. Since the 2014 annexation of Crimea, the president's ratings have returned to their previous extreme highs. His powers are absolute and his individual rule is a given, a situation more reminiscent of a monarchy than an undeveloped democracy.

A primitive "[political] mentality from the 18th or 19th century" now dominates in Russia, according to Alexei Levinson, a sociologist from the independent Levada Center.

But while Navalny's crowds have come as a surprise blow to the elite, they could hardly be considered unexpected.

When Putin returned to the presidency for his third term in 2012, he brought a new ideology with him. Russia was declared a harbor of traditional values in a sea of immorality. The criminal case against Pussy Riot demonstrated the Russian Orthodox Church's leading social role. The passage of notorious legislation prohibiting "gay propaganda" among minors recalled the Soviet era, when homosexuality was a crime. The annexation of Crimea was designed to seal the deal on the new consensus.

Yet every action generates a reaction. The mood started changing in 2013, says Nina Nazarova, women's affairs correspondent at BBC's Russian Service. The backlash against the new conservative state policy created its own counter-trend.

A new agenda — gender, LGBT rights, sexual equality, anti-religious activities, and individualism — began to take shape.

"Since 2013, state conservative populists have occupied the entire public space. So the hype started on the opposite side of the spectrum," says culture expert Oksana Moroz. "It started as a debate on violence, abuse, and feminism. And it was about values, about being a civilized person."

If not for technology, this debate would never have occurred: Social networks formed the ecosystem for this new agenda.

Examples abound. In 2016, thousands of women in Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus took to social media to share their experiences of sexual violence in the "#IAmNotAfraidToSpeak" flash mob. The same year, a Facebook-generated campaign to expose sexual abuse in one of Moscow's elite schools turned into a Russian version of the film "Spotlight."

The spread of feminism in Russia went far beyond Facebook posts. One recent survey suggests that Russian society, as patriarchal as it may be, has seriously reevaluated the gender issue. By default, men still have more authority. But today, women care about their independence and pursue their own careers, while men are far more involved in family matters than before.

Of course, it's not only about gender. In March, after a terror attack in the St. Petersburg metro killed 14 people, the city was electrified with a spirit of solidarity Russia had rarely seen before. Taxis canceled fares for stranded passengers. Cafes provided free tea. Locals invited those in need into their homes.

The change in Russians' self-perception comes in different forms. Activists fight against discriminatory legislation. Historians form NGOs to defend their field from political abuse. Muscovites rose up against a massive rehousing program. In St. Petersburg, citizens united against transferring the city's iconic St. Isaac's Cathedral to the Russian Orthodox Church.

In today's Russia, it is difficult to draw a line between people's search for social identity and political action. There is a simple explanation: Any social actions that people take — even superficially apolitical ones — go against state interests.

In the course of four years, the notorious "homosexual propaganda" law has not once been enforced. Yet it communicates the official state approach.

"I feel as if I have been separated from the rest of society," says Leonid Zhivetsky, a classical music manager from Moscow. In 2013, after the law was adopted, Zhivestsky came out along with many other prominent Russian LGBT people in a special issue of the Afisha Moscow lifestyle magazine. Now, Zhivetsky says, he faces no problems in his daily life, yet he remains wary of the state. Perhaps he has reason to worry. In Russia, the regime only grows heavier. But simultaneously, the regime erodes. It provokes repudiation. And a new generation is now taking the stage.

In Fall 2011, Putin was prepared to cruise back into the presidency after four years of Dmitry Medvedev holding highest office. Two months later, he was shocked by the largest mass protests in Moscow since the early 1990s. It took him more than a year after his election to take control of the situation.

But these demonstrations didn't come out of the blue. For years, waves of minor local protests had swept through Russia. That accumulated distrust, fueled by the political thaw under Medvedev, detonated — first in voting booths during the 2011 parliamentary election and then on Bolotnaya Square.

The young protesters who took to the streets to support Navalny this year were actually not so numerous. This is definitely not a revolutionary situation.

But the demonstrations this spring should not be viewed as a stand-alone activity. They are part of a much broader picture. The teenagers who took to the streets grew their worldview online. Their protest is, to a significant extent, a reaction against the ideological pressure delivered in schools and colleges. They are part of a backlash against the state agenda, a reaction that takes many different social forms — from feminism and solidarity during crisis to anti-corruption activism

In the Putin era, Russian political life is all about change and resistance to change that comes from the country's leadership. The last major battle for change was lost in 2011 and 2012. But now it looks like much of Russian society is building up strength for a new one. TMT

*"Putin is Russia, and Russia is Putin, and thus those who oppose Putin oppose Russia" - **Vyacheslav Volodin**, State Duma chairman, October 2014*

1.5%
average annual GDP growth in 2017-2022 (IMF estimate).

2001 - Russia's population in 2100 is projected to be similar to Russia's population in 1950.

30%
of Russians think the country is coming to a dead end (страна идет в тупик).

MYSTIC MARK

A Bit of Grin and Bear It: Reasons to be cheerful, 1, 2, 3

By Mark Galeotti
Senior researcher at the Institute of International Relations Prague and coordinator of its Centre for European Security.

GALINA GUBCHENKO

Back when I was a fledgling Russia-watcher, I was once given advice from a Grand Old Man in the field: always be the second-most pessimistic person in the room. Pessimistic, because, well, this is Russia; second-most, so someone else is the extreme outlier. But as we look forward to Russia's next presidential term, despite all the doom and gloom, it is worth looking for reasons to be cheerful.

First of all, the Putin system is dying, and few seem to be mourning it. Barring some health issue or the like, Putin will be standing in 2018 and winning. I am struck not just by the lack of excitement about that, but the extent to which even loyalists are already talking about what follows.

Despite alarmist talk about a no-bread-lots-of-circuses regime trying to distract the masses with foreign adventures, Russians are not interested in an age of perpetual war between Eurasia, Eastasia and Oceania. They like to be told they are special – who doesn't? – and that Russia still matters. They also harbor grievances, some manufactured, others wholly reasonable, about the way the outside world treats them.

But that does not translate into a people willing to sacrifice their interests – and their children's' – in the name of empire. Apart from a relative handful of the stratospherically rich, even the elite seem unconvinced by late Putinism, a strange and unworkable fusion of Brezhnevism and Gaullism. Putin will want to pick a successor who will protect him and his legacy. But he was a political artifact of the 1990s near-collapse of the Russian state and immediate post-imperial backlash. His mini-me will likely be constrained by an elite more interested in economic performance, which means improved relations with the West, reduced defense and security spending, meaningful property rights, and diversification.

In the first instance, that means putting pressure on the individual in the Kremlin, and one of the best ways of doing that is through a re-institutionalisation of the state. Democracy in Russia today may largely be sham, but it has seeps into public consciousness, and constitutions have a tendency to demand attention over time.

This requires real political parties. Whatever happens to Alexei Navalny – realistically, he was never a candidate for 2018 as the election after – the more his movement acquires structure and nationwide reach, the more it is laying the foundations for such a party.

It is striking that even the sons and daughters of the upper elite are, in the main, not being groomed to run the government, nor wanting to be part of it. A political career in the moribund Putinocracy is neither cool, nor desirable.

We will see the rise of a new generation of political, business and social movers-and-shakers who are, well, normal. They are not hold-out homo sovietici, nor traumatized survivors of the 1980s and 1990s. They have been exposed to a barrage of toxic propaganda, and yet are not goose-stepping stormtroopers of neo-tsarist imperialism.

That does not make them a generation of reformist liberals. Some of them are marching for Navalny. Most are not, though, and that's OK, but they still want a "normal" life, with a decent job, freedom from predatory officials, and the prospect that their kids will live better.

Together, what this means is that the national intellectual, social and practical infrastructure for a new kind of Russia is being built. However much the Kremlin may seek to control the internet and muzzle the media, Russians are too networked (and naturally skeptical) and the Russian internet architecture too dispersed for this to work.

Instead, Russians are looking increasingly beyond state media for their news, building networks and communities both virtual and physical, and, whatever some outsiders may think, they are not passive. They are finding their own ways of expressing their fears and angers, from satire to industrial action. Sometimes they win, more often they lose, but the point is that whether defending their khrushchevkas or protesting paying road tolls to line the Rotenbergs' pockets, they are acting.

And from action, bit by bit, can come networks, communities and forces for change.

The Grand Old Man would be shaking his head in disapproving despair but I am unfashionably optimistic about Russia. Maybe that is the historian in me: I am not expecting rapid change for the better, nor that 2024 will see some liberal, law-based democratic state flowering.

But in the long term, Russia has extraordinary potential and will take its place as a European nation in values and institutions, not just geography. TMT

GREAT GAME THEORY

On the Cheap and for the Elite: Great Power as the New Legitimacy

By Vladimir Frolov
Political analyst

YEVGENY PARFYONOV

Russia's foreign policy reinvented itself in mid-2012 after Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency. His third term has been almost entirely consumed by a foreign agenda.

For Putin and a small group of Russia's elite this new foreign policy — anti-Western, geopolitically assertive, unpredictable, impulsive, pugnacious, and sublimely cynical — has been a smashing success. It has reconstituted the perception of Russia as an indispensable great and global power, demanding a say in every important international issue. It has reenacted the 1970s bipolar rivalry between Moscow and Washington in Europe and the Middle East, boosting Kremlin prestige at home and abroad.

More importantly, it has redrawn the concept of political legitimacy for Russian rulers. Now foreign policy success and the pursuit of Russia's international greatness are presented as more important than wealth, health and education.

Tight media controls ensure a high level of support for Moscow's international exploits (87% according to the latest Pew Research poll). At the same time, it creates a political trap of having to demonstrate continuous foreign policy victories and makes any foreign policy debacle (not a low eventuality) a critical vulnerability in the regime's domestic position.

There is an organizing principle to Russia's new foreign policy — to constrain and diminish US leadership within the rules-based international order. It permeates its every gambit and position. This creates an artificially manufactured threat environment that consolidates Russia's ruling elites.

Yet Moscow needs the US as a subdued and cooperative partner on international issues. It needs to bolster the perception of Russia's status as a US co-equal despite the glaring deficiency in Russia's economic stature (Russia's GDP in nominal terms is about half that of California's.) To compensate for this weakness, and punch above its real geopolitical weight, Moscow resorts to risky gambits with a limited use of force to create or exacerbate crisis situations impossible for the U.S. to ignore.

The problem with this strategy is that the list of "crisis situations" with minimal risk of a direct US-Russia military clash is nearing exhaustion in Syria, and possibly Libya too. Other options entail significant escalation risks.

There are calls by some hot heads within the Russian foreign policy community to "bring the geopolitical fight" closer to America's shores by meddling in Venezuela, Nicaragua and even Mexico. This may be a bridge too far even for the Kremlin's tastes. But the internal debate on whether Russia should act more assertively in the Western Balkans to prevent Serbia and Macedonia's entry into NATO is far from settled — despite the glaring failure of such efforts in Montenegro.

The artificial threat environment that Moscow created has resulted in a military posture in Europe more unfavorable to Russia than at any point since 1991. By September 2013, the last US main battle tanks had left Europe, but by May 2017 they were back in Poland and the Baltic states. Moscow is now forced to spend limited resources to counter military threats.

Russia's daring gambits in Ukraine and Syria have attracted the world's attention and forced the US to directly engage with Moscow. But they have yet to produce clear wins for Russia and the risks of getting stuck in an open-ended stalemate are rising. Does Russia really need those military bases in Syria, whose sole purpose would be to defend Assad? Is getting stuck in Donbass without discernable strategic goals really a victory for Russia?

The growing gap between Russia's inflated foreign policy ambitions and its broad economic and technological vulnerabilities is finally forcing a rethink within the Russian foreign policy community. Two recent reports by leading establishment think tanks have called for a policy of restraint and consolidation to replace assertiveness and unpredictability.

Opinion polls show Russians heavily favoring foreign policy restraint. According to the Pew survey, 65% favor Russia focusing on its own affairs, while only 30 % support Russia involving itself in affairs of other countries.

If anything, Russian voters want to enjoy Russia's great power status on the cheap. But they have no means to effect change in accordance with their real priorities. The policy was never designed to serve their interests, but instead those of the elites that seek to perpetuate their grip on power. TMT

"It is a modern, dynamically developing organization that uses cutting-edge technology and equipment" Russian President ***Vladimir Putin***

1994
Ministry of Emergency Situations founded.

139,703
Fires were reported across Russia in 2016

Negligence of construction regulations has made the job more dangerous for firefighters.

Playing with Fire

By Daria Litvinova d.litvinova@imedia.ru | Illustration by Bojemoi Art

Incompetence, neglect and rash reforms are undermining Moscow firefighters' ability to tackle major fires.

It was the deadliest blaze in Britain's recent history. Earlier this month, a malfunctioning refrigerator set fire to Grenfell Tower, a public housing complex in London. Soon, the flames shot through the building's 24-storeys, most likely aided by the structure's highly flammable aluminum composite cladding.

Two-hundred and fifty firefighters battled the blaze for 10 hours — but to no avail. The building burnt nearly to the ground, and a plume of smoke billowed into the sky for hours more, a grim reminder of the terrible tragedy. At least 80 people are presumed dead or missing as of July 3.

London Metropolitan police have already determined the cause of the fire: A refrigerator exploded in one of the apartments. It is assumed that the flame then spread unusually quickly because of the building's cladding and other violations of fire safety regulations. In the ensuing two weeks, the UK authorities have inspected more than 600 buildings across England and found seven with similarly flammable cladding. They are now working to ensure this tragedy does not repeat itself.

Moscow is no England in that respect — and Grenfell has left Russian firefighters worried. Russia's fire service, currently part of the Emergency Situations Ministry, has been paralyzed by a deep internal crisis, several firefighters and rescuers told The Moscow Times on condition of anonymity.

The firefighters, who were not authorized to speak on internal matters, fear organizational dysfunction has left the fire service largely helpless in the face of major blazes like Grenfell — a serious problem in a high-rise city where fire safety regulations are often not followed.

"We've long been on the verge of falling into the abyss," a firefighter told The Moscow Times. "And it's not getting better. We're only stepping closer and closer to the edge."

Glory days

During the Soviet era, firefighting was somewhat more efficient. It was a militarized entity within the Interior Ministry. Only highly qualified professionals worked as firefighters, perpetually passing their knowledge and skills down to younger generations. This force was bound by values, traditions and, most importantly, accountability, firefighters say.

Every death in a fire and every unusual incident was thoroughly investigated. These investigations were meticulously analyzed and used by authorities and the fire service to prevent similar deaths and dangers.

"I can still teach young servicemen with Soviet fire analyses, that's how good they were," an experienced firefighter told The Moscow Times. "If a firefighter died in a fire, heads would roll. Everyone knew that, so it was a rather rare occurrence."

Construction standards were strict, and government oversight of fire safety regulations was relentless. Moreover, the fire service would frequently test fire safety. "In new buildings, they would pick out an apartment and set a controlled blaze in it to analyze potential scenarios," a firefighter told The Moscow Times.

But those glory days died with the Soviet Union. In the early 1990s, economic crisis took its toll, firefighters recall. For some time, the service barely received any funding, and servicemen saw their wages shrink and lost motivation to work. Many left the profession.

"Those who stayed survived a very dark period. Some of them resorted to drinking, including on duty," a firefighter said.

Around the same time, a young and zealous bureaucrat named Sergei Shoigu took charge of the State Committee for Emergency Situations, which was transformed into the Ministry for Emergency Situations (MChS) in 1994. Currently Russia's defense minister, Shoigu cut his teeth on Emergency Situations. Veterans working in the fire service at the time recall that Shoigu immediately had his eyes on the fire service.

By the end of the 1990s, the crisis in the fire service started to die down, and the situation began to improve, sources say. But in 2002, Shoigu got his way. The 278,000 staff members of the fire service officially became part of MChS. That is when the downfall began, firefighters say.

According to a veteran firefighter who has been working in the fire service since the 1970s, one of Shoigu's first moves was to purge the old guard at the top of regional branches of the service. Generals who "knew what firefighting was about" were replaced with Shoigu's own military cadres, who had "little to no experience in firefighting."

With them in charge, inefficiencies began metastasizing throughout the system, the veteran firefighter says. Almost every operational process was affected — from training firefighters to dealing with major accidents and deciding on firefighting tactics.

Ultimate price

For some time, the Russian fire service lived off its strong Soviet legacy, but that is now unsustainable, sources say. "Firefighting as a science hasn't developed in Russia in recent years," a firefighter with nearly 20 years of experience says. "We're two decades behind the rest of the world."

Sources complain that the education firefighters receive these days is, at best, outdated. At worst, it prioritizes military rituals — "like marching in file with hands over each other's shoulders" — over teaching the science of fighting fires. They say educational and training facilities were being shut down due to lack of funding.

The number of experienced professionals — the kind who would pass knowledge on to younger firefighters — has also fallen sharply. A sweeping optimization in recent years saw thousands of people laid off, including those who had reached the 45-year age limit. There are now 58,000 unfilled vacancies across the system, a firefighter says.

"Those 45-year-olds were the most experienced," a firefighter says. "Once they were sent packing, the fire service lost its institutional memory."

Unsurprisingly, this has greatly undermined the force's effectiveness and the management's ability to make right calls, sources say. A wrong tactical decision can lead to putting a fire out in five hours instead of 30 minutes. Disorganization in procurement may result in buying a large firefighting vehicle that is not suitable for densely populated urban areas.

Sometimes, visits from management can get in the way of putting out a fire. A current firefighter recalls an episode in which a firefighting squad, en route to a house fire, was turned around because a minister was coming.

"I had to drive to that fire from another district," the firefighter said. "The [other] squad would have been there 10 minutes earlier and would have contained the fire."

In that instance, people lost their home, and no one was held accountable for it, he said.

Management can also cause chaos at the scene of a fire, says another highly experienced rescuer. The larger the fire, the more high-ranking commanders arrive at the scene and start overriding each other's orders: "They don't listen to advice, they can change the tactics at any time and any way they see fit."

Sources claimed that this situation — combined with low salaries — was pushing skilled firefighters away from the profession. "Management doesn't need professionals — it needs soldiers who can quietly follow orders," an experienced firefighter says.

According to both current and former firefighters, the service is being "held together" by the few professionals it still has. They help younger colleagues learn their ropes, beg foreign colleagues and even buy necessary equipment on eBay out of their own pockets. Sometimes they turn a conscience blind eye to unhelpful new regulations in order to save people from fires.

And they sometimes pay the ultimate price for deficiencies in the system. Several firefighters referred to a September 2016 fire in a Moscow warehouse, which killed eight of their colleagues. The men became trapped in the inferno after a roof fell in.

According to one experienced firefighter who was present at the blaze, much more could and should have been made to ensure the safety of the team. The roof was near collapse when the team arrived, he says - the building had already been burning for several hours. Cranes or ladders could have been used for the rescuers to attach themselves to and avoid collapsing together with the roof, but squads at the scene didn't have the time or the equipment for it, the veteran firefighter says.

Instead, people were sent in with few safety precautions. Because of extreme staff shortage, these were firefighters from squads that had never worked or rehearsed maneuvers together, he adds.

"There were about 20 of them. Twelve made it out, the rest didn't," the veteran firefighter says. Had they been allowed to let the building burn down, and prioritize work on keeping the fire from spreading, the firefighter is sure his colleagues would have survived. According to our survey of past and present firefighters, this was far from being an isolated case.

"How can I entrust a service with saving lives if it can't even protect their own?" the veteran firefighter told The Moscow Times.

Vicious circle

On paper, the Emergency Situations Ministry is still a knight in shining armor. The Moscow Times reviewed stats published on the organization's official website and found that, over the past five years, the number of fires has been slowly but surely decreasing (from 162,975 fires in 2012 to 139,703 fires in 2016). So has the number of deaths (from 11,653 in 2012 to 8,760 in 2016) and injuries (from 11,962 in 2012 to 9,909 in 2016) in fires.

"In 2016, we took unprecedented steps to boost the potential of the fire and rescue services" Emergency Situations Minister ***Vladimir Puchkov***

2009
a deadly fire in Perm kills 156 people.

Firefighters were formerly part of the Interior Ministry, but now belong to the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

9,909
people died in fires across Russia last year.

But these figures don't necessarily reflect reality, current and former firefighters told The Moscow Times. MChS cares a lot about its image and has found ways to distort its official statistics, they argue.

It is true that the Ministry now calculates the number of deaths during a fire differently than before. According to an Interior Ministry decree from 1994, anyone who died within 90 days of being rescued from a fire was included in the count. The Emergencies Ministry decree from 2008 doesn't include that norm.

"Right now if a person was alive when I shut the ambulance door behind them, they are not counted as killed by the fire even if they die right then and there in that ambulance," a former firefighter said.

MChS officials sometimes discount deaths not directly related to fire. For example, a woman who died after jumping out the window of a burning building was not counted as a fire death, a firefighter said. The situation with firefighter deaths is even worse: There are no statistics or analysis at all. "All we are usually told about our colleagues killed in fires is that they passed away as heroes," a firefighter said. "No one talks about what could have been done to prevent those deaths."

Ministry officials exert pressure to make sure annual statistics show improvement, sources say. One firefighter told The Moscow Times that he was once summoned to a meeting during the New Year holiday and told not to report any more fires "because we already exceeded the previous year's number."

Manipulating statistics has created a vicious circle, the veteran firefighter adds: "If everything is fine — and on paper it is — there is no reason to improve things."

Russia's Grenfell towers

The Ministry's press service did not respond to The Moscow Times request for comments on staff shortages and manipulating statistics by the time this article went to press.

The Emergency Situations Ministry has issued official statements saying the fire service is consistently improving. MChS spokesman Alexei Vagutovich claimed earlier this year that the optimisation boosted the system's overall effectiveness, which led to a decrease in the number of emergency situations, fires and fatalities. Minister Vladimir Puchkov recently said "unprecedented steps" were taken to develop the fire service last year. He added that the ministry was paying close attention to training qualified specialists and ensuring safety for firefighters.

But according to people who have seen the system from the inside, fires like the Grenfell Tower blaze would be difficult to put out, given how poorly qualified many firefighters are today. There are also questions about the safety of newer complexes built in the post-Soviet construction boom, like the new Moscow City financial cluster in the east of the city.

"Extinguishing a fire in a tall building is an extremely difficult process on its own, and we've seen what a challenge it can be when [skyscrapers in] Moscow City [were] on fire," a former firefighter says.

The fact that many developers ignore construction regulations and MChS does not have enough resources to oversee buildings only increases the risk, firefighters say.

Russia has actually experienced tragedies even worse than Grenfell Tower. In 2009, a fire in a nightclub in Perm in 2009 took the lives of 156 people. But while the fallout from Grenfell in England is likely to result in a serious re-examination of safety norms there, Russian firefighters say their institutions learned little from the Perm disaster.

"It was a combination of extreme fire safety negligence and the unpreparedness of the local firefighting squad," the firefighter says. "The local garrison could have saved at least 50 people if it had enough men trained to deal with toxic smoke and equipped with breathing apparatuses."

Local firefighter commanders were dismissed, and the whole government of the region stepped down. Minister for Emergency Situations Shoigu initiated sweeping inspections of nightclubs across the country to ensure they comply with the safety regulations. But in the more substantive matter of fire safety practices, little changed. Disregard for safety regulations is still common, and there are still not enough specialist equipment or trained teams at hand.

This is why smaller tragedies — which take several lives here and there — add up to Moscow's own never-ending Grenfell Tower, a former firefighter says.

"The Grenfell Tower fire attracted attention in Britain because it was so big and deadly," he says. "But if all our smaller ones were properly reflected in official statistics, you'd see how many of Grenfell Towers we've had." TMT

Formerly known as Bessarabia, **Moldova** has historical and cultural ties to Romania and Russia. With the country's Russian population opposed to reunification with Romania, Moldova hopes to join the EU.

11,000

Number of annual foreign visitors to Moldova in 2014.

16 June 2017

Emerging markets consulting firm EM announces opening of operations in Beijing.

Since becoming the capital of independent Turkmenistan in 1991, **Ashgabat** has reinvented itself, with oil and gas revenues funding the construction of parks and marble palaces.

UNFAIR OBSERVER

The Glorious Present

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

If you've read this far, you know that this is the final issue of The Moscow Times, the newspaper. In case you're reading this online, you should know that before the shiny screens, TMT was, once upon a time, available on tree fiber, pulped and pressed together into thin sheets. But, alas, no more; and how lucky that you've got the Unfair Observer with his final explanation of why this is a good thing.

Let's get the slander out of the way first. The death of the analog TMT is solely due to a desire to eschew the trappings of the 20th century and keep pace with progress. No other reason: Move on, readers, nothing to see here. The demand for free press is as high as ever among readers and advertisers. You know how it is.

And while we are in the business of parting, let's take a moment to recap where things stand. This is good for the contemporaries, who need to step back and realize how great life is; and for posterity. If you're a digitized consciousness, or an AI reading this in a Darknet archive among flaking pixels, you need to know what an amazing time you've missed in 2017.

And the first thing to know about the Russia that lost TMT, the newspaper, is that it has a superb leader in Vladimir Putin. He is strong but benevolent. His strategic wisdom spans centuries. And his track record of errors is zero.

... Or at least so the court media tells us. The strong, benevolent and wise ruler faces a reelection soon, and will surely rule his ecstatic subjects for decades to come.

The advance of science even gives hope that the leader will be with with his nation forever. In which case, gentle AI reader, you will know him firsthand.

But even if not, the example of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, who is 93 and still in power, gives hope that Putin, who at 64 is just a whippersnapper, will also eat an elephant and two buffaloes at a birthday party in the Kremlin, three decades down the line.

Putin presides over a magnificent country. Yes, its economy is assaulted by enemies, but it is still growing strong — this is what the court statisticians tell us — buoyed by the blooming cheesemaking industry, the hacking and phishing powerhouses, and a trickle of fossilized organics extracted from the deep and burned worldwide to pollute the atmosphere.

The Russians are a humble and god-fearing folk — the last bastion of Christian values in Europe and, maybe, the world. Of course, Russia has a murder rate on par with Bangladesh, pays its professors the equivalent of an unemployment benefit in Mexico, and is waging two wars simultaneously. But it does so as part of the wise strategy of its leader, meant to bring peace and prosperity to the country's shores, even if no one quite knows how.

Admittedly, there are a few constitution-toting dissidents left. But they are being dealt with in the proper manner. In the same way as the constitution itself.

Of course, some things are still lacking. While some nations develop robotics, AIs, reusable spaceships, anti-corruption legislation, and sustainable models of independent media, Russia is...well, not doing those things. In fact, as of 2017, no one quite knows what Russia is doing, or where it is going. But that's what makes it fun to watch (if not necessarily at close range).

So stay tuned with the reborn MT, gentle readers flesh and digital.

This will be a fun ride. TMT

MY MOSCOW

Crisis Manager

By Bradley Jardine artsreporter@imedia.ru

Tom Blackwell values Moscow's entrepreneurial spirit

TOM BLACKWELL / PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Blackwell sees a wealth of opportunity in the changes currently taking place in Moscow.

The son of an IMF employee, Tom Blackwell moved to Chisinau, the Moldovan capital, as a teenager in 1992. His experience there dropped him feet-first into the Russian-speaking world and he has not looked back since. Tom is now CEO of the EM (Emerging Markets) business consulting firm and is working to expand Moscow's business networks into Hong Kong and Beijing with the opening of a new Chinese branch.

My father worked for the IMF so I got a real taste for the post-Soviet world from an early age. We moved to Moldova when I was a teenager and I began studying Russian, and then we moved to Ashgabat (the Turkmen capital) before I started working in Moscow. I've been based here [in Russia] now for over 12 years.

[The annexation of] Crimea changed the world. Many Western business professionals left Russia and the market became less saturated. Political and economic outreach to China soon followed as part of the famous 'pivot' and companies began working with an eye to the east. State companies in particular felt compelled to spread into the Chinese market.

Moscow is a city of cycles and it constantly changes. The 2005-2007 period, for example, was an absolute boom market where every investor felt like a genius. Seventy percent growth per year was not uncommon. But after the crash in 2008 a new cycle started and Moscow became a city of solidarity. People were losing jobs and facing salary cuts, but everyone was united against a seemingly abstract enemy. Crisis parties, held in people's homes, were happening everywhere as people could no longer afford to go to bars. The current crisis is more complicated and it will last much longer. There is a genuine sense of tension this time around, everyone feels it.

My favorite part of the city is Patriarshy – where I've been a resident for six years. It's a stereotype that foreigners love this place but it isn't unjustified. It's one of those rare places in town where you can walk around on foot without the hectic atmosphere.

Cafe Receptor, 10 Bolshoi Kozikhinsky Pereulok, Metro Pushkinskaya, Tverskaya

I like the food in Moscow. But I must confess that I avoid all places where the menu is dependent on European-style cheeses – they haven't quite cracked the secret – so it's better to stick with food such as Georgian that relies on its own local products. That being said, local production is growing and it's interesting to watch the way they are adapting to the crisis. In five years they'll have great cheese, though it's a high price to pay!

The flavor of the city is undergoing an exciting transition. Whenever you have a mass exodus of one group (in this case Westerners) there's always a cast of new characters and opportunities for innovation. The Asian tourist market is seeing a boom right now for example, and you can see this with Chinese signs in the international airports – this is a major signal. Now Chinese and pan-Asian restaurants are popping up around the city.

The thing that keeps me here is the pace of life. For better or worse, Moscow's frantic energy is addictive. Part of it is its entrepreneurial spirit. You can be 20 years old with limited experience, but if you're talented and have big ideas you can get your foot in the door. There are no sharply defined notions of "who is good" like there are in the West. As a result you can move very quickly within a company and get responsibilities within a year you would never get without at least four years experience in the UK – where it's generally a slow process building trust. TMT

The Moscow Times
No. 5811

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

EXTREMALNAYA MOSKVA

The 'new' drain is a 4-kilometer-long concrete tunnel built from 1974-1989 to expand capacity and minimize flooding.

Tunnel Vision: **Exploring Moscow's Underworld**

By Alastair Gill artsreporter@imedia.ru

A tour of the Neglinnaya River takes you into a labyrinth deep under the city

We're in a dark tunnel deep under the Metropol Hotel when our guide Ivan calls us to a halt. The beams of our head torches pick out the underground river we have been following for the last two hours as it cascades down a slope and vanishes into darkness. Shuffling along a narrow walkway beside the torrent, we peer into a large shaft blocked by a huge reinforced grille.

"This section of the tunnel leads under Red Square toward the Kremlin," says Ivan. "The grating was put up two years ago. And that white thing on the wall inside is a motion sensor. If anybody tries to get past, security forces will be down here in an instant."

He points out a spot on the wall where a security camera was mounted to monitor the entrance to the tunnel. "It didn't last long," he says. "It was only up for about four hours before one of us took it away as a souvenir."

It's a hot summer afternoon in Moscow, but the bright light and warmth of the street above seem light years away from where we are. Down in the tunnels beneath the city the temperature is a chilly 8-10 degrees Celsius and your breath hangs in the air.

Ivan belongs to a community known as "Diggers," underground enthusiasts whose hobby is exploring and documenting the vast network of tunnels under Moscow. These range from drainage systems and subterranean rivers to secret Soviet bunker complexes and "Metro-2," a secret underground rail system of four lines, allegedly built by Josef Stalin in order to link the Kremlin with various sites of strategic importance.

However, while knowledge and surefootedness are essential to navigate this dark world beneath the city, access is relatively unrestricted. The company Extremalnaya Moskva (Extreme Moscow) organizes weekly guided tours along the Neglinnaya River, giving locals and tourists with troglodytic tendencies and a sense of adventure the opportunity to see Moscow from a completely new angle.

The Neglinnaya flows from near the Savyolovsky Railway Station in the north of the city under the city center and into the Moskva River. Covered in the early 19th century, this tributary now passes invisibly down Neglinnaya Ulitsa, past the Bolshoi Theater and under Red Square and Alexandrovsky Sad before emptying into the Moskva.

Our gateway to the underworld turns out to be an innocuous drain cover in front of a statue in a park near Tsvetnoi Bulvar. Ivan hands out rubber waders, torches and gloves, and explains that we are about to descend into an old part of the city's drainage system. "Watch out for falling debris and step aside as soon as you reach the bottom," he warns.

Five minutes later we are standing almost waist-deep in fast-flowing water in a narrow, arched brick tunnel. Since this is not a sewer, there is no smell as such, beyond the slight odor of damp walls, stone and dirty rainwater. The murmur of traffic is faintly audible.

The six of us move along the dark passage in single file, the sound of rushing water a constant accompaniment. Every now and again, a loud metallic percussion reverberates around the dank space — this means a car on the road above has just driven over a manhole cover.

At one point Ivan reaches out and picks something off the wall. A large coppery cockroach is sitting on his finger.

"There are four types of animals to be found in the Neglinnaya," he says, "Rats, cockroaches, fish and spiders." Former Moscow mayor Yury Luzhkov claimed to have seen giant white cockroaches in the tunnel during reconstruction work at the Bolshoi Theater in 2010. He said that the insects were white "because it's dark there, and they don't want humans to touch them." Ivan, however, says there is no evidence of these creatures.

EXTREMALNAYA MOSKVA

The oldest sections of the Neglinnaya tunnels date back to the early 1800s.

Pipes carry rainwater into the main channel — at one stage a torrent of water suddenly erupts from a pipe behind us into the river.

At times the footing is uneven, and at one stage we are required to abseil down a 45-degree chute amid rushing water.

Diggers seem to have a kind of surreal humor, as evidenced by the graffiti on the walls: In one place the giant words "War and Peace" stretch from floor to ceiling in English.

At the end of the tour, we ascend a dusty brick shaft — and emerge from a manhole right in the middle of busy Trubnaya Ploshchad. The brilliant sunlight and pedestrians passing in blithe ignorance of the secret world beneath them strike a startling contrast, as two of our companions note.

"From now on, every time I drive over a drain cover I'm going to be thinking: 'There are people down there,'" says Alexander, whose girlfriend Alexandra has taken him on the tour as an unusual birthday present. "Few people on the surface think about what's going on under their feet." TMT

Extremalnaya Moskva runs 3-hour tours of the Neglinnaya River every week for 2,470 rubles ($42) per head. An English-speaking guide is available on request.

8 (499) 322 8182
mosextreme.ru

Around Krasny Oktyabr: Industrial Past, Changing Present, Cultural Future

By Daria Demidova artsreporter@imedia.ru | Illustration by Liza Lunz

With its art and bar scene, this island on the Moskva River is one of the city's social hubs

1) Patriarshy Most

Named after Russia's late Patriarch Alexei II, this 203-meter-long bridge has linked the western part of the island to the embankments on either side of the Moskva River since 2004. The bridge offers stunning views of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, the Kremlin and the river, as well as the city skyline. These vistas are appreciated by locals, in particular by couples: The bridge was the first place in Moscow where the Parisian copycat trend of affixing "love locks" to the railings was noticed.

The Lumiere Brothers Center for Photography (Bolotnaya Naberezhnaya 3) has a collection of more than 15,000 items.

2) Chambers of Averky Kirillov
18 Bersenevskaya Naberezhnaya, Bldg. 3

The chambers of Averky Kirillov, a powerful 17th-century statesman and tycoon, is an example of what influential figures of the age could afford. This elaborate mansion was an object of admiration worth a note in the memoirs of foreigners. After Kirillov was killed by an angry mob during an uprising, the state seized the property. In 1870, the Imperial Archeological Society took over the building, which today is the Russian Institute of Cultural Studies.

3) GES-2
15 Bolotnaya Naberezhnaya

Built during the early 20th-century industrial boom, GES (Power Plant) 2 produced electricity for the city's tram network. Boasting formidable capacity and a progressive design, the structure also mimics Moscow's historical architecture – hence its basilica-like layout and a clock tower echoing those of the Kremlin. Decommissioned in 2006, the plant is now being transformed into a contemporary art center by the V-A-C Foundation. It will open in 2019.

4) Church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker on Bersenevka
18 Bersenevskaya Naberezhnaya

Averky Kirillov's estate occupied the site of the former St. Nicholas monastery, so the magnate built a church devoted to St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. It later became his family's burial place. There are legends that the church's demolished belfry hides a secret tunnel leading to the Cathedral of Christ the Savior and even the Kremlin. It may be true – underground passages dug as early as the 16th century lace the city.

5) Krasny Oktyabr Factory
6 Bersenevskaya Naberezhnaya

In 1889, chocolate tycoon Ferdinand von Einem decided to expand and built a new complex of 23 buildings on the western tip of this island. Renamed Krasny Oktyabr (Red October) after the Russian Revolution, the factory developed trademark recipes, including the famous Alyonka chocolate bar (launched in 1965). Since production was relocated in 2007, the complex has been transformed into a cultural hub full of design bureaus, galleries and restaurants.

The iconic Alyonka chocolate bar features the image of an 8-month-old girl called Yelena (Alyona). Taken by her father, it won a photo contest.

6) Strelka
14/5 Bersenevskaya Naberezhnaya

Opened in 2009, the Strelka Institute is an international center of urban studies and design. The ambitious goal of the institution is to form a talent pool for renovation projects executed in Russia's cities. Postgraduates are welcome to enroll in the educational programs, and Strelka also hosts many open discussions, conferences, and talks in English. After some brain food, take your time and drop into the Strelka bar for drinks and excellent views.

SEMPRE / FACEBOOK

Sempre's natural approach is visible both in its decor and its presentation of food.

Sempre: A Feast for the Senses

By Alastair Gill artsreporter@imedia.ru

This green restaurant is a bold foray into a new kind of dining experience

Sempre caught my attention shortly after it opened in late May: Its prominent position on Bolshaya Dmitrovka makes it hard to miss. It might also have been something to do with the vast swathe of foliage hanging from the ceiling – there aren't many places in town that look like a botanical garden from the outside.

And as you will find out, Sempre is no ordinary restaurant. It is the first establishment of its kind launched by Belgian entrepreneur Gust Sempre. His company Sempre Life specializes in global interior design projects using household goods made by the company. The focus is on loose, uneven forms and traditional natural materials: glass, metal, wood, stone. Think of it as a kind of up-and-coming, pagan Ikea.

In order to familiarize people with its atmosphere and philosophy, Sempre has now decided to open a restaurant in Moscow, which, as one of the staff explained, is a test run before the company opens new locations in other cities around the world. This, you see, is because the cutthroat world of Moscow's dining scene is the perfect acid test for a restaurant. Still with me?

Before we go any further, let's get something out of the way: Sempre is that dreaded of beasts, the "concept restaurant." But before your prejudices take over, allow me to reassure you: I also came loaded with apprehensions, most of which were happily discarded at the door.

Sempre is all about sharing, letting go of your inhibitions and the conditioning that dictates how we normally behave in restaurants. The lighting is low and most of the seating is around long stone and wooden tables. This creates an laid-back, friendly atmosphere in which table-sharing – and conversations – come naturally.

Every detail reflects a devotion to integrating natural elements into a modern setting, from the moss and fantasy washbasins in the toilets (figure out how they work for yourself) to the bottle racks and the 100 plants that hang over the tables. Imagine a cross between a traditional folk restaurant, a greenhouse, and a slick cocktail bar and you're getting there.

Sempre's approach to food is what Jamie Oliver would call "naked": classic dishes made with fresh ingredients, prepared with a minimum of fuss. The PR people have given it the slightly unfortunate moniker of "con-fusion," but we'll forgive them this misstep. The menu is refreshingly simple – just 4-5 items per section.

In keeping with the back-to-basics aesthetic, there are no forks at Sempre, just a spoon and a knife made of beaten steel. This means getting a bit neanderthal with your dinner, which is served on either stone platters or wooden trenchers.

Still, when the food is this good, nobody's complaining. A tangy, textured beef tartare with lime and oyster sauce dressing for 570 rubles ($9.60) laid the groundwork, but the "ayayay grilled chicken" with mint sauce (685 rubles) stole the show. In no time at all I was channeling my inner caveman, fingers sticky with chili teriyaki sauce, chicken juice running over my hands. The grilled vegetables (495 rubles) were simply presented, juicy and perfectly done.

The cynic in you (and me) will say this all adds up to the use of a restaurant as a PR tool. And while it's easy to make fun of Sempre's affected concept, it offers a refreshing antidote to the twin evils that plague Moscow restaurants: the cold snootiness of the glamor crowd and the too-cool-for-school pose of the "hipster" set. It's cosy, it's informal, it's a little messy, but most of all, it's good fun. TMT

+7 (495) 249 5009
moscow.sempre.life/
22 Bolshaya Dmitrovka
Metro Chekhovskaya

NEWS & OPENINGS

VARVARA / FACEBOOK

Varvara

Moscow food goes local

This cafe offers auteur cuisine influenced by traditional Russian dishes made with local produce. The beef is from Voronezh, the trout from Karelia, the honey from the Altai and, oddly enough, the burrata from Tula. Concept chef Alexander Yermakov also works at Winil Restaurant & Wine Bar. Duck breast with mashed root vegetables and sea buckthorn sauce costs 570 rubles ($9.60).

+7 (495) 694 5626
facebook.com/varvaracafe
23/10 Ulitsa Petrovka, Bldg. 5
M. Chekhovskaya

BOTTOMS UP

Bottoms Up

New bar chain

This new bar on Pyatnitskaya has been opened by Chief, the restaurant company that manages the Meatless and Dzhondzholi chains. Sergei Kolpakov (formerly of Uley and Prichal) is taking care of the food. All the drinks prices are fixed: Wines are 180 rubles ($3) per glass, shots cost 250 rubles and cocktails go for 350 rubles. The menu has appetizers from around the world: from tacos to nems (Vietnamese fried rolls).

+7 (495) 959 5269
ch1ef.ru/restaurant/bottoms-up
29/8 Pyatnitskaya Ulitsa
M. Novokuznetskaya

GORKY PARK MUSEUM

Gorky Park Museum

Concerts above the park

This summer a new concert program will be launched at the viewing platform atop Gorky Park's main entrance, which at the same time serves as the park's museum. Several concerts are planned for July, including so-called "bard" music from the 1960s, similar to American folk music. Hear songs by great singer-songwriters like Vladimir Vysotsky, Bulat Okudzhava and Yuri Vizbor while watching the sun set.

+7 (495) 995 0020
park-gorkogo.com
9 Ulitsa Krymsky Val
M. Oktyabrskaya

MOSKVA-CITY MUSEUM

Moskva-City Museum

Sky-high history

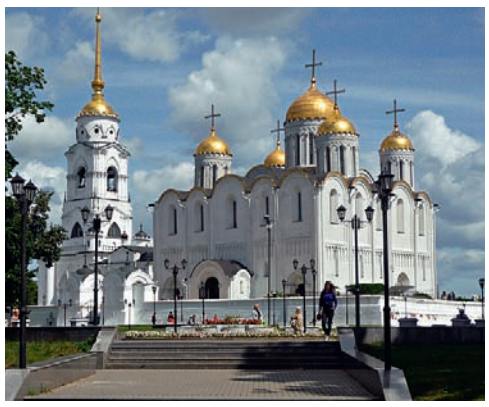
Located on the 56th floor of the Empire skyscraper in the Moskva-City business district, this museum is devoted to the area's history and future. There's currently an exhibition on the history of high-rise buildings. One of the highlights is the "Parallel Reality" multimedia object, where you can see the Moscow that was never built: with horizontal skyscrapers, the Palace of Soviets and other utopian projects.

+7 (495) 775 3656
museum.citymoscow.ru
6 Presnenskaya Naberezhnaya, Bldg. 1
M. Vystavochnaya

Eclectic Escapes: 7 Day Trip Options Within Easy Reach Of Moscow

There's a wealth of day-trip destinations on Moscow's doorstep. Culture vultures should head for the artists' estates of Abramtsevo and Polenovo, while history buffs will be fascinated by Sergiev Posad, Leninskiye Gorki and the Napoleonic battlefield at Borodino.

Vladimir ↓
City of white stone churches
Now just a provincial backwater, Vladimir was a political and cultural powerhouse back in the 12th century, when Grand Prince Andrei Bogolyubsky made it his capital. When you exit the city's Constructivist train station, all you see is post-industrial desolation. But once you climb the hill, you will see a very different Vladimir, one that is undisputedly part of the Golden Ring of ancient cities north and east of Moscow. Most of the sights are located along Bolshaya Moskovskaya Ulitsa, so start by checking out the Planetarium here. Located in a former church, it is a real temple of science. Then continue on to the two UNESCO World Heritage sites: the Cathedral of St. Demetrius with its detailed stone carvings, and the Assumption Cathedral, with its incredible frescoes by the great Russian icon-painter Andrei Rublyov. Further down the street is the 12th-century Golden Gate, where you can climb the tower.
Trains run frequently from Kursky Railway Station – trains take between 1 hour 40 minutes and 3 hours 30 minutes to cover the 190 kilometers from Moscow.


WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Polenovo →
Painter's estate south of the city
Prominent Russian painter Vasily Polenov, a member of the itinerant "Wanderers" (Peredvizhniki) group of realist painters, settled on the Oka River near Tarusa in the 1890s. He designed all the buildings on the estate, as well as a church in the nearby village of Bekhovo, a rare example of Russian Art Nouveau. The Vasily Polenov Estate is the only Russian museum to be completely directed by the artist's descendants. This summer you can see the "Vasily Polenov in the Holy Land" exhibition – works inspired by the painter's trips to the Middle East, including both landscapes and New Testament-themed paintings. It's part of a summer arts festival titled "In Search of the Promised Land," which also includes readings, concerts and lectures.
Take a Moscow-Tula train from Kursky Railway Station to Tarusskaya, then take the Tarusa-Velegozh bus and get off at Strakhovo.


WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The 14th-century Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius dominates the skyline of Sergiev Posad.

Abramtsevo →
A rural 19th-century artists' colony
Just 60 kilometers from Moscow, the Abramtsevo Estate was the center of the Slavophile movement in the early 19th century. After original owner Sergei Aksakov's death,π the estate was bought by industrialist Savva Morozov, a patron of the arts, who turned Abramtsevo into an artists' colony. Its residents included Valentin Serov, Ilya Repin, Isaac Levitan, Viktor Vasnetsov and Mikhail Vrubel. You can see their paintings and works by other Abramtsevo residents at the main exhibition there. Don't miss the small church designed by Viktor Vasnetsov in Russian Art Nouveau style.
Take a train from Yaroslavsky Railway Station to Khotkovo and then take bus #55.


VASILY POLENOV ESTATE MUSEUM

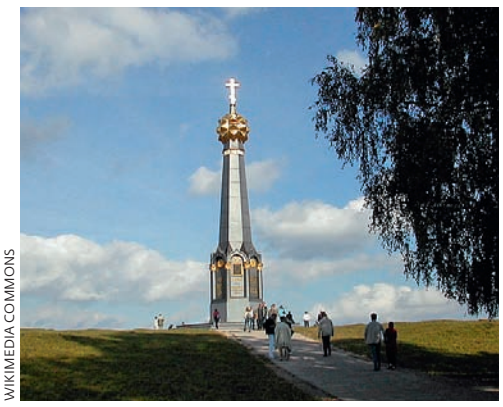

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Sergiev Posad
Russia's largest monastery complex
Sergiev Posad is the only Golden Ring site within the Moscow region, just 70 kilometers north of the capital. The main sight here is the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, another UNESCO World Heritage site. The largest working monastery in Russia and the official residence of the Patriarch, the Lavra was founded in the mid-14th century by Sergius of Radonezh, one of the most revered Russian saints. The oldest church is the 15th-century Trinity Cathedral. The other two architectural masterpieces are the Assumption Cathedral with its star-spangled blue domes and the Baroque refectory building.
Sergiev Posad is served by a direct express line from Yaroslavsky Railway Station.

Yasnaya Polyana →
Where art meets literature
Yasnaya Polyana is the ancestral estate of Leo Tolstoy, who wrote "War & Peace" and "Anna Karenina" there. It's now a museum devoted to keeping everything exactly as it was in 1910, the year of the writer's death. Tolstoy's house is still in pristine condition, with its wood-carved patio and library, as well as paintings by Ilya Repin, Valentin Serov, Ivan Kramskoi and many others. Pay your respects at Tolstoy's resting place in the forest or have a picnic by one of the many ponds. The annual Tolstoy Weekend theater festival takes place in the Yasnaya Polyana grounds.
Take the express train to Tula from from Kursky Railway Station, then a bus to Yasnaya Polyana (30 min.)


WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Borodino ↓
Relive Napoleonic history at this battlefield
On Sept. 7, 1812, after months retreating before the advance of Napoleon's Grande Armee, Russian commander Mikhail Kutuzov took a stand here, west of Moscow. After a bloody battle that took 70,000 lives, the Russians withdrew, but this pyrrhic victory for the French came at a fatal cost. Today war memorials (including from WWII) are scattered over a huge area. Visit the Borodino Museum, the command posts of Napoleon and Kutuzov, as well as the Rayevsky redoubt, scene of the battle's most intense fighting.
Trains to Borodino depart 10 times daily from Moscow's Belorussky Railway Station (2:15 hrs). Borodino is the stop after Mozhaisk.


WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Leninskiye Gorki ↓
Time machine to the Soviet era and beyond
Right at the entrance to this settlement outside Moscow is the Lenin Museum, a cross between an ancient temple and Soviet Constructivism, built by Leonid Pavlov in 1987. Behind it is an exhibition of "monumental propaganda" – dozens of white sculptures of Lenin, Stalin and other revolutionary leaders. The main attraction is the mansion where Lenin spent his final days. Renovated by architect Fyodor Shekhtel, it contains Lenin's death mask and lots of fancy furniture. Also check out a recreation of Lenin's Kremlin office in one of the estate buildings, as well as the burial mounds of the Vyatichi, a Slavic tribe that inhabited the area in the 9th-12th centuries.
Go to the Domodedovskaya metro station, then take a taxi to Gorki (about 20 minutes).


WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

From 'Mad Men' to 'Romanoffs'

By Ali Sar artsreporter@imedia.ru

Hollywood director Matthew Weiner is turning his attention to Russia's royals

Mad Men" stars Jon Hamm, Elisabeth Moss and John Slattery are set to feature in a TV dramatization of the lives of the descendants of Russia's Romanov dynasty as showrunner Matthew Weiner returns with his long-awaited new project.

Titled simply "Romanoffs" (the double "ff" reflects the way it was spelled until recently), the serial is being financed by Amazon Studios, which has budgeted in excess of $50 million for the ambitious project after a winning a bidding war. Its partner is The Weinstein Co., an independent movie company with significant foreign distribution reach.

Ever since AMC's award-winning "Mad Men" went off the air two years ago, the nature of Weiner's next project has been the subject of excited speculation in the industry. Kept tightly under wraps until recently, the series will be an eight-part anthology, with shooting taking place around the world.

"I didn't want to talk about the show because I wanted to get the room opened," Weiner said in a released statement. The "room" is the industry name given to the writers' room that is set up for a TV project. Weiner currently has as many as a dozen screenwriters working on the show.

"Each of the eight episodes will tell a standalone story with no recurring plot elements or actors," said Weiner.

The director explained that the only common thread is that each episode will tell the story of people in contemporary times who believe they are descendants of the imperial family

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

'Romanoffs' will focus on the lives of several descendants of Russia's ill-fated imperial family.

that ruled Russia from 1613 until the Bolsheviks seized power.

"I love this idea that these characters believe themselves to be descendants of this autocratic family," said Weiner.

Russia's last tsar Nicholas II abdicated the throne during the revolutionary upheavals of 1917. In 1918, Nicholas was executed by revolutionaries, alongside his wife, children and his entourage, who had accompanied the family into exile in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg. Many relatives escaped to the West.

Various groups of descendants abroad claim to be true successors to the throne. Among the better known descendants are the UK's Prince Philip, King Constantine II of Greece and Russian Grand Duchess Maria Vladimirovna. Are they likely to "star" in "Romanoffs"?

Weiner is playing his cards close to his chest for now, but hinted that the series might feature Grand Duchess Anastasia, who many insist escaped the firing squad, despite forensic evidence indicating otherwise.

Weiner said that Anastasia's whereabouts had "long served as a mystery, with lore suggesting she'd survived the tragedy and taken on a new identity."

The showrunner says that the series will be contemporary, featuring "a different cast, a different story and a different location." The current game plan calls for four episodes to be shot in the U.S. and the other four in soon-to-be-determined European countries.

Unlike "Mad Men," "Romanoffs" will go directly to streaming, which represents a revolutionary marketing approach for a big-budget show – and a huge gamble. The project also represents the first time this team of writers, including Weiner, will be writing for streaming.

For now, the specifics of the casting process remain vague, but "Mad Men" veterans Jon Hamm, Elisabeth Moss and John Slattery are expected to be involved in separate episodes, adding box office power to the project.

A concrete date for the streaming of "Romanoffs" is yet to be announced, but the show is expected to be released in late 2017 or early 2018. TMT

06.07

All over the city
Immersive theater
In the Cargo Moscow project, viewers sit inside a truck with a transparent wall and listen to real stories told by long-distance truck drivers, while being driven around the city. Produced by German company Rimini Protocol.
cargomoscow.ru

07.07

Moskva-City
Cage with Parrots
Virtual reality experience in a 360-degree video about a trip to Mars. By theater director Maxim Didenko, known for eclectic theater and dance productions.
square.citymoscow.ru
13 Presnenskaya Naberezhnaya, Bldg. 1
M. Vystavochnaya

08.07

TsGK Pravda
Bol (Pain)
Alternative music festival held at Pravda, a former printing house. Headliners include Danish post-punk band Iceage and U.K. electro-pop band The KVB.
vk.com/bolbfest
19 Bumazhny Proyezd, Bldg. 5
M. Belorusskaya

09.07

Ostankino Estate
Kirill Richter
Young Russian composer known for his soundtracks and signature style, which is sometimes described as "expressive minimalism."
+7 (495) 544 3400
vdnh.ru/water-theatre
7A Ulitsa 1-ya Ostankinskaya
M. VDNKh

10.07

Pioner
Wakefield
In this Hollywood drama starring Jennifer Garner and Bryan Cranston, a nervous breakdown causes a middle-aged man to leave his wife and children.
+7 (499) 240 5240
pioner-cinema.ru
21 Kutuzovsky Prospekt
M. Kievskaya

11.07

Obraztsov Puppet Theater
Three Little Pigs
In this puppet show based on the classic fairytale, three dancing and singing pigs encounter the big bad wolf.
+7 (495) 699 5373
puppet.ru
3 Sadovaya-Samotechnaya
M. Tsvetnoi Bulvar

12.07

Oktyabr Cinema
Musee d'Orsay
Part of the Perform Festival, devoted to films about art, Musee d'Orsay deals with this prominent Paris museum's history and collection.
+7 (903) 208 8459
performfilmfestival.com
24 Novy Arbat
M. Arbatskaya

Phoenix from the Flames: The Story of Moscow as Seen by Foreigners

By Emily Erken artsreporter@imedia.ru

"Fire. Invasion of the Tatars. Fire. Time of Troubles. Fire. Fire," reads a timeline of Moscow history printed around the Museum of Moscow's spiral staircase.

As the exhibition "Moscow Through Foreigners' Eyes" shows, the frequent catastrophes that Moscow suffered over the centuries forced the city to reconstruct itself every 30 years or so. The exhibition offers an 18th- and 19th-century insight into these changes through travelogues and pictorial representations made by foreign visitors.

"What did they see when they just arrived in Moscow?" asks director Alina Saprykina. "What surprised them? How did they write or draw it, and when they saw more of its life, what did they make of Moscow?"

The exhibit focuses on issues of city planning and administration through maps, lithographs and travel diaries that reveal a pragmatism not usually associated with Moscow or Russia in general.

For example, in 1721, German diplomat Friedrich Christian Weber noted how fire prevention concerns forced the nobility to hide their beautiful houses behind high stone walls. The elegant homes "would be enough to make the city beautiful if they were situated regularly and in order; but they are surrounded by many wooden homes, and besides that, the facades don't look out onto the street, but they are hidden in big courtyards behind great walls guarding against thieves and fire," wrote Weber.

The exhibit's maps also depict the growth of Moscow's population as the city expanded outwards from the Kremlin. Successive governments built defensive walls of wood, earth, and finally stone to protect citizens.

"This exhibit allows us to compare what is still the same," says Saprykina, "and what has changed. Moscow as a city changes very rapidly."

Some foreign travel writers tempered aesthetic praise with social criticism. In 1790, Moscow's "great contrasts" disturbed French Duke Alphonse de Piles. As revolution raged in his own country, de Piles documented how "on one and the same street 40-50 wooden huts represent the most terrible poverty, but a huge palace stands among them. Made of brick and architecturally elegant, it speaks of great wealth."

The most striking part of the exhibit, however, is a series of four lithographs from 1707 depicting a view of the city from Sparrow Hills (Vorobyovy Gory), a place where Muscovites and tourists still gather today to take panoramic photos and selfies.

"Moscow Through Foreigners' Eyes" shows the capital as a forward-looking city, with the infrastructure to support a growing empire. It also shows the fascination it inspired in those unfamiliar with Russia. TMT

Until August 25
+7 (495) 739 0008
mosmuseum.ru
2 Zubovsky Bulvar
Metro Park Kultury

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