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The Moscow Times

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‘Spasibo!’



Russia Warms to Turkey

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev is heading a delegation of Russian officials and politicians scheduled to attend the inauguration of Turkish President Recep Erdogan on Monday.

Medvedev was dispatched to Ankara on the instructions of President Vladimir Putin, according to an online statement issued by the Kremlin, in a move that analysts say signals Russia's willingness to work with Turkey despite strains in bilateral ties.

"There is a part of the Russian government which recognizes the difficulty of the Turkish leadership's often whimsical behavior but feels the need to continue reinforcing this partnership for the sake of both nations," said Maxim Suchkov, analyst at the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC).

The firebrand leader of the Liberal Democratic Party Vladimir Zhirinovskiy will also be in attendance on Erdogan's "personal invitation," his party said in an online statement. Zhirinovskiy will reportedly be joined by four other LDPR deputies.

After years of hostility brought to a head over the downing of a Russian plane near the Syrian border, Russia and Turkey – alongside Iran – are now leading a conflict resolution that will likely see Syrian president Bashar Assad remain in power.

"When it comes to Syria, there are all sorts of concerns over whether Turkey will remain a committed partner to Iran and Russia," Suchkov told The Moscow Times.

"Now that Turkey has serious influence on the ground in Syria – that in large part was made possible due to its tactical alliance with Russia and Iran – Erdogan may have an appetite for a more independent policy."

Putin and Erdogan have met several times recently and regularly speak on the phone to discuss issues including Syria and the Turkish Stream gas pipeline.

Patriotism Abounds After Russia Exits World Cup

Tears, pride and regret were the dominant emotions after Russia's dramatic exit from the World Cup on Saturday.

In the rollercoaster match against Croatia, the team was on the cusp of progressing to the semi-finals of the competition for the first time since 1966 but had its fairytale run cut short in a penalty shootout, after tying the game 2-2 in overtime.

Despite the bitterness of Saturday's defeat, Russian officials and fans commended the unlikely progress that the team had made in the tournament and the devotion with which they played.

"We're proud of team Russia!" Russia's Sports Minister, Pavel Kolobkov, was cited as saying by the RBC news website.


"They played excellent football. Great job!" he added.


Russia went into the World Cup as the tournament's lowest ranked side but steadily won skeptical fans over with a series of committed performances and victories.


After the defeat in the quarterfinals, many of the players struggled to hold back their emotions.

"Our whole lives we've wanted ... people to be proud of us. We wanted to prove that football is

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Monday  23°C

Tuesday  25°C

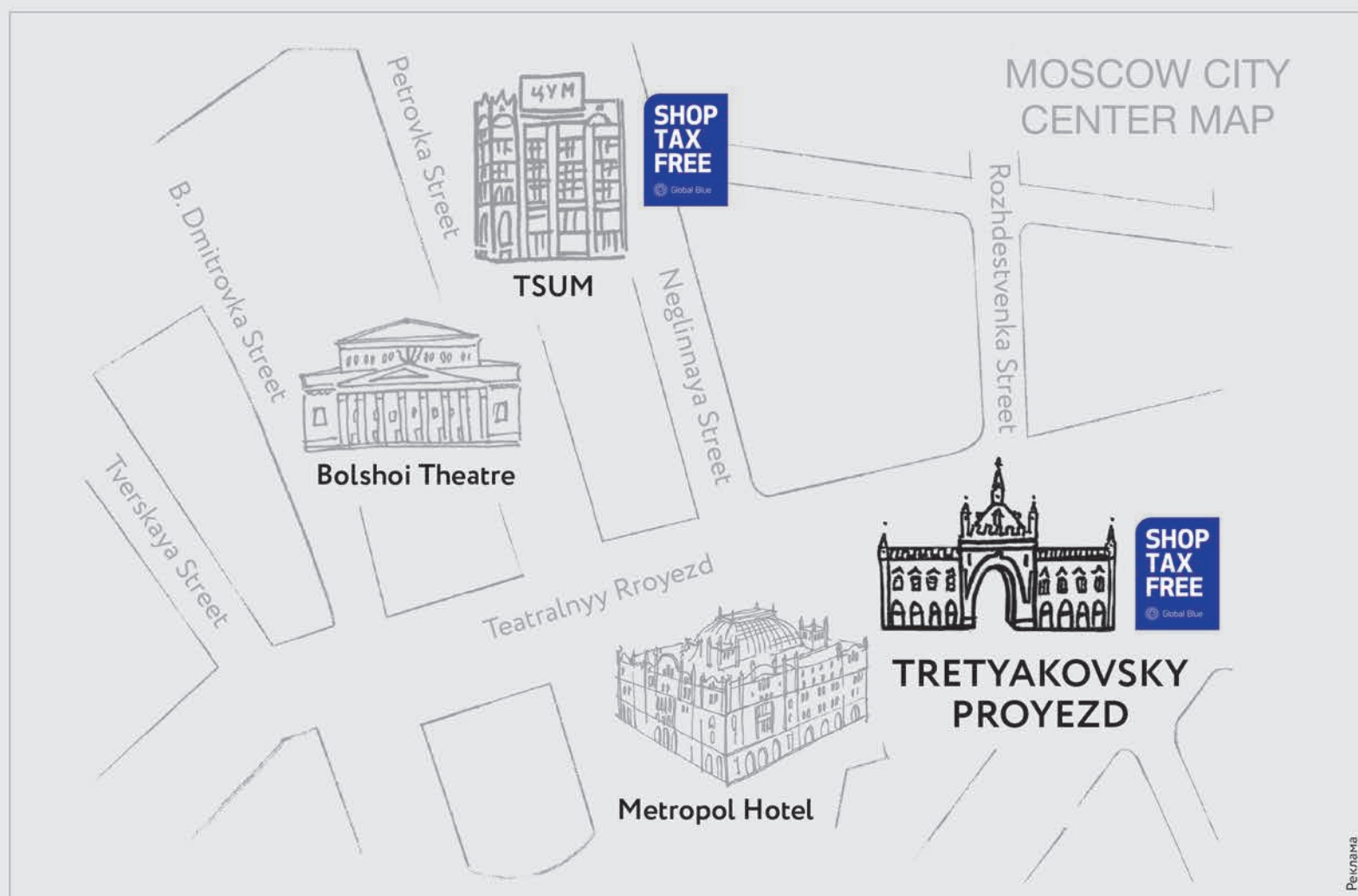
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Babchenko Lives Under Constant Guard

The wife of Arkady Babchenko, a Russian journalist who faked his death in Kiev in May, says the couple and their daughter have been under round-the-clock surveillance after the incident, reportedly to prevent any attempts on his life.

Ukrainian officials in late May reported that Babchenko had been gunned down in his Kiev apartment. A day later, however, he appeared at a press conference alongside Ukrainian law enforcement, claiming his staged death had been an attempt to thwart a real murder plot.

In her first interview since the incident, Babchenko's wife Olga described how Arkady had come home one night and told her to open a bottle of champagne.

"In our 20 years together, that had never happened, so I understood something was up," she said in the interview published Friday by Newsru.co.il.

"He explained that the SBU [Ukrainian Security Service] had come to his work and told him about a plot to attack him," she said. "They showed him proof and Arkady, of course, believed them, because he didn't have a reason not to believe the Ukrainian security services."

The couple told their 11-year-old daughter Katya that her father was a "super agent who catches criminals and bandits."

Olga also said the couple and their daughter



VALENTYN OGIRENKO / REUTERS

now lived under constant surveillance and only communicated with others via video. "There are always armed people in our vicinity," she said.

Babchenko has been widely criticized for the incident, with many accusing him of undermining the credibility of journalists.

"Some relatives were very offended," Olga said in the interview. "Some said it was all theater and there was no plot."

But, she added, "this is regular practice. Arkady wasn't the first and won't be the last [to stage his death.]"

Babchenko unexpectedly appeared at a press conference in Kiev after his reported assassination.

Detainee Sends Letter



SERGEI PIVOVAROV / REUTERS

Sentsov is on a hunger strike in a Siberian jail.

Detained Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov has sent a letter to Ukrainian actress Rimma Zyubnina, describing his health and prison conditions.

Sentsov was sentenced to 20 years in a maximum security prison in 2015 after being found guilty of setting fire to two offices in Crimea, including one belonging to Russia's ruling political party, after Moscow annexed the territory from Ukraine. He has been on a hunger strike since May 14, demanding the release of Ukrainians he says are illegally jailed in Russia.

In the letter, a copy of which Zyubnina posted on Facebook on Saturday, Sentsov writes: "I am feeling fine, despite the 51st day [of the hunger strike], but, of course, my health isn't as wonderful as some authorized human rights defenders may believe — everyone sees what they want to see."

Russia's human rights ombudsman, Tatyana Moskalkova, reportedly visited Sentsov in the penal colony where he is being held in northern Siberia late last month. She reported that the activist's health was "satisfactory, though there is concern over how it will develop," according to Interfax.

Sentsov also complained about the delays with which mail gets to him in the jail.

"First it's read by the censor and other interested persons, then it's unsealed and given to me, which might not be on the same day," he wrote.

"Generally, if an answer is received after a week, then that's a normal speed under this system," he added.

Critics say that Sentsov, who has warned that he will "go until the end" with his hunger strike, was targeted for his political views and his opposition to Crimea's annexation.

Fireman Charged In Kemerovo Fire

Investigators have opened a criminal case against the head of the fire-fighting unit that first arrived on the scene of the Kemerovo fire tragedy.

Sixty people were killed when a massive fire swept through the Winter Cherry shopping mall in the Siberian city of Kemerovo in March.

Among the victims were dozens of children, many of whom were trapped in a cinema where they

had been watching cartoons.

Andrei Bursin, who, with his unit, was among the first to arrive at the burning mall, has been charged with negligence for failing to take the necessary action to save lives, the Investigative Committee said in an on-line statement on Saturday.

Among the accusations is that Bursin failed to employ his resources effectively or try to locate the source of the fire.

In comments carried by the local branch of the Emergency Situations Ministry in March, Bursin said his brigade had arrived on the scene minutes after receiving the alarm.

"We began evacuating straight away," he was cited as saying. "But neither the management nor the security guards were there, no one met us, no one could tell us whether there were people inside and how many."

Bursin is the eighth person to be detained in connection with the fire in the mall which, prosecutors say, had not undergone the required safety inspections.

OPINION

By Grigory Yudin



University Regulators Are Going Berserk

The average length of a course syllabus at most universities in the world is three to four pages. Usually, it contains a brief description of the course, a reading list, a description of the grading policy and the professor's office hours. This is roughly all a student needs to know to decide whether to take the course.

The average length at a Russian university? Some 30-40 pages. Twelve are taken up by an enormous table that enumerates the competencies a student can expect to develop. The reading list, of course, is so long that it far exceeds what any normal student is capable of actually reading. Even outlining what exactly is included in those 30-40 pages would end up being much longer than this column.

Students hardly ever read the syllabus, because it doesn't really include the information that they need to determine whether they will take the course.

Why, then, do professors actually complete the huge amount of paperwork that goes into compiling these documents? The answer is Rosobrnadzor — Russia's Federal Education and Science Supervision Agency.

The watchdog performs regular inspections of universities and is tasked with issuing and revoking education licenses and state accreditation. Course syllabi are only one among thousands of documents collected and inspected by the agency.

The damage done by Rosobrnadzor to the Russian education system is already unacceptable.

For a year before an inspection, both faculty and staff must prepare hundreds of boxes filled with the documents. Almost all are produced exclusively for inspectors and are never actually used in the classroom. This huge amount of work effectively paralyzes the education process in many institutions.

However, a series of recent decisions by Rosobrnadzor has escalated this problem to new proportions. On June 21, it denied state accreditation to the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, a university where I teach. MSSES is also known as Shaninka, after its founder, the British sociologist Teodor Shanin. Rosobrnadzor's decision in June followed another, equally ridiculous move two years ago, when the agency revoked the education license from the European University in St. Petersburg. Since then, endless court appeals have not been able to change the outcome of the decision.

In both cases, the grounds are absurd. The European University was initially accused of not having enough "practitioners" among its faculty (whatever that means). Later, it was charged with failing to provide special furniture needed to teach philosophy and history.

Shaninka's sins, however, are even more grave: One of the syllabi indicates that the duration of the course is 12 hours, though it is actually 14. And the academic director of the master's program in law is accused of being insufficiently qualified for the position because he earned his master's degree in history (he later obtained two academic degrees in Roman Law).

The agency's criticisms are seen as being self-discrediting by the academic community because both the European University and Shaninka are role models. Shaninka was founded in 1995 jointly with the University of Manchester, which awards diplomas to Shaninka's master's graduates. Anti-plagiarism policies, education in English, an emphasis on writing skills — which have become widespread in the Russian academy over the last 20 years — originated from Shaninka. An outpouring from the academic community both in Russia and abroad demonstrates the strong support for the university.

Shaninka's functioning has not yet been disrupted by Rosobrnadzor's decision (the university earned its reputation and operated without accreditation for a majority of its existence; its partnerships with British universities constitute quality assurance for the students). However, the damage done by Rosobrnadzor to the Russian education system is already unacceptable, and there is currently no way to prevent the agency or the powers standing behind it from doing more harm, like revoking Shaninka's license and closing it down, as it did with the European University.

The recent petition addressed to President Vladimir Putin from the Association of Leading Russian Universities demands that the power to accredit universities be transferred to the academic community. The autonomy of Russian universities and their independence from Rosobrnadzor is the only way to ensure Russian science and education integrates into the international academy.

Grigory Yudin is a professor and academic director of the master's program in political philosophy at MSSES.

VOX POP

Russia Fans Look on The Bright Side

The Moscow Times went to the Vorobyovy Gory fan zone to ask locals how they were feeling after the national team's defeat

Saturday's game was the best so far: unbelievable emotions, pure passion. They pushed until the very end. So I'm not sad at all, we had a great run. No one expected them to get this far.

The biggest problem isn't the level of football being played, it's the lack of football culture and support for the team. People don't know how to react to this sort of success, we don't remember how to celebrate.

— Svyatoslav, 43

They did everything they could, but they just weren't lucky enough this time.

— Anastasia, 27, left

The atmosphere at the fan zone was electric. I've never seen so many Russian flags in one place. I'm really happy that we did so well. She's right, we just needed a bit of extra luck.

I don't know who else to support after Russia. Maybe Croatia — you have to admit they played with a lot of skill against us.

— Svetlana, 28, right

How could I be disappointed? We've waited 10 years for this!

The finals should be interesting. We have no idea what will happen, but I'm excited.

To improve Russian football, as has been said many times, we need new football academies, we need to pay coaches more, we need to get the youth interested in the sport.

— Yevgeny, 21

Our boys are champions. They beat all expectations and played well against the Croatians. I am really proud of them. They're the best!

Russia has been kicked out but this is still a huge celebration of football, and it's the first time it's happening here in Russia. Meeting so many new people has been great.

— Vika, 18

PATRIOTISM

Continued from Page 1

alive," Artyom Dzyuba, Russia's star striker, told a reporter after the game, before breaking out in tears.

"Our hearts are shattered," he added.

"There is an emptiness in my soul," midfielder Yuri Gazinsky wrote on Instagram after the match.

"Thank you TEAM! Thank you FANS! I'm proud to be part of this Great Country!" he added.

"We leave the tournament with tears in our eyes, but with our heads held high," the team's official Twitter account wrote in a post that was shared thousands of times.

After the match, President Vladimir Putin reportedly called the players "heroes" and congratulated them on their performance.

"Our [team] lost in a fair and very beautiful game," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was cited as saying by RBC.

"But they still did a great job. [They're] heroes. They died on the field. We're proud of them!" he added.

According to the spokesperson, Putin invited team coach Stanislav Cherchesov and the players to a meeting to discuss the results of the tournament and its legacy.

Cherchesov, who is widely expected to continue in his role as the team's coach after his success at the tournament, said that his players had worked hard to win over the country's fans.

"We believed in ourselves. We could only prove our worth by working hard," Cherchesov told reporters at a press conference after the match.

"Not only did we [get people to believe in us], but the country even fell in love with the team," he added.

Meanwhile, Cherchesov said he regretted not



"We play for you!" The Russia team makes a guest appearance at Moscow's fan zone Sunday.

being able to continue playing in the tournament.

"We're like soldiers who were called up for the army," he said.

"We were demobilized, but, to be honest, we wanted to continue fighting ... We would have gladly served our country until July 15, but unfortunately, it didn't work out."

Time to Retire

Russia's most-capped player, Sergei Ignashevich, announced his retirement from football on Saturday after his team's loss against Croatia in the World Cup.

The 38-year-old defender was called out of retirement in June as an emergency replacement after a slate of injuries hit the Russia team. He became the oldest player to compete for the country and appeared in all five of its games at the tournament.

"If it wasn't for the World Cup, I would have retired earlier," the veteran defender said in a video address posted on Instagram.

"I'm ending on a good note: Playing in the quarterfinals of the World Cup, in a great team with a great coach," he added.

Ignashevich, who is turning 39 next Saturday, played in a total of 127 games for the Russia team. He plans to become a coach.



Ignashevich leaves the pitch for the last time.

BBC Journalist Robbed in Taxi

A BBC journalist was robbed in the early hours of Saturday morning after reportedly being drugged in an illegal taxi, the Interfax news agency reported.

The correspondent, a British citizen who came to Russia to cover the World Cup, was offered a drink after getting into a taxi near the Bolshoi Theater, the report cited a source in law enforcement as saying.

"The British citizen drank the coffee, lost consciousness and woke up in Dynamo [northwest Moscow] without a phone or money," Interfax cited the source as saying.

A spokesperson for the BBC was reported by Interfax as having confirmed that the person involved was one of their employees. The spokesperson added that the BBC employee had since returned to work.

Police have detained two suspects on charges of theft, Interfax said over the weekend.

At a meeting between members of the team and supporters at the Vorobyovy Gory fan zone in Moscow on Sunday, Cherchesov said he was already getting ready for the next tournament.

"We'll be even better in four years in Qatar," he said. "But it'll be hard without you. So see you there."



Missed a spot! Fans clean up post-match.

Cleanup Crew

In a nod to the latest trend that kicked off during this summer's World Cup, Russian fans organized a flashmob to clean up Sochi's Fisht Stadium after the country's quarterfinal game against Croatia.

When the match ended on Saturday, fans armed with plastic bags went through the aisles to collect leftover garbage.

Previously, Japanese and Senegalese fans were seen collecting trash after their teams' games, while players of the Japanese team cleaned up their locker room and left a thank you note in Rostov-on-Don for their hosts, after a devastating 2-3 loss to Belgium that saw them knocked out of the tournament.

The latest initiative was launched by the Sports.ru website, under the hashtag #Chisti-ChM, meaning: a clean World Cup.

UPCOMING GAMES

SEMIFINAL

Tuesday
9 p.m.



FRANCE

St. Petersburg Stadium



BELGIUM

OPINION

By Marc Bennetts



Only a Cynic Would Dismiss This Victory

It is perhaps only fitting that Russia, with its turbulent and volatile history, has hosted what is arguably the most unpredictable World Cup ever. The tournament has been characterized by last-minute goals and big defeats for the established powerhouses of international football.

Germany, the 2014 champions, crashed out at the group stage for the first time in living memory. Argentina, the 2014 runners-up, just scraped through to the playoffs after Croatia put three goals past them without reply. Brazil, the most successful team in the history of the World Cup, were dealt a footballing lesson by Belgium in the quarterfinal, while Italy, four-time winners, didn't even make it to Russia.

But one of the biggest surprises has been, undoubtedly, Russia's own performance. Even the side's own long-suffering fans didn't expect much before the World Cup began, with many fearing they might not even make it out of what was widely seen as the tournament's weakest group.

But Russia got through, and then held Spain, the 2010 World Cup champions, to a 1-1 draw before beating them in a penalty shoot-out that made a national hero of Igor Akinfeyev, Russia's goalkeeper. They then took Croatia

Our whole lives we've wanted ... people to be proud of us. We wanted to prove that football is alive.

to penalties again, drawing 2-2 in a pulsating quarterfinal clash on Saturday evening, before their collective spot-kick skills let them down.

There had been concerns that trouble could erupt after Russia got knocked out, much like the riots that hit Moscow after the national side was beaten 1-0 by Japan at the 2002 World Cup. But, instead, fans continued to party, albeit in more subdued form. Chants of "Ros-si-ya!" echoed late into the night as Russians celebrated their side's memorable World Cup campaign.

A cynic would say, of course, that Russia didn't actually achieve that much: They beat Saudi Arabia and Egypt, then lost 3-0 to Uruguay, before draws against Spain – fielding arguably its weakest side for years – and Croatia. Despite the euphoria at making it to the last eight, penalty shoot-outs aside, Russia still hasn't defeated a European side at the World Cup since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

But who cares, right now, about the statistics? It was the manner of Russia's performances, their obvious desire and passion, not to mention some truly top-class goals, that impressed the nation and made household names out of players that most people wouldn't have previously recognized had they bumped into them down at the local shop.

"Our whole lives we've wanted ... people to be proud of us. We wanted to prove that football is alive," said a tearful Artyom Dzyuba, Russia's battering-ram of a center-forward, after the loss to Croatia. Symbolically, just hours after Dzyuba and co. were knocked out of the tournament, the good weather that has helped turn central Moscow into one big fan zone ended abruptly, as torrential rains hit the Russian capital.

Had Russia overcome Croatia, their semifinal opponents would have been England. With London and Moscow embroiled in a row over the poisoning of Sergei Skripal, the former Russian military intelligence officer, and his daughter, Yulia, in southern England, the match would have been the most politically-charged World Cup game since the United States took on Iran in 1998.

A last-four clash between the two countries had been noted as a possibility when the World Cup draw was made, but only as an abstract prospect. Few believed either team would make it that far. In the end, the unlikely fixture was only a few penalty kicks away from becoming a reality.

All eyes now, of course, will be on the semifinals. In keeping with the nature of this tournament, only one of the four sides left – France – has won a World Cup in recent history. Belgium, Croatia and England all have one semifinal appearance to their names from the past 32 years. There is now the very real possibility of a Belgium vs. Croatia World Cup final, a fixture that would pit two countries with respective populations of just 11.3 and 4.1 million people against each other. At this World Cup, it seems, anything really is possible.

Marc Bennetts is a journalist and author of "Football Dynamo: Modern Russia and the Peoples' Game." [Twitter](#) @marcbennetts1



Gender norms are thrown out the window as Russian fans embrace the patriotic headdress.

The Power of Kokoshniki

With football on their minds, many fans from around the globe at the World Cup in Russia have tried something new on their heads: a traditional Russian headdress known as a kokoshnik.

Female Russian football fans have worn the headdress, which resembles a tiara, with team jerseys and traditional costumes at matches and fan zones to show their allegiance. Some men have taken a liking to the headdress, too.

They had their moment of fame when three fans were

shown on national television while wearing the traditional headdress. In kokoshniki, the fans ate hot dogs in the stands during Russia's round of 16 match against Spain at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium.

"I really want to support [the team] by wearing a kokoshnik," said Russia fan Kermen Mandzhiyeva as she tried on the headdress. "It should bring them luck. I believe it!"

However, foreign fans have not necessarily worn the kokoshniki to support their team but have adopted the

headdress as a fashion accessory.

"It's beautiful," said one Brazilian fan in the St. Petersburg fan zone. "They are very colorful. They are very nice. And they look very good on me."

Traditionally worn by married women in the pre-Soviet era, kokoshniki are now often worn by members of folk dance groups.

"This is a part of our culture that a tourist can take away with him," said Tatyana Dombovskaya, who designs the headdresses. (Reuters)

Kazan: Unlucky City For Champions

Kazan's official participation in the World Cup came to an end on Saturday as the Brazil squad made their way to the airport for the long flight home and their fans consoled each other over beers on the streets of the Tatarstan capital.

The Selecao's quarterfinal exit at the hands of Belgium in the last of the six matches in the city on Friday night ensured this would be the first World Cup without at least Brazil, Argentina or Germany in the semifinals.

Remarkably, all three of the football superpowers, who have won 11 World Cups among them, bowed out of the tournament at the Kazan Arena.

First to go were defending champions Germany, beaten 2-0 by South Korea to finish bottom of their group in a match that certainly made up for what it lacked in quality with late drama.

Next to depart were Lionel Messi's Argentina, who lost 4-3 to France in a thrilling last-16 clash that married quality football with tension and atmosphere.

Finally, it was the turn of the Brazilians, unpicked early by the counterattacking of Belgium's richly talented side and unable to quite clamber back into the contest.

If it was a rude ending for the traveling fans of the three powers, they at least got the chance to spend some time in Kazan.

The city, which has a reputation for harmony – largely because of the way equal numbers of Muslim Tatars and Orthodox Russians have managed to rub along for centuries – welcomed throngs of foreign fans to their bars and restaurants with open arms.

Their reward was the memories of a four-week football-themed party played out in sultry summer weather.



The curse of Kazan struck the Brazilian team.

There are more permanent reminders of the tournament in the murals of Neymar and Messi painted near the team hotels, affording them the same honor that Cristiano Ronaldo received when he came to Kazan for last year's Confederations Cup.

The World Cup is only the latest major event to be held in the "sports capital of Russia," which has hosted the Summer University Games, the World Swimming Championships and World Fencing Championships over the last five years.

(Reuters)



Citing the “suffering” of single mothers after the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, a Russian lawmaker ahead of the World Cup warned local women against getting too friendly with foreign fans.

Close Encounters

The World Cup is rekindling old anxieties within Russian society over what an influx of foreigners could lead to

BY EMMA FRIEDLANDER [@EMMACFRIED](#)

Sometime in the late 1960s, Irina Filatova was on the Moscow metro with a Senegalese classmate and his daughter. The two had met in a Swahili class at the Institute for Asian and African Countries at Moscow State University, where Filatova was studying history.

On the way home, she noticed a young Russian man staring at them. She tried to ignore him, but when they arrived at her station, the man jumped from his seat and yelled for everyone to hear: “Girl, have you no shame?”

“That was the attitude at the time,” Filatova sighed, recalling the event. “My cousin told me that if she ever saw me with a black person she would never speak to me again. My father warned me that friendships with people of color were one thing, but relationships were entirely another.”

Five decades on, just as the World Cup was kicking off, comments made by a State Duma deputy during an interview with the *Govorit Moskva*

radio station reminded her of that incident.

“We must give birth to our own,” Tamara Pletnyova, the head of the Committee on Children, Women and Family, said on air, warning Russian women against getting too friendly with foreign fans. “It’s OK if they are of the same race. But if they are of another race, then that’s something entirely different.”

To support her argument, Pletnyova said she had personally met some of the “suffering” single mothers left behind after the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow and argued that a repeat would be bad for the country. She was not alone in that belief.

As the tournament got underway, it became clear that many in Russia shared the lawmaker’s concerns. While foreign football fans flooded Russian streets and cities, commenters on social media shamed local women for fraternizing with Moroccans, Nigerians and Mexicans. They warned of the crisis that would materialize nine months down the line.

This sense of anxiety is not new. In fact,

mixed-race children born to Russian mothers after international events in Russia have their own term: *deti festivalya*, or “festival children.”

The term dates back to the 1957 World Festival of Youth and Students, when thousands of students from around the world flocked to Moscow for the two-week cultural fair. For most young Muscovites, it was the first time they had met anyone from Africa, Latin America or East Asia.

Just four years after the death of Stalin, the event was a departure from the Soviet Union’s previous isolation.

“The festival is considered to be the signal event of the Thaw,” Kristin Roth-Ey, a historian at University College London, told *The Moscow Times*. “Just a few years earlier, marriage to foreigners of any kind was illegal. To go from that to throwing open your doors to 40,000 visitors from around the world is a radical change.”

It’s OK if they are of the same race. But if they are of another race, then that’s something entirely different.

Photos from 1957 show crowds of young Russians dancing in the streets with students from all over the world. In more intimate moments, Russians and non-Russians were captured sitting on benches together or sharing a meal, giddily smiling.

“We have all these firsthand accounts of joy — [locals] joyfully going up to foreigners of all races on the streets and embracing them,” Roth-Ey said. “Forget the sexual element of it — [it was] just unrestricted jubilation.”

Soon enough, however, rumors swirled that Russian girls were sleeping with foreign men. “Of course there was a lot of sex during the festival,” Filatova told *The Moscow Times*. “It was the first time the Soviet Union had seen so many foreigners, particularly from African and Latin American countries.”

It became a commonly accepted belief that, nine months later, Russian girls were giving birth to babies of African, Latin American and East Asian origin, the so-called *deti festivalya*.

The phenomenon of the children went on to gain a life of its own in popular culture. Lyudmila Ulitskaya’s 2010 novel “The Big Green Tent,” a reflection on Moscow in the 1950s, makes explicit reference to the festival and its resulting “brown-skinned babies.”

The cult musical-comedy film “*Stilyagi*,” from 2008, follows the lives of a young group of Muscovites and their love for Western culture. One of the main characters, Polly, gives birth to a mixed-race baby boy.

Actual statistics on mixed race births after the festival, however, are difficult to find. A handful of studies all proved futile.

“Clearly there were some children who emerged from that, but nothing like what the popular sensibility suggests,” Roth-Ey said.

A multicultural union

For many Russians looking back on the 1957 festival today, *deti festivalya* are evidence of Soviet internationalism and racial tolerance. “My Russian friends and colleagues point to those liaisons as proof that the Soviet Union was a racially tolerant country,” Raquel Greene, assistant professor of Russian at Grinnell College, told The Moscow Times.

The early Soviet Union presented itself as a champion of multiculturalism, in opposition to the racism and nationalism that Soviet authorities said was rampant in the capitalist United States.

Experts who spoke to The Moscow Times pointed to the 1936 film “Tsirk” as one of the strongest illustrations of this. In the film, a white American woman named Marion Dixon comes to Moscow with her black baby. Having fled bigotry in the United States, Dixon decides to stay in the Soviet Union with her child.

After Stalin came to power, however, things changed. In 1947, the Soviet authorities passed a decree banning marriages between Soviet citizens and foreigners. Upon Stalin’s death in 1953 the law was reversed, but the prejudices that in-



It started out with a kiss.

formed it remained, targeting women in particular. “Women are seen – cross-culturally – as the embodiment or repository of the nation’s honor,” Roth-Ey explained. “It’s not unique to the Soviet Union and it’s not unique to Russian culture.”

What was unique to the Soviet case, she said, was how fears of racist paranoia over women’s bodies so clearly contradicted the overarching internationalist principle.

This became especially palpable from the 1960s onwards, when the Soviet Union welcomed students from Africa, East Asia and Latin America to work or study.

In 1960, the People’s Friendship University of Russia was founded by Nikita Khrushchev and the number of people of color living in Moscow increased. The *deti festivalya* myth ballooned at the same time, and anyone who was of mixed race was lumped under that umbrella, especially after the 1980 Olympics were held in Moscow.

“I know a bunch of people who are referred

to as ‘children of the Olympics’ or ‘festival children,’” Joyce Kuaovi, a journalist and graduate student told The Moscow Times. Kuaovi has a Russian mother and father, but her paternal grandfather is from Togo. “My father is considered to be a festival child, while his father actually came to Russia to study and stayed here for a number of years in the 60s.”

But under perestroika and glasnost, the term took on a more negative connotation as underlying racism bubbled to the surface.

“During the liberal period of the 1990s, many racists emerged in Russia. Now people could speak really openly about what they thought about other people,” Yekaterina Demintseva, a sociologist at the Higher School of Economics, told The Moscow Times.

Kuaovi recalled the more direct racism that her mixed-race family faced in the 1990s, a period which she described as “very hard.”

“My parents and I were sometimes insulted, our car was once smashed with a club – in hard times it is easier to blame those who are different.”

Learning racism

With a growing sense of Russian nationalism in recent years, the *deti festivalya* myth has once again taken on a new significance. “Discourse really changed after the annexation of Crimea in 2014,” Demintseva said.

“We have a new enemy, and this enemy is Western people. Western people are not only thought of as people from Europe or the United States – it is anyone who is not from Russia.”

Kuaovi has also noted an escalation in bigotry from officials. She found that these attitudes have become especially explicit around the World Cup.

“Hate speech – and I believe Ms. Pletnyova’s comments are just that – is not new among Russian politicians,” she told The Moscow Times. “[But] I could not imagine such a racist speech coming from the State Duma, especially just before the World Cup we are hosting.”

When called for comment on this article, Pletnyova’s assistant said that she had nothing more to say about the issue and hung up.

Racism towards Russians of color is especially prevalent in schools, says Demintseva.

While working on a study on migrant children in Russian schools last year, Demintseva said one teacher invited a student to a focus group solely because she had a Vietnamese father.

“The girl grew up in a Russian family, she’d never been to Vietnam. But the teacher of this class invited her as if she were a migrant.”

Experts pin this racism down to a desire to develop a Russian nation. “The problem is the Russian project,” Demintseva said.

“People think that if a Russian girl has children with someone who isn’t Russian, the children are not really Russian, either. That’s a big problem for the country.”



Social media users have lashed out at local women for fraternizing with foreign men.

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Реклама

3. Fyodor Dostoevsky Apartment Museum

Walk around the theater to the left on Ulitsa Dostoevskogo until you see a gate with two white plaster lions on top to your right. This is the entrance to the flat where the writer Fyodor Dostoevsky grew up, in housing provided for his father, a doctor at St. Mary's Hospital for the Poor. The small apartment has been recreated to look the way it did when Dostoevsky was growing up here, with two brightly painted and light rooms and two partitioned spaces for sleeping. The space is furnished with family possessions, and you can see the author's scribbled work plans and drafts of his novels.

2 Ulitsa Dostoevskogo



3

2. Russian Army Theater

Walk across the street and back toward the square, and pause to admire one of the city's most unusual and impressive structures – the Russian Army Theater, built in the form of an enormous five-pointed star. Although the Red Army Theater was founded in 1930, this theater was opened in 1940 after six years of construction, with interiors decorated by such famous artists as Lev Bruni, Alexander Deineka, and Ilya Feinberg. The theater has one of the largest stages in Europe and can accommodate tanks, horses and other large-scale props and players. Although it specializes in military-themed dramas and musical performances, the huge space is a great venue for musicals and other special productions.

2 Suvorov Square

5. Museum of Decorative and Applied Art

When you come out of the Gulag Museum, walk to the right down the hill, and then right on Delegatskaya Ulitsa to the 19th century manor house that now is home to the Museum of Decorative and Applied Art. Here you will find some beauty to clear your mental palate. Be amazed by the minuscule fine work on lacquered boxes, sigh over the lace exhibit, see how peasants lived – more beautifully and colorfully than you might imagine – and stand in a room filled with early Soviet porcelain and ceramics. The museum's permanent collection of furniture, glass, and crafts is superb. At the end, stop in to learn about amber and do a bit of shopping here and in the museum gift shop. There is also a pleasant café.

3 Delegatskaya Ulitsa



5

Where the Samotyoka Flowed

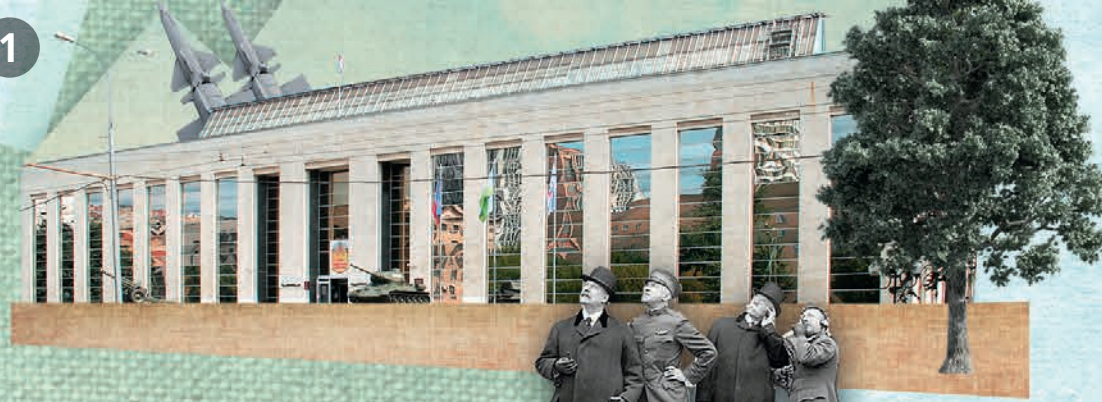
By Michele A. Berdy m.berdy@themoscowtimes.com | Illustration by Oleg Borodin

Museums on every subject and theaters of every kind
in a quiet residential neighborhood

Sadovaya-Samotyochaya Ulitsa

Ulitsa Sovetskoi Armii

1



2



1. Central Armed Forces Museum

Take the metro to the Dostoevskaya station and walk across the square and to the left on Ulitsa Sovetskoi Armii. Your guiding star is the large missile standing in front of the first stop on this tour, the Central Museum of the Armed Forces. Built in 1965, this is an essential stop for anyone interested in military history. Inside there is room after room packed with uniforms, weapons, planes and banners dangling from the ceiling, wall paintings of battles, newspaper clippings, films, documents and much more. Your kids can try on medieval armor and test a World War II revolver, or climb on tanks outside where the planes and vehicles are on display. An enormous bust of Vladimir Lenin and a 1960s red-and-gold mosaic of warriors and soldiers preside over it all.

2 Ulitsa Sovetskoi Armii, Bldg. 1



4



4. Gulag History Museum

The second museum hub of this walk is at the end of a stroll through a surprisingly pretty neighborhood. Outside the museum, cross the street and walk to the right to Pereulok Chernyshevskogo; turn left and go a block; turn left again to walk past little 19th-century wooden houses. At the end of the street, turn right and follow the tram line past a little park on your left. Turn right on Nikonovsky Pereulok and then left again on 1st Samotyochny Pereulok. The sternly imposing building on your right is the Gulag History Museum, founded in 2001 and opened in this new space in 2015. In somberly lit, cavernous spaces with rough brick walls you can learn about the country's history of repression through artifacts, texts, photographs, films and stories. The subject is grim, a wall of cell doors is horrifying, and the lists of names of innocent victims are heartbreaking. But the filmed stories of survivors are remarkably uplifting. Everything is in English and Russian.

9 1st Samotyochny Pereulok, Bldg. 1

Delegatskaya Ulitsa

6



6. Obratsov Puppet Theater

When you emerge from the museum courtyard, brave the noise and walk out to the Ring Road. Turn left and walk past the traffic police building down to the boxy 1970s building with a wild metal clock on the façade. This is one of the city's most beloved places, where virtually every child comes at least once, and sometimes even once a month – the Obratsov Puppet Theater. If you think you don't like puppets, come here to have your prejudices shattered. Even if you can't make it before the season closes at the end of July, just stand in front and watch puppet figures pop out of the clock's puppet boxes on the hour. At noon and midnight the whole gang emerges to oink, squawk, chirp and generally make a lovely racket.

3 Sadovaya-Samotyochnaya Ulitsa



Top 4 Day Trips Out of St. Petersburg



Peterhof

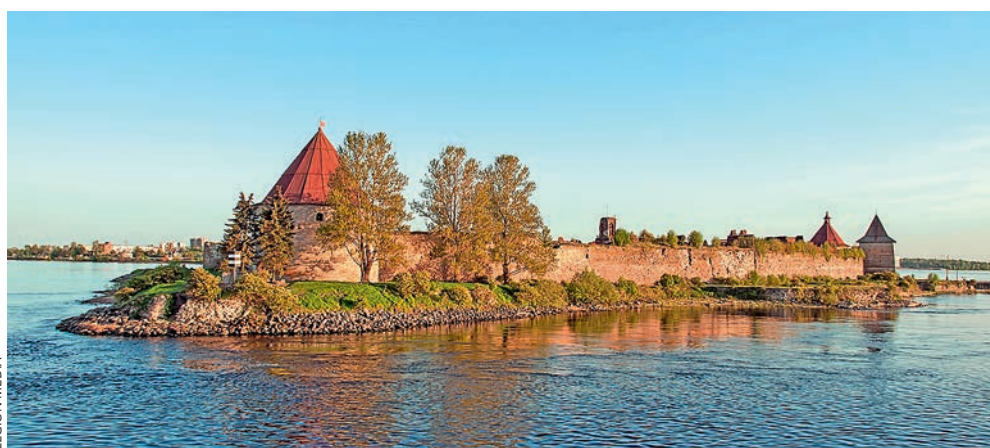
Peterhof is the Russian imperial family's most well-known suburban estate. The palace was built by Peter the Great and was inspired by the tsar's visit to Versailles. It quickly became his favorite retreat.

Most of the palace was destroyed during World War II and what is visible today was largely reconstructed after the war. Apart from the damage caused by the Germans, the palace also suffered from Soviet bombing raids between December 1941 and January 1942, when Stalin ordered an attack on the estate to prevent Hitler from hosting a New Year's victory celebration there.

Peterhof's masterpiece and main attraction is the Grand Cascade, a complex of 64 fountains, 142 water jets and 37 golden statues. A must-see is also the Grand Palace, with its majestic rooms, each of which has a unique theme and is filled with art and decorations.

Peterhof can be reached during the summer by hydrofoil, which goes from the Gulf of Finland into the city; by marshrutka minibuses from Baltiiskaya, Avtovo and Leninsky Prospekt metro stations; or by commuter train from Baltiysky Vokzal.

2 Razvodnaya Ulitsa
peterhofmuseum.ru



Shlisselburg

Strategically located by the shore of Lake Ladoga, just 35 kilometers east of St. Petersburg, from its beginning this town was a source of rivalry between the rulers of Novgorod and Sweden. The small island adjacent to the town was fortified in 1323 by Novgorod Prince Yury Danilovich and took the name of Oreshek (little nut). After being ruled by different sovereigns, the island was finally recaptured in 1702 by Peter the Great, who changed its name to Shlisselburg ("key fortress" in German).

The stronghold was transformed into a prison for opponents of the tsar. Famous inmates included Peter the Great's half-sister, the boy Tsar Ivan VI, members of the Decembrist Uprising and Lenin's brother Alexander Ulyanov, who was hanged for attempted regicide.

The island regained its original function as a fortress during World War II, fulfilling an emblematic role during the Siege of Leningrad and for supplying food to the city. Although most buildings on the island were destroyed during the war, the fortress was never captured, and its ruins can still be visited today. The town center and the fortress are UNESCO World Heritage sites.

The direct 575 bus runs every 20 minutes from Ulitsa Dybenko and reaches the town in approximately 40 minutes.

Kronstadt

The city of Kronstadt, just a one-hour ride from St. Petersburg, is recommended for Russian history enthusiasts. Built on Kotlin Island in the Gulf of Finland, the town consists of a complex of naval forts dating back several centuries. The city was founded by Peter the Great shortly after St. Petersburg and was meant to safeguard the northern capital from the Swedish navy. The city's historical importance comes from its role as the cradle of the 18-day Kronstadt Rebellion, when Soviet sailors protested against the provisional government. The revolt culminated in over 30,000 deaths.

Another important milestone in Kronstadt's history was World War II, during which the artillery and naval forces of the city played a major role in the defense of besieged Leningrad.

A unique memorial of the times of the siege can be found on one of the canals in front of Petrovsky Park, featuring a stickleback fish, which during the war represented one of the few resources that prevented some people from starving.

The town can be reached by bus from St. Petersburg, with buses regularly departing from the Staraya Derevnaya and Chyornaya Rechka metro stations.



Vyborg

A bit further out of town, but still an ideal place for a day trip from St. Petersburg, Vyborg is an enchanting town just on the border between Finland and Russia. The town, lined with cobblestone streets, is filled with small gems: antique shops, medieval architecture, picturesque stone houses and the Hermitage-Vyborg Center. The main attraction of the town, the castle, dates back to the 13th century. Today, it serves as a local history museum. The castle's only remaining tower, St. Olaf, offers a stunning view across the city.

After a 15-minute walk from the central station, you can immerse yourself in the woodlands and take a hike through the Batareynaya mountain park, where you can find defensive fortifications from the 19th century and an abandoned

amusement park.

The town can be reached both by train and by bus. Buses are available every half-hour from Parnas metro station; trains depart 10 times a day from Finlyandsky Vokzal.





Borshch: Cooks, Shoots and Leaves

By Jennifer Eremeeva | [@jweremeeva](#)

There is no single correct recipe, but infinite variations on a theme

The precise origins of *borshch* are lost in the mists of time and the fluctuating borders of Eastern Europe. Each Slavic nation claims ownership and revels in its own interpretation. Thank goodness for Nikolai Burlakoff's exhaustive and authoritative work, "The World of Russian Borshch," which contains 77 different recipes for borshch as well as a comprehensive historical guide. Burlakoff traces the beet from Byzantium to the lands of Rus sometime around the 10th century, giving credence to the theory that borshch is more

Ukrainian than Russian. But after that, borshch lore splinters in a million different directions. My favorite is a charming legend that borshch was honed by Don Cossacks, foraging during the sixteenth century Siege of Azov. I love the idea of Cossacks riding at full gallop, spearing up a bunch of beets with their sabers.

For every pot, there is a different borshch, and no two pots are the same. Some schools of thought insist that the essential ingredient is beets, but *shav*, the Jewish sorrel soup, is also considered part of the borsch family. Does borshch need meat? My Russian mother-in-law

certainly thinks so, though my American vegan nieces beg to differ. Should borshch be served ice cold, as they do in New York delis, or piping hot as is customary in Eastern Europe, with a garnish of hard-boiled eggs and sour cream? Which spices augment the flavor of borshch best? Do you grate the vegetables or dice them?

Anyone who tells you there is a carved-in-stone recipe for borshch is lying. If pressed, I offer a template on which you can endlessly riff. It's the ecumenical quality that I love best about borshch: In the depths of winter, borshch can be hearty, rich with broth and meat from a cou-

ple of lamb shanks, tomatoes and onions with tartness from sauerkraut. In spring and summer, however, I go much lighter, and use lean duck breast as my meat. With tart and tasty greens such as sorrel, wild garlic, young beets with their colorful leaves, delicate pea shoots and tender chives all in season, it's a sin not to include these headliners. So give it a try. There are no rights or wrongs here.

Jennifer Eremeeva is a long-time expatriate. She writes about Russian history, culture and cuisine.

RECIPE

Borshch with young beets & duck

Ingredients:

2 quarts (2 liters) chicken or vegetable stock
2 boneless duck breasts
2 bunches young beets with stems and leaves
2 small parsnips, peeled and cubed
2 medium-sized carrots, peeled and cubed
2 sprigs fresh thyme
1 red pepper, cleaned and cubed
1 large leek, cleaned and cut into thin rounds (it's fine to use the dark green parts of the leek)
2 Tbsp butter
2 bunches fresh sorrel, leaves removed from the stems and washed
¼-cup (60 ml) pomegranate syrup
3 Tbsp caraway seeds
2 Tbsp dill seed
2 Tbsp dried dill weed
2 cups (475 ml) sauerkraut with juice
8 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced very thin
1 knob fresh ginger, peeled and grated
2 bay leaves

Optional:

Pickled garlic
Pickled green scallions
Salt and pepper to taste
To garnish:
2-4 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and halved
Full fat sour cream
Chopped fresh dill, parsley and chives

Instructions:

Step 1: Prepare the vegetables

- Pre-heat the oven to 205 C.
- Cut the new beets from the stems, leaving

about 1-2 cm of the stems. Wash the beets, scrubbing off any dirt. Set the stems aside. Wrap the beets in a sturdy tin foil pouch and place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Roast for 15-20 minutes. While the beets are roasting, assemble the diced carrots, pepper and parsnips. Toss with olive oil, salt, pepper and 1 Tbsp of the caraway seeds. Add the fresh thyme and wrap loosely in a tin foil pouch as you did for the beets. Add this mixture to the baking sheet and roast for an additional 10 minutes.

• Remove the carrot mixture and set aside. Test the beets by inserting the tip of a small sharp knife into the largest of the beets. If it goes in smoothly, you are all set, if not, return them to the oven to cook for 10-15 minutes more. Size will determine how long you need to roast the beets: Beets the size of tennis balls take about 40 minutes, while small young beets the size of ping-pong balls take half that time. Set the roasted beets aside until they are cool enough to handle.

Step 2: Prepare the duck

• If your duck breasts have skin on, render the fatty skin by doing the following: Score the surface of the fatty skin with a sharp knife in a cross-hatch pattern, taking care not to cut into the flesh of the breast. Sear the breast, skin-side down in a hot, ovenproof skillet for 3 minutes. Reduce the heat and let the fat cook off for 10 more minutes until it is crisp and there is a great deal of liquid fat in the skillet.

• Salt and pepper the duck and put it in the 205 C oven for 10 minutes. Remove to a plate lined with paper towel to cool. Reserve the duck



fat for some other use. Shred or slice the duck to your desired size.

Step 3: Assemble the borshch

• Strip the leaves from the beet stems and wash and spin in a salad spinner to dislodge any grit. Shred or chiffonade the leaves into thin strips. Wash the stems thoroughly and cut into chunks the approximate length of the carrots and parsnips. Peel the roasted beets and dice into cubes the size of the other vegetables. Set aside.

• Melt the butter over medium heat in a heavy soup pot until bubbling. Add the leeks and garlic and sauté until they turn limp. Add the sorrel leaves and sprinkle with a generous pinch of salt

and grind of pepper. Sauté until the sorrel turns dark green. Add the vegetables with the sprigs of fresh thyme and stir to combine, and then add the remaining caraway seeds, dill weed and seed. Toss together. If you want to include pickled vegetables, add them now.

• Add the stock and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a mild simmer. Add the beets leaves and stems, grated ginger, pomegranate syrup, sauerkraut with its juices and bay leaves. Cover and simmer for 40 minutes. Add the duck breast and warm through for 10-15 minutes.

• Serve in shallow soup bowls, garnished liberally with sour cream, hard-boiled eggs and lots of fresh herbs.



Kosmatschhof sees this exhibition as payback for all of his and his wife's artwork that was destroyed after they left the Soviet Union.

Vadim Kosmatschhof's Revolution in Art

By Michele A. Berdy | [@MicheleBerdy](#)

The sculptor's first major Russian show at the New Tretyakov Gallery

In a small Austrian village outside Vienna, a little glass house stands on a hill overlooking a valley. This is the home of Russian-born sculptor Vadim Kosmatschhof and his wife and fellow artist Yelena Koneva.

In front of the house and on the terraces behind it are works by Kosmatschhof — sculptures that move, turn, twist or swing; shiny ovals that catch a bit of the sky and reflect it back; mirrored portals that frame part of the forest behind the house. Some spout water. Others make

music as the wind ruffles thin strips of metal. Wild goats, deer and boars fly out of the woods above the house, caught for a moment in the mirrored oval of a sculpture and then released back into the wild.

Inside the house are workrooms, studios, storerooms and open living spaces filled with Koneva's tapestries and Kosmatschhof's drawings and sculptures.

This summer, some of these works came to the New Tretyakov Gallery for the first major exhibition of Kosmatschhof's works in Russia.

Before this homecoming show, the curators invited several journalists to visit his studio outside Vienna — to see his art in its native habitat, as it were, and to talk with the artist about his extraordinary path in art.

Born of the Russian avant-garde

Kosmatschhof was born in Kaluga, and after the war moved with his family to Moscow. In the capital he attended the Moscow Art Middle School and then the Stroganov Art Academy. This was the era of Khrushchev's "Thaw," when

doors were cracked open and the arts breathed a bit more freely. Shows of Pablo Picasso and Ferdinand Leger came to Moscow, instigating passionate arguments and discussions. The backrooms of the Tretyakov Gallery, where the works of the Russian avant-garde were carefully preserved but not exhibited, were open to young art students. Kosmatschhof and his fellow students spent hours studying the paintings and attending lectures. He recalls hearing a lecture about Wassily Kandinsky that was like "being hit over the head."

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Kosmatschhof was tremendously influenced by the works of such avant-garde artists as Vladimir Tatlin, Lyubov Popova, the Vesnin brothers and Alexander Tyshler. "I didn't copy Tatlin," Kosmatschhof said. "But I took the principle of his work and I scaled it up."

After graduation, Kosmatschhof and Koneva both worked on the edges of what was ideologically permissible. Kosmatschhof's abstract, geometrical works were commissioned and installed in the Yugoslav Embassy and the Soviet Ministry of Defense, and most prominently in the republic of Turkmenistan, where he created a monumental sculpture made for the National Library in Ashgabat, now called "Konstrukta."

But by the late 1970s, the doors were closing again. Many of their friends among non-conformist artists had already emigrated. Reluctantly, the family applied to leave, too. In 1979, after three petitions, the family was finally allowed to emigrate.

A European artist

Emigration was a wrenching experience. Koneva supported the family with watercolors that sold instantly but drained her. "I was so sick of them, I couldn't work again for five years," she said. Meanwhile, Kosmatschhof began to enter competitions and win commissions, one after another, mostly, he said, because of his ability to think and work in scale. "Many artists in Germany work with galleries. So they don't think in scale, they think of how a piece looks in a gallery ... when they work in a big space, their sense of scale is off." Kosmatschhof's monumental works began to appear throughout Germany, Austria and other countries as his reputation grew in the 1980s and 1990s.

But he remained virtually unknown in his homeland, at first because the Soviet Union banned all mention of anyone who emigrated



The exhibition at the New Tretyakov includes more than 60 videos and installations.

for political or ideological reasons, and then perhaps because the new Russian galleries could not exhibit or sell his massive works.

This summer, however, Vadim Kosmatschhof has returned home. Although he bears no grudge for his past treatment, he still has something of a bone to pick and regards the show as a kind of "apology for all the works by my wife and me that simply vanished after we left – destroyed."

Not everyone considers this show his homecoming; the German and Austrian curators would like to claim Kosmatschhof as their own. At the opening, the good-natured disagreement was settled by Zelfira Tregulova, director of the Tretyakov Gallery. "We're showing his works here, in the New Tretyakov Gallery of Russian Art, and not in the Pushkin Museum of Western art. That means he's Russian," she said.

The show includes more than 60 works, photographs, videos and other materials that cover his entire career. The top floor is largely a retrospective of his work beginning with the abstract and geometrical monumental sculptures that began his career in the 1970s, including "Konstrukta," and following their evolution to more organic forms, with his favorite themes appearing more frequently in various guises: hands, signature, human torso, hearts and ovals.

The second part of the exhibition is about looking ahead: sculptures that breathe, pulse, move, take in and pour out water, light up, blink, grow, change in shape and color in response to heat, shadows, people and weather conditions.

Most of them have not been made yet, often because the cost was prohibitive or technology had not yet caught up with Kosmatschhof's vision. "Urban Heart," for example, was meant to

stand in the center of Moscow City and respond to the sun through solar panels that would let it pulse during the day and light up at night. It was abandoned after the economic crisis.

Many of these are shown in videos, first as images in a sketchbook – where you see Kosmatschhof's massive hands flipping the pages – and then envisioned in computer graphics as they would "behave" in city squares.

The exhibition ends with the "Unfolding Square" (2005) – a large square made of massive sheets of mirror joined at one point. When that point is "pressed" – here powered by an engine; on the street powered by solar energy – the sheets break up and collapse upon themselves, fracturing reality and reflecting it outward, transforming the world around it and then eventually returning it to the way it was as the sheets realign.

It is fitting that this piece is exhibited here. A few floors above it is the most famous square in art history: Kazimir Malevich's "Black Square." That square was, in the words of the curators, a "rejection of interaction," while Kosmatschhof's square, to the contrary, opens a dialog with the world, interacting with it, drawing the surrounding reality into the world of the sculpture and transforming it.

Kosmatschhof's living and breathing sculptures may have come out of the Russian avant-garde, but they have gone on to create their own revolution in art. His works "change the world's perception of the very nature of sculpture," curator Kirill Svetyakov said. "They change the notion of what sculpture is and can be."

Until Aug. 9

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Odessa was historically a cultural hub. Many hope that it can recapture some of its old glory.

Magazine Touts Black Sea Culture

By [Alexander Feinberg](#) | [@afeinber](#)

The story of an improbable English-language Odessa Review

Among the things that will likely strike a visitor to Odessa are the busy seaport (the largest in Ukraine) and the gloriously crumbling 19th century architecture. Stay a little longer, and its cultural past begins to reveal itself in the monuments plentifully scattered throughout the city. But you could spend years here and never come across one of Odessa's most unlikely curiosities, an English-language magazine called *The Odessa Review*.

Finding this bimonthly publication, a literary journal emulating *The New Yorker* and *The Paris Review*, is not easy. You'll have to hunt it down at one of just a handful of locations in Odessa and Kiev. Once you open the cover, however, you will be rewarded with up-to-date and relevant coverage of issues related to contemporary Ukraine and the region.

A literary entrepreneur

The magazine's chief editor is Vladislav Davidzon. Now in his early 30s, he was born in Uzbekistan to Russian-Jewish parents and moved to New York's Brighton Beach, also known as "Little Odessa," when he was seven years old. While he grew up in the United States, he spoke Russian at home and learned about Russian literature from his grandmother, who he describes as a "literatus and art connoisseur." Thanks to his upbringing, he never lost touch with his Russian roots. He describes himself as "very deeply devoted to this part of the world" and "deeply Russian."

In his early 20s he made the decision that he would move to eastern Europe. After graduating from The City University of New York with a double major in Slavic studies and philosophy, he met his future wife, Odessa native Regina Maryanovska, while studying at the Sorbonne in Paris. From there they moved to Venice, where Davidzon received a master's degree in human rights law, and from there to Ukraine, where he became a journalist for "Ukraine Today," a now

defunct English-language Ukrainian television station.

Davidzon started *The Odessa Review* in 2016 with his wife and the financial backing of his publisher, the Ukrainian-Syrian philanthropist Hares Youssef. "I always wanted to have my own magazine, a literary journal," Davidzon said. "No one's done this before. No one's ever had the ludicrous idea to have a Western-language, New Yorker-style literary journal of ideas in this region. It's too weird."

Chronicling the golden age

Where Odessa natives tend to be modest about the potential of their city, Davidzon gets visibly excited when talking about the cultural opportunities in Odessa. He says that Ukrainian culture is now seeing a "golden age."

The *Odessa Review* has been riding this new wave of Ukrainian culture, providing commentary and reviews of events, literature and phenomena happening in Odessa and elsewhere in Ukraine. It often frames its coverage in terms of the idea of a contemporary Ukraine, constantly returning to themes of the Ukrainian nation and identity. After Maidan, the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbass, it is almost impossible to have a political conversation in Ukraine without touching on what it means to be Ukrainian. That question is especially fraught in Odessa, a city of Russian-speakers where many identify more closely with Russia, and where 46 locals were killed in a fire in 2014 while protesting Maidan.

"We're a product of post-Maidan Ukraine," Davidzon told *The Moscow Times*. The Review supports liberal viewpoints regarding Ukrainian independence and territorial sovereignty, but there is no agreed upon doctrine for liberal-minded Ukrainians to follow. The Review often functions as a forum for starkly dissonant responses. For example, in an issue devoted to Ukrainian Jewry, the Jewish-Ukrainian journalist Vitaly Portnikov argued that a Jewish community is impossible in the Ukrainian nation,



The journal is the first of its kind in Odessa.

and that "if you identify primarily as a Jew and that is more valuable to you, do not delude yourself, go to Israel." A few pages later Vitaly Chernovianenko, a history professor, argued that "Jewish Studies need to become part of an integrated humanities culture and educational system in Ukraine."

Davidzon has built a large network of contributors to the magazine, and many of the pieces are by some of the region's leading experts and cultural figures. The Review has published articles by journalist Peter Pomerantsev, historian Timothy Snyder and poets Boris Khersonsky and Adam Kirsch. Many of the bylines are also from young Ukrainian journalists who Davidzon has helped to mentor, introducing them to concepts of journalism that are not included in the standard Ukrainian curriculum. "There's not a school of Western-style journalism," he explained. "Not

one person in Ukraine makes a living as an art critic or a book critic or a film critic."

Connecting Odessa to the West

Locals are hesitant about their city's status as a cultural center, still shell-shocked after mass emigration in the 1990s. Where Davidzon sees a cultural revolution, others still see room for improvement. The curator of Odessa's Museum of Modern Art, Alexandra Troyanova, was positive about the amount of interest that the arts have been getting lately, but uncertain whether there were any young artists to match the growing demand. The art critic Ute Kilter, who contributes to the Review, echoed this sentiment, saying "It's very complicated for contemporary art to exist in Odessa. Kiev eats all the money, which is why [The Odessa Review] is so important to us. This way there will be at least something."

That the journal is in English is crucial to its mission. Boris Khersonsky, a poet who lives in Odessa and regularly publishes in the Review, explained that "it is the only thread connecting Odessa with the English-speaking world."

One piece Davidzon was particularly proud to have published was an excerpt from Sergei Loiko's novel "Airport," which was widely praised in Ukraine but had not before appeared in English. It is a portrait of the battle for Donetsk's airport as told by one soldier. For foreigners who are not familiar with the war in the Donbass, it is crucial reading.

The print circulation for each issue is currently around 10,000. They also have a website, where they track 60 percent of their traffic to North America. To grow their readership, Davidzon and Maryanovska-Davidzon want to expand coverage to other parts of the Black Sea region. In addition, they plan to host events in the future, which they hope will bring more attention.

Davidzon points out another benefit to learning more about the city: "I think more people would come here if they knew how great it was and how inexpensive it was. Why wouldn't anyone want to come to Odessa?"



STEVE EVANS FLICKR

Steve McCurry. Untold Story.

Through Sept. 2

Steve McCurry is one of most recognizable names in contemporary photography, largely thanks to his iconic “Afghan Girl” photo that first appeared on the cover of National Geographic. “Untold Story” is a joint project of the Moscow Museum of Modern Art (MMOMA) and the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, curated by Dmitry Ozerkov, head of Hermitage’s contemporary art division. The exhibition includes more than 80 works, covering all the major themes in McCurry’s work: portraits, landscapes and photographs of natural disasters and humanitarian catastrophes.

MMOMA

10 Gogolevsky Bulvar. Metro Kropotkinskaya.
mmoma.ru



IVAN EROFEEV / GARAGE MUSEUM

Exhibition Anxiety on the Couch

Through Aug. 19

In honor of the World Cup, photographer and football fan Juergen Teller has created a special series of photographs and videos about football, football players – past and present – and football fans, football games and football accoutrements. Some photographs are humorous; a few may leave the viewers feeling uncomfortable. All are filled with an obsessive love for the game. Don’t miss it, but come without the kids.

Garage Museum of Contemporary Art

9 Krymsky Val. Metro Oktyabrskaya.
garagemca.org



THE MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN IMPRESSIONISM

Exhibition Impressionism in the Avant-Garde

Through Sept. 19

The Museum of Russian Impressionism has launched another potential blockbuster exhibition on the heels of “The Wives,” a successful exhibition about the wives of Russian painters of the 20th century. This exhibition’s title is a bit misleading: You won’t actually see avant-garde works here, except for reproductions. What you will find are early paintings by such artists as Mikhail Larionov, Kazimir Malevich, Natalia Goncharova, Aristarkh Lentulov, Olga Rozanova and many others before they developed a style that would later become Russian avant-garde. **The Museum of Russian Impressionism**
15 Leningradsky Prospekt, Bldg. 11.
Metro Belorusskaya.
rusimp.su

Exhibition Rodchenko and Stepanova. Football

Through July 15

This small exhibition includes paintings, graphic artworks and photographs related to football and sports by the great Soviet avant-garde constructivist artists Alexander Rodchenko and Varvar Stepanova. Both were advocates of the cult of athleticism, with sport motives recurring in their works from the late 1920s until the early 1940s.

The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts

12 Ulitsa Volkhonka. Metro Kropotkinskaya.
pushkinmuseum.art

Exhibition Places: One After Another

Through Aug. 19

“Places: One After Another” is the fourth installment in the “Human Condition” project, a

Theater War Is Near

July 9

Teatr.doc, Moscow’s acclaimed venue for documentary theater, has made several productions based on real events. One of the most honest and brave of them is “War Is Near,” devoted to the conflict in East Ukraine. Part of it is based on a real diary of a Luhansk resident written over several months of the war. Another part tells the story of Oleg Sentsov, who’s been on hunger strike for more than 50 days.

Teatr.doc

12 Maly Kazyonny Pereulok. Metro Kurskaya.
teatrdoc.ru



LEON BRIDGES / GARAGE

Concert Leon Bridges

July 9

The third season of Mosaic Music at the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art continues with a performance by singer-songwriter Leon Bridges. He is not yet 30, but his debut album “Coming Home” is all about the 1960s in the United States. The music can be described as traditional R&B and soul, and has been compared to the likes of Otis Redding and other past greats.

Garage Museum of Contemporary Art

9 Krymsky Val. Metro Oktyabrskaya.
garagemca.org



SCHUSEV MUSEUM OF ARCHITECTURE

Exhibition Stadiums Past and Present

Through Aug. 26

The Schusev Museum of Architecture in Moscow has produced an exhibit about the art and history of Soviet and Russian stadiums. The first half of the show is dedicated to drawings and photographs of some of the country’s great Soviet stadiums, varying in style from slightly avant-garde to solidly classical. The show highlights some unusual stadiums, like a U-shaped one, and brings to life the excitement of the first major sporting events held in the country. The second half is about the world’s best stadiums and the Russian stadiums built or reconstructed for this year’s matches, illustrated with models, photographs and designs. In addition to guides in several languages, this show includes tactile copies of three-dimensional exhibits, guided tours in sign language and accompanying texts in Braille for people with visual impairments.

Schusev Museum of Architecture

5/25 Ulitsa Vozdvizhenka. Metro Alexandrovsky Sad, Biblioteka Imeni Lenina.
muar.ru/en



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series of contemporary art exhibitions curated by Viktor Miziano that focus on the phenomenon of space. The fourth edition is hosted by the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center and features works by prominent Russian artists like Leonid Tishkov and Taus Makhacheva, as well as international artists from Germany, Greece and Morocco.

The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center

11 Ulitsa Obratsova, Bldg. 1A.
Metro Mariina Roshcha.
jewish-museum.ru



STARY DOBRY DIXIELAND

Concert Stary Dobry Dixieland

July 10

Stary Dobry Dixieland (Good Old Dixieland) is a Moscow jazz band that’s all about bringing back the music and the ambience of early 20th-century American saloons. The band performs tunes not only from the U.S., but from France and the Soviet Union as well.

16 Tons

6/1 Ulitsa Presnensky Val.
Metro Ulitsa 1905 Goda.
16tons.ru

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