The Moscow Times

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How new Ukrainian artists are stealing a march on Moscow → *Pages 8-9*

18+

"I did not know what I was doing as I was only executing commands, which I received." - ***Abror Azimov***

2013
the year Central Asian fighters appeared in Syria

1992
Bin Laden targets Central Asian - Vahid Brown in 'Fountinhead of Jihad'

Bin Laden's effort in Central Asia was called "The Furqan Project"

Russia's Home Front

By Matthew Bodner m.bodner@imedia.ru

For Russian intelligence, extremists from Central Asia are presenting new security challenges

Recently, the Kremlin's counter-terrorism policies have been simple, but controversial. After containing radical Islamist fighters to the North Caucasus, Russia funnelled them to warring Syria and Iraq. For a time, authorities could claim to have managed the threat of domestic terrorism.

But the St. Petersburg metro bombing on April 3 showed that this threat has not dissipated entirely. While Moscow has focused on tracking and combating Islamist fighters in the Caucasus, a new (exaggerated and misunderstood) threat is emerging: Central Asian migrant workers in Russia who number in the millions and could prove easy targets for recruiters.

One of these workers, Akbarzhon Dzhalilov, was responsible for the April 3 St. Petersburg bombing.

Then, on April 17, authorities arrested Abror Azimov, who they believe recruited and trained Dzhalilov. Both were natives of the southern Kyrgyzstan city of Osh, which has reportedly sent dozens of fighters to the Islamic State in Syria.

"This is Russia's nightmare scenario," says Mark Galeotti, an expert on Russian intelligence and security services. Voices within the FSB have called attention to the threat of extremists from Central Asia, he says, but to no avail. Rather, the FSB has been preoccupied with "the threat of Islamic State fighters returning to the Caucuses and the rest of Russia."

TASS

On April 17, the FSB arrested Abror Azimov, the alleged recruiter of St. Petersburg metro bomber.

The FSB's focus on the Caucasus is a textbook example of generals fighting the last war. Extremists from the North Caucasus who went to Syria are returning home. But they have been fighting alongside radicals from Central Asia who also making their way to Russia, says Maxim Suchkov, a Russian expert on the Middle East.

Faced with abysmal working conditions and discrimination, Central Asian workers in Russia are susceptible to online jihadist propaganda and returning Islamists infiltrating the ranks of migrant workers to recruit new fighters. And the FSB simply isn't well equipped to deal with this, Galeotti says.

But fighters returning to Central Asia pose a much greater challenge to Russia says Suchkov, because they enjoy visa-free entry to Russia and can travel among groups of migrants.

Even electronic surveillance of Central Asian workers is difficult. Many don't have phones, or they share phones among themselves. When individuals do have phones, they use encrypted messaging apps, Galeotti says.

But more than anything, Galeotti says, "there is a lack of resources devoted to this problem by the FSB. So they lean heavily on their Central Asian counterparts, which is a shaky foundation. And the FSB lacks the analytic capacity to fact check information passed on by Central Asian security services, which can be twisted by those agencies to further their own political goals."

Given these challenges — and the fact that Moscow is already facing the threat of Islamic State fighters returning to the Caucasus from the battlegrounds of Syria — the Kremlin's counter-terror woes are not getting any easier. TMT

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RIGHTS WATCH

Why Putin Will Be Forced to Act on Chechnya's Anti-Gay Purge

By Tanya Lokshina
Senior Researcher for Human Rights Watch

SOFIA MIROEDOVA

Reports of at least three deaths and hundreds of arrests of gay men in Chechnya have shocked the world. Those well versed in the tyranny of Ramzan Kadyrov's rule were perhaps less surprised.

With the Kremlin's blessing, Kadyrov has run Chechnya as a personal fiefdom for over a decade. In that time, he has installed a regime of fear, punishing anyone with different views or lifestyles. Chechnya today is the most lawless subject of the Russian Federation.

That doesn't mean that the Kremlin has no leverage over what goes on there. Indeed, all it would take to end this anti-gay putge is for Putin to pick up the phone and tell Kadyrov: "This has to stop."

We hope and think that this is what will happen. But so far the official reaction from Moscow has been contradictory.

The first signals coming out of the Kremlin were arguably positive. Putin's spokesman Peskov basically said: "We don't know much about what is going on here, but law enforcement agencies will look into it."

But then he said something very peculiar: Those who claimed they were abused by Chechen officials "should file official complaints." It was hard not to conclude he had presented authorities with a convenient loophole.

Homophobia is extreme and rampant in Chechnya, and LGBT people have faced prosecutions and blackmail for a long time. We know of some cases where gay men have been hunted down by police officials, who have then demanded regular payoffs, lest they tell their families.

But an organized campaign on this scale is unprecedented, and clearly sanctioned by top Chechen leadership.

We know the campaign began towards the end of February. It lasted several weeks, before stopping. Then, by mid-March, it picked up again.

It isn't clear why it began. We could speculate it was designed among other things to consolidate Kadyrov's support base. There are signs of dissatisfaction in the Kremlin, and the number of insurgent attacks is on the rise. Kadyrov is possibly not as secure in his power as he was a few years ago and is now taking desperate measures to reassert himself.

But the methods Chechen authorities are using are not new at all. They are the same tricks the regime has employed against critics, Salafi muslims, drug users and suspected jihadist sympathizers.

The widely reported detention centers where Chechen gays were brought have existed for some time. These are not "gay concentration camps," as reported by some Western outlets. Such hyperbole devalues the suffering. What we are talking about are unofficial prisons where people are tortured: electrocuted, beaten, humiliated. The aim is to get them to give information on other supposedly gay people. Or, if they are presumed jihadists — to spill the beans on other supposed jihadists. If they are drug users — on supposed drug users.

Of course, gay people in Chechnya are especially vulnerable. They are caught between two fires — persecuted both by the local authorities and in fear of their own relatives. The official reaction from Kadyrov's spokesman to the reports speaks volumes. There are "no gay people in Chechnya," and even if there were, "their relatives would send them to a place from where there is no return," he said. Such statements from local officials essentially fuel honor killings.

And this is why the Kremlin has things the wrong way round. You cannot ask victims to come forward if you fail to provide proper and comprehensive security guarantees.

The West needs to play an informed role. First, governments should do everything they can to provide sanctuary to the victims in danger. Those who have relocated to cities in central Russia have access to activist networks. But they aren't safe. While they are in Russia, Chechen officials can easily find them. Their relatives, pumped on official propaganda to "cleanse family honor," could also turn on them.

Homophobia remains a big issue in Russia, if not as extreme as in Chechnya. Many Russians consider gay people second class citizens and the country has discrimimatory legislation against them. Based on human rights experience, there is no reason to be optimistic about prosecutions.

At the same time, I hope Putin will eventually be forced to intervene. If all the key international organizations and international actors continue to raise the issue with the Kremlin in one way or another, he will be left with very little choice. He will have to act. He will have to make Kadyrov stop. TMT

As told to Oliver Carroll

"There is nothing for us to gain from this system, we can only lose and lose." ***Andrei Bazhutin,*** *head of the United Truckers of Russia (OPR)*

3,73 rub/km

proposed
Platon rate

According to research by the Higher School of Economics, being a driver is the most popular profession in Russia, with 7 percent of Russians working behind the wheel.

100,000 km/yr

average distance
traveled
by truckers

ILYAS KHADZHI / TASS

Truck drivers protest against the Platon Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) system say their salaries will be slashed in half.

Road Rage

By Eva Hartog e.hartog@imedia.ru

A road tax that could cut truckers' salaries by half is escalating one of Russia's most enduring protests

For over a thousand kilometers, the Kavkaz highway meanders south from Russia's Krasnodar region through the North Caucasus until it reaches the border with Azerbaijan.

About 40 kilometers before Makhachkala, the bustling capital of the Dagestan republic, a highway exit leads to the village of Manas on the Caspian Sea. A roadside petrol station, cafes with names like "Bon Appetite," and a large parking lot offer passing drivers a place to recover.

But since late March, Manas has transformed from a sleepy coastal village. Angry truck drivers — from dozens to thousands at a time — have staged a sit-in there under the watchful eyes of police. Tensions escalated this March when Russia's National Guard made an appearance on the scene in full riot gear, threatening to bring the standoff to a head.

"People were surrounded," says Rustam Mallamagomedov, the unofficial coordinator of the protests in Dagestan. "Everybody was very tense." In an earlier comment, he compared the situation to being "on the brink of revolution."

The National Guards have since left, but the truckers say they will stay until the electronic road tax they are protesting is scrapped. Platon is a tax on trucks heavier than 12 tons per kilometer they travel. The tax, which could eat up to half of the truckers' income, has sparked some of the most enduring protests across Russia in recent years.

Before Platon was first introduced in November 2015, truckers across the country joined in strikes, rallies and road blockades. Ahead of a planned tax hike on April 15, the protest reignited across the country.

There have been large roadside rallies and strikes in at least 20 regions since, and 40 percent of Russian truckers have laid down their work, says Andrei Bazhutin, head of the United Truckers of Russia (OPR) group. Mallamagomedov, the Dagestani coordinator, says nearly 100 percent of Dagestani truckers have joined the strike.

"Why are we, the Russian people, suffering today?" one of the truckers, Abdurashid Samadov, tells a crowd in dark caps and leather jackets, in one widely circulated video uploaded to YouTube. "Can you not see we're being squeezed? It is out of desperation that we have come out!"

Both in numbers and ferocity, Dagestan has emerged as the unlikely epicenter of the Platon protest. The North Caucasus republic typically makes the headlines for its conflict with militant Islamists or as a bastion of Kremlin loyalty. (In 2016 parliamentary elections were marred by accusations of vote rigging — 89 percent voted for the ruling United Russia party.)

But according to Konstantin Kazenin, a senior researcher at the Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), Dagestan has a strong tradition of small protests, usually over land rights and the work of law enforcement.

Platon has hit the region particularly hard, he says. Wedged between the Russian interior and Azerbaijan and Iran, Dagestan is a busy transit point for the heavy transport that Platon targets.

Many Dagestanis either work as truckers or are dependent on the trade. "For local farmers from Dagestan's interior, the truckers are the only way to get their goods, such as fruit and vegetables, to market in other Russian regions," says Kazenin.

Dagestan is also among Russia's poorest regions. The truckers say they simply cannot afford another tax on top of existing transport and fuel levies. "We are paying three times for the same road," says Mallamagomedov.

His argument has reverberated throughout Russia's trucking community, which is already pressed amid an economic downturn, says the OPR group's Bazhutin. On average, they travel around 100,000 kilometers per year, and with the current Platon rate set at 1,90 rubles per kilometer, the bill could slash truckers' earning by half.

"Platon is the last drop," says Bazhutin. "It's reaching a point that we can't even pay our utility bills anymore."

While officials say the tax hike will pay for road repair, truckers believe it is a ploy to line the pockets of Russia's richest. The company collecting the tax is partly owned by the son of Arkady Rotenberg, a long-time friend of Vladimir Putin. That has gained Platon the moniker "Rotenberg's cash cow."

People are [generally] prepared to pay government tax says political analyst Yekaterina Schulmann, "but here they feel they are personally paying Rotenberg."

The perceived corruption of the Platon tax makes it easy to compare with recent anti-corruption protests led by opposition activist Alexei Navalny in March. Just like those demonstrations, the Kremlin has reacted to Platon with arrests and an information blackout.

On April 15, a protest convoy in St. Petersburg was cut short when police detained seven participants, including OPR's Bazhutin. Other Platon coordinators, including Mallamagomedov, have also been detained (and later released). Meanwhile, state television, has ignored Platon.

But there are important differences between the protests, argues Schulmann. Whereas the Navalny's anti-corruption protests are dependent on his leadership, the outrage against Platon is focused around a specific issue, she says. That makes it more similar to protests against, for example, urban demolition projects in Moscow.

"These protests are effectively a demand for participation," she says. Unlike leader-dependent protests, which can be thwarted by removing the leader from view — as the authorities have tried to do with Navalny — issue-based protests are more durable, she says.

But they can also be more easily appeased by giving in to their demands. Following the initial protests in 2015, Platon was more than halved. The suggested price hike of 50 percent this April was paired back to 25 percent on the orders of Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev (whose alleged property holdings gave rise to Navalny's protests).

While adding to general instability, the Platon protests are unlikely to pose any threat to the Kremlin. It would have to merge with a broader protest movement, like Navalny's, to have any potential impact says Schulmann. But "so far Navalny has mostly set and then pursued his own agenda," she says.

Kazenin agrees, adding that Platon protesters are making specific economic, not political demands. If only "because they understand it will be more complicated to achieve their goals that way." TMT

"Original, brilliant and a revolutionary contribution to national and international thought" – official description of Juche, North Korea's state ideology

2005

North Korea declares its nuclear ambitions.

105

2017 according to North Korea's calendar which starts with the birth of Kim Il-sung.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was founded in 1948

It's Over. We're With Kim Jong-un Now

By Alexey Kovalev and Matthew Bodner newsreporter@imedia.ru | Illustration by Sofia Miroedova

State TV has executed an abrupt U-turn on Trump, and is now embracing North Korea. But is it too early to equate media posturing with official policy?

As tensions heat up on the Korean Peninsula, so too has Russia's newest television genre: anti-Trump propaganda. Once the golden boy of Russian television, the U.S. president has become its leading black sheep.

Now, the divergent approaches to North Korea's nuclear weapons program are exacerbating a divide that began in Syria.

Officially, the United States and Russia are not far apart on the issue of Kim Jong-un's nuclear ambitions. They're both opposed to his nuclear weapons program. They disagree on what should be done: Trump may be considering a preemptive strike, while Russia insists that no actions should be taken that would violate North Korean sovereignty.

A U.S. strike on North Korea would put Moscow in an awkward position. After fawning over Trump for months, the Kremlin is increasingly clear that he is unpredictable and possibly detrimental to their interests. After spending months preparing the nation for a detente under President Trump, Russian television pundits and producers are now hurrying to demonize the U.S. leader.

Reversing course so dramatically was no big deal for Russia's flagship news show, "Vesti Nedeli" (Weekly News), a program that doubles as the Kremlin's main propaganda outlet. In his most recent broadcast, the show's host, Dmitry Kiselyov delivered a segment that was impressive even by his own standards.

Letter to Jong-un

Last weekend, the most watched news show on Russian television aired a brazen love letter to North Korea.

Kiselyov opened with a short introduction composed entirely of absurd understatements. North Korea, he said, has "a peculiar social structure based on strong centralization" and "an imposing public sector."

Next, the show featured a report from North Korea's capital, Pyongyang, where the correspondent showered Kim Jong-un and his military in praise. "Pyongyang," the reporter said, "is a city of skyscrapers." She then described bright, spacious apartment buildings, and sun-drenched streets, filled with smiling people going about their business. The country, she proclaimed, finds itself in a "new era of openness."

North Koreans weep at the sight of their leader, the correspondent explained, as enraptured cries echoed behind her. Kim Jong-un, she said, is everyone's role model — all the men even want his haircut.

An Abrupt End

The Kremlin is no stranger to abrupt policy U-turns. Just a couple of months earlier, Dmitry Kiselyov praised Donald Trump so profusely that it prompted an unexpected backlash. Members of a fringe patriotic group picketed the offices of VGTRK, Russia's state media behemoth, demanding that Kiselyov abandon his "Trumpomania" and devote more airtime to domestic coverage.

But those days are gone, and today Kiselyov, the Kremlin's loudest, most visible mouthpiece, has turned on his short-lived idol. On his latest show, in a series of bullet points, the host laid out the reasons why Trump is actually worse than his North Korean counterpart.

Yes, Kiselyov said, Pyongyang's saber rattles, but none of its missiles has ever hit a sovereign nation — unlike United States' Tomahawks. Both are dangerous, but at least Kim is more predictable.

To really drive his point home, Kiselyov noted that Kim Jong-un's five-year-old daughter doesn't have her own office in her father's official residence, in a nod to Ivanka Trump.

But Kiselyov's show really jumped the rails when he all but openly threatened South Korea on Kim Jong-un's behalf. North Koreans won't admit this, Kiselyov suggested, but their ballistic missiles could deliver not just nuclear but chemical weapons. These rockets, he added, could be pointed at Seoul.

After a dramatic pause, Kiselyov delivered a not-so-subtle warning: "North Koreans are asking for an end to these provocations, but they're also prepared to respond to total war with a total war of their own."

New Propaganda Policy

Georgy Toloraya, a senior Russian diplomat and the East Asia section director at the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, advises caution in taking these bold statements at face value. Realistically, he says, the only real recourse for Russia in dealing with another North Korean crisis is to urge all sides to exercise restraint and carefully engage with both the Trump administration and South Korea.

The latter, Toloraya added, is on its way to becoming a major Russian partner in the region. The Kremlin has its own gripes with South Korea's leadership — namely, the U.S-South Korean joint exercises and THAAD anti-missile deployment — but the last thing Russia would want to do is to antagonize South Korea.

Of course, it would be shortsighted to assume that the Kremlin's propaganda directly reflects its own policies. Rather, what we see on TV is what the government's media managers want the population to believe. When asked about Kiselyov's claim that Donald Trump is more dangerous that Kim Jong-un, Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, backed down.

The Kremlin doesn't necessarily agree with Kiselyov's remarks, Peskov explained. At the same time, he added, Kiselyov was entitled to his views "as an independent journalist."

This last statement is difficult to take seriously, given the amount of control over the state media that the Kremlin enjoys. Important domestic and foreign coverage is directly manipulated and coordinated from the presidential administration. Dmitry Kiselyov was appointed the director of a national news agency by Putin's personal order — and he can be removed just as easily.

On the other hand, there have been persistent rumours that the Kremlin is unhappy with its own propaganda machine. It may well be that it is choosing to disassociate itself with its most loyal employees.

Playing it this way, the Kremlin enjoys maximum flexibility: it can use the state media to cultivate a radical worldview, and then it can distance itself from these ideas later, if tensions with Trump subside. TMT

"Heroes of contemporary society fight with crime, terrorism, and extremism" - Ministry of Culture on film subjects receiving priority.

60 M

rubles spent on film by Russian state in 2016.

*"In the autumn, we plan to get the ball rolling and begin filming" - Producer **Andrey Sigle** on shooting in Palmyra.*

5.5

average IMDB rating of Russian films that received state funding in last year.

Reel Patriotism

In a battle between nationalism and Hollywood, there was only going to be one winner

Op-Ed by Stephen M. Norris
Professor of History at
Miami University (OH)

On its opening weekend, F. Gary Greg's hotly-anticipated Hollywood blockbuster,"The Fate of the Furious," smashed its way to the top of the Russian box office. Capitalizing on its tried-and-tested formula of fast cars and explosive stunts, the franchise stalwart earned more than twice than the much-lauded "The First Time" — a Russian patriotic film about the Soviet Union's first spacewalk.

For those watching closely, the victory marked an embarrassing defeat for Russia's Minister of Culture, Vladimir Medinsky. He had personally lobbied to have the release of Fate of the Furious delayed so that the patriotic movie he had backed could get a boost at the box office. Yet Medinsky's plan failed to materialize.

The proposals angered movie theater owners, who accurately predicted that the movie would bomb. And even though "The First Time" topped the charts in the week before the release of "Fate of the Furious," it earned far less than forecast.

Russia's Culture Ministry still remains undeterred. On April 17, it announced its next patriotic project: a joint Russian-Syrian production called "Palmyra." Ivan Bolotnikov, who made the 2016 biopic "Kharms," would be in the director's chair.

At the press conference, Medinsky declaredthat the film would "help to keep people on the good side."

Medinsky has repeatedly backed films that help build a "patriotic spirit," and has regularly complained about Russophobia in Western culture. In his ongoing book series, "Myths about Russia," Medinsky acknowledged that some of the widely-held beliefs about Russia "are fairly reflective of reality," butcomplained that most "are silly, uninformed, or even ridiculous."

Since he became Minister of Culture in 2012, Medinsky's policies toward Russian cinema have attempted to combat these perceived myths. But not only this: they also have sought reinforce domestic support for the Putin regime. Putin often personally reviews the films. In 2016 for example, he watched "Panfilov's 28" — another patriotic film backed by Medinsky — in a special screening with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"Palymra" makes little secret of its pro-Kremlin interpretation of the Syrian crisis. But the Russian-Syrian project is not the first attempt at narrating contemporary Russian history. In 2012, Dzhanik Fayziev released "August Eighth:" a Kremlin-backed film that justified the 2008 South Ossetia War with the story of a Muscovite mother who travels to the war zone to rescue her son. Heavily promoted and full of blockbuster special effects, "August Eighth" did not come near to breaking even. But for the Russians, it acted as a useful counterpoint to Finnish director Renny Harlan's 2011 "Five Days of War," which cast Andy Garcia as a romanticized Mikheil Saakashvili.

But box office returns matter, and even Medinsky seems to accept this when he argues that Russian patriotic productions should be given a chance against their Hollywood competitors. Good patriotic Russian people, following Medinsky's logic, should have found cosmonaut Alexey Leonov more appealing than Dom Toretto and his fast and furious companions.

In reality, Vin Diesel's car chases easily overtook the drama of Soviet spacewalks, leaving it to drift off out into obscurity. The minister clearly has some persuading to do yet. TMT

Stephen M. Norris is the author of "Blockbuster History: Movies, Memory, and Patriotism in the New Russia."

*"Bilateral agreement on adoption was a very good document. It would have resolved all our issues" - **Alexei Golovan,** former chidlren's rights ombudsman*

2013
"Dima Yakovlev law" takes effect.

>60,000
Russian children have been adopted by U.S. families since early 1990s.

For the first three years of adoption, U.S. parents sent elaborate reports on their children's well-being to Russian authorities.

← Lara (not her real name), the mother of 12 children, was hoping to adopt another boy from Russia in 2012.

→ John (not his real name), Lara's 17-year-old son, was successfully adopted from Russia in 2000.

The Kids Russia Forgot

American families hope they can convince the Kremlin to lift its adoption ban by telling stories of success. But is anyone willing to listen?

By Daria Litvinova d.litvinova@imedia.ru | Photos by Courtesy of the families

Lara (not her real name) was in the process of adopting a 2-year-old boy from Russia in 2012 when Russia passed the notorious Dima Yakolvev law putting a halt to her plan.

Letters to U.S. President Barack Obama, hours of conference calls with U.S. officials got her — and other disappointed parents — nowhere. She was crushed.

But four years later — in January this year — Lara read something that gave her a glimmer of hope, hope that Russia's ban on U.S. adoptions would be lifted and she could finally adopt the boy she already considered her son.

It was a quote from Anna Kuznetsova, Russia's children's rights ombudswoman: "Our first task is to review how children, who are already there, are doing," she told reporters in response to a European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruling that Russia's ban illegally discriminated against U.S. families. "If everything is fine, we can start asking what to do with the law."

If Russia's authorities knew how well their children were doing in the U.S., Lara thought, they would allow her and 200 other families to finalize adoptions that stalled four years ago.

In fact, Lara said she repeatedly wrote to Russia's former children's rights ombudsman after the 2013 ban, imploring him to visit her home and see how her first adopted son from Russia was thriving in the United States.

"We have nothing to hide," she told The Moscow Times."Thousands of families would gladly show [Russian authorities] how well their children are doing if it would lift the ban."

Tracking Down Children

Russia's 2013 ban on U.S. adoptions, the Dima Yakovlev law, was named after an adopted Russian boy who died in the U.S. in 2008 after his adoptive father accidentally left him in a car.

The move was politically-motivated retaliation against the United States at a time of geopolitical tension that left more than 200 U.S. families mid-adoption in the lurch. Forty-five families successfully contested the law in the ECHR in January — Russia vowed to appeal the decision ahead of the April 2017 deadline.

In the years after the ban, Russian officials justified it with Kuznetsova's recent claim: Russian children adopted in the United States are abused by their adoptive families and there are no mechanisms for Russia to track the children or protect them from maltreatment.

But U.S. families who have adopted from Russia disagree. "This is just not true," Lara told The Moscow Times. Nine other American families also say that Russian officials have enjoyed ongoing access to adopted Russians.

"For three years following the adoption," explains Anne Lockard-Heirigs, a mother of two girls adopted from Russia, "the family is required to submit post-placement reports — detailed documents about how well the child is adjusting to the new life."

These reports are compiled by a social worker four times in the first three years of adoption. The reports are filed to the adoption agency, which forwards them to Russia's Education Ministry or local government offices.

One report seen by The Moscow Times is an elaborate, 11-page description of the adopted child's health, development, and living conditions. It describes the adoptive family's history, finances, relationship with the child. The report includes several large photos.

REUTERS

The notorious Dima Yakovlev law sparked outrage both inside and outside of Russia.

Even though compiling these reports costs a family between $1,000 and $2,000, there was no way around it. "If you don't send the report in time, the agency would come after you and make you do it," Lara says.

It was also in the U.S. agencies' best interests, agrees Alexei Golovan, Russia's former children's rights ombudsman: Their accreditation in Russia depended on how well they complied with the rules.

Furthermore, in accordance with Russian legislation, adopted children kept their citizenship in the United States, were required to register with a Russian consulate and keep Russian diplomats informed about their current address and contact information.

"They know where we are — when we moved, we gave them our new address," says Lockard-Heirigs. "So if they want to, they can contact us and check up on the kids."

Resolving the Issues

The Russian official who was in charge of adoptions in 2009 contests this rosy picture. Sometimes parents failed to file progress reports. Families that adopted independent of agencies posed separate problems.

The main difficulty, according to former ombudsman Golovan, was that adoption regulations differed from state to state. "In some states the system was better than in others," he said. "But we often couldn't track down a child."

In 2011, Russia and the United States signed a bilateral agreement that was supposed to improve how the two countries communicated about adoptions. "It would have definitely resolved our issues," the former ombudsman told The Moscow Times.

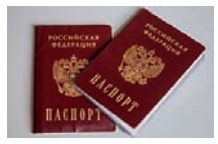
But 12 months after the agreement took effect in early 2012, Russia nullified it by passing the Dima Yakovlev law. The agreement wasn't working anyway, Russian Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told the Ekho Moskvy radio station this January. "It was being blocked [by the U.S.]. [Russia's] Foreign Ministry and its bodies abroad were doing everything on every level to make it work."

But Golovan says it was too early to judge whether the agreement was working. Karinna Moskalenko, the lawyer representing U.S. families in the ECHR, agrees. "There used to

"If everything is fine, we can start asking what to do with the law," ***Anna Kuznetsova,*** *children's rights ombudsman.*

>200

families had to cut short the adoption process



Many adopted children maintain their Russian citizenship, still have Russian passports and are registered with Russian consulates in their states of residence.

2012

Russia and U.S. agreed to improve communication on adoption.

be problems — no one argues with that — But that's why the bilateral agreement was signed in 2011. If Russia hadn't voided it [with the Dima Yakovlev law], it would have been properly implemented," she told The Moscow Times in January, commenting on the ECHR ruling.

Missing Reports

After the 2013 ban, U.S. adoption agencies working exclusively with Russia shut down. Even so, agencies that adopted from other countries too continued to sent reports to Russia on behalf of the shuttered agencies.

One adoption agency executive that asked to remain anonymous told The Moscow Times that their last post-adoption report was sent to Russia three years after the ban March 2016. "We just kept the commitment we made three years earlier regarding post-placement reporting," she said.

Some agencies didn't know whether the Education Ministry would accept them, so they sent their reports to the Russian Embassy. "I have no idea what the Russian Embassy did with them."

While families in the United States were sending hundreds of reports on adopted children to Russia even after the ban took effect, Russia's children's rights ombudswoman Kuznetsova says that "more than a thousand" of Russian requests about their children's well-being sent to the United States remain unanswered.

Maria Olson, a spokesperson at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, didn't say whether any requests from Russia regarding adopted children that the U.S. Department of State didn't respond to. A spokesperson for Kuznetsova later told The Moscow Times that the ombudswoman was speaking "metaphorically" and actually meant that "thousands and thousands" of requests were ignored by the U.S.

Further compounding the stalemate, her office is now insisting that foreign adoptive parents send the progress reports until adopted children turn 18 — not just during first three years following adoption as U.S. families have been doing. And "Right now, Russia is not receiving any reports," her office told The Moscow Times.

This new regulation was only introduced in August 2013 and can't be applied to U.S. families, says lawyer Yevgeni Korchago — precisely because of Russia's ban on U.S adoption which came eight months before. A decree issued by Russia's Ministry of Education stipulates that the new regulations only apply to children whose adoption was finalized in court Sept. 3, 2013 — eight months after Russia's ban. "Demanding these reports from parents who adopted their children before 2013 is illegal."

Adelaide, 6, and Genevieve, 8, on occasion Skype their brother Vitya, 15, who is still stuck in Russia because of the ban.

The Education Ministry, Russia's government body responsible for collecting the reports, hasn't responded to The Moscow Times' request for comments on whether there are any missing reports.

It is possible that many post-placement visits have not been reported to Russia since the adoption ban, admits Chuck Johnson, president and CEO of the U.S. National Council for Adoption NGO.

"Now with so many adoption agencies closed and no more adoptions allowed, it is likely many reports are not being done. However, many American families and many dedicated adoption agencies are still trying to fulfill their obligations," he told The Moscow Times. "I understand Russia's frustration, but it is an unintended consequence of the ban imposed by Russia."

Doing Well

For Russian officials, this lack of oversight meant Russian children too often become victims of abuse in their American families.

"Lack of protection and safety of the adopted children has reached its boiling point," said Valentina Matviyenko, chair of the Federation Council, in December 2012, days before the Dima Yakovlev law was signed by President Vladimir Putin. Russia must do whatever it takes to protect its children, she insisted.

Some 60,000 Russian children have been adopted by U.S. families since the early 1990s, according to the U.S. National Council for Adoption. In more than 20 years, there have been 19 deaths of Russian children, Johnson says, and probably hundreds of disrupted adoptions.

"Each one of these deaths and disruptions are terrible tragedies and understandably reasons for outrage and concern," he said. "But the great majority of Russian children adopted by American citizens are living happy, successful lives in loving and stable families."

For Anne Lockard-Heirigs' Russian daughters, 8-year-old Genevieve and 6-year-old Adelaide, this is most certainly true.

In 2010, during a court session finalizing one-year-old Genevieve's adoption, Anne and her husband James were surprised to discover that Genevieve had a brother in another orphanage.

Soon after bringing Genevieve home, they started the process of adopting her brother Vitya, who was seven-years-old at the time. Preparing the documents took months. Then they had to switch their adoption agencies. Then the Kemerovo region, where Vitya lived, imposed its own, temporary adoption ban. Then the Dima Yakovlev law came into effect, putting a halt to all hopes for the brother and sister to reunite.

Vitya is now 15 years old. He still lives in an orphanage. Anne and James send him clothes, food and presents, correspond with him in Russian social network Vkontakte and occasionally Skype him with the girls.

Anne hopes the ban will be lifted soon — but admits it might be too late for Vitya. In several months, he will turn 16 and have to leave the orphanage. "Quite literally, he has nowhere to go, so will probably be forced to live on the streets." TMT

"They want their music to be loved in any country" - music critic ***Boris Barabanov***

2005
the last time Eurovision was held in Kiev.

1994
the year Russia first participated in the Eurovision Song Contest

"I'm not a politician, I'm a musician" - Ukrainian producer ***Ivan Dorn***

Over the past few years, the Kiev pop scene has developed a specific style that has proved extremely popular in Russia - 1. Quest Pistols Show (seen below) combine a dance show with a pop band. 2. Kristina Bardash (right), lead singer of Luna, is known for her 1990's style home music videos. 3. Potap and Nastya (below right) were one of the first UkrPop bands to make it in Russia a few years ago.

1

COURTESY OF QUEST PISTOLS

2

COURTESY OF LUNA

3

COURTESY OF POTAP | NASTYA

The Ukrainian Invasion

By Andrei Muchnik and Ola Cichowlas newsreporter@imedia.ru

A new music trend is taking over Russia.

When Russia dropped out from this year's Eurovision contest, due to be held in Ukraine in May, it ended a long-running political saga between the two warring nations.

The story began with Russia's selection of a disabled performer, Julia Samoylova, which Ukraine dismissed as a political gimmick. Then, Ukraine announced it would not even allow Samoylova to enter the country, arguing that she had broken migration rules by performing in annexed Crimea. Struggling to contain the conflict, European authorities suggested a compromise of a video link with Moscow, but Russian broadcasters dismissed this out of hand.

Politics came first, Russia seemed to be saying. Ukraine didn't disagree.

In reality, however, this was only true in relation to Eurovision. Elsewhere, and despite the tensions between the two countries, an unexpected cross-cultural phenomenon was in play. Over the last year, new Ukrainian bands were winning over scores of Russian followers, beaking Russian charts and dominating social networks.

So influential is this latest wave of Ukrainian musical imports, it has even been coined as a new movement — by the name UkrPop.

UkrPop on Top

The most talked about of the 2017 UkrPop crop is a band called Griby, which translated as "mushrooms." Griby is the brainchild of Yury Bardash, one of Ukraine's most successful producers and the founder of the label Kruzheva. But the rest of the band's members are anonymous, often performing in masks, or from under hats.

Their style is equally difficult to pin down. In the words of Russian music critic Alexander Gorbachev, Griby "incorporate elements of Russian hip-hop and turns them into well-made house music."

Until recently, Griby were a little known group.

"Today Griby has turned into an emotional phenomenon," says Ukrainian music critic Andrei Nedashkovskiy, who likens the Russian-language band to the British 1998 group Gorillaz. Initially, Ukrainian fans were unhappy that Griby spent most of their time touring Russia, where their label Kruzheva organizes most of its concerts.

But Griby is just as popular at home in Ukraine. Nedashkovskiy says that "almost half of Odessa" turned up at their recent concert in the Ukrainian port town.

Yet it was their song Tayet Lyod ("The Ice is Melting") that captivated the whole of Russia. Within days of release, Griby's video gained millions of views on YouTube. By the end of the month, the number of views reached 50 million.

Tayet Lyod has become a cultural phenomenon. Following the release, Russian social media has exploded with dozens of parodies of the song. The reworkings include Tajik street cleaners in Moscow, school children protesting corruption and, the most popular version produced by a late-night talk show, a professional weather forecaster singing about ice melting in the Urals.

Griby's image as 1990s 'gopniks' [hoodlum] has only added to their success. The 90s, after all, are back in fashion in Russia — actively promoted by the country's best known designer Gosha Rubchinsky, whose recent collaborations include Adidas and Vans.

Griby is only one of dozens of Ukrainian bands that have recently made it in Russia. Other successes include Vremya i Steklo, produced by another Ukrainian heavyweight, Mozgi; Luna, a stylish Kiev band led by wife of Griby's producer Kristina Bardash; and Quest Pistols Show, which combines a dance show with a pop band.

"They have a distinctly new, progressive sound, which looks to Western analogues, such as Disclosure or Kendrick Lamar," says Gorbachev.

"The very decision that Eurovision will take place in Kiev is political" ***Dmitry Kiselyov,*** *Russian state television anchor*

51Mln
the number of views of Griby's most watched hit

Kruzheva and Mozgi: the two main music producers of ukrpop.

10Mln
the number of YouTube views the most popular Griby parody gained

COURTESY OF VREMYA STEKLO

COURTESY OF GRIBY

JURIJ TRESKOFF

4. Vremya i Steklo (left) is making videos reminiscent of Britney Spears' first hits.
5. Griby (below left), a band whose members remains anonymous, has produced Tayet Lyod, probably the most popular hit in Russia this year.
6. Ivan Dorn, one of Ukraine's most successful musicians, was criticized at home for commenting on the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Many pop stars avoid the conflict but they do not always succeed.

Griby is not alone among UkrPop groups in referring to the 1990s. Vremya i Steklo's videos are reminiscent of Britney Spears' first hits, while Luna's have a distinct home-made look.

For the most part, these new UkrPop acts try to avoid politics. But that does not mean that performers have always been able to steer clear of controversy.

Criticism at Home

Singer-songwriter Ivan Dorn, whose music ranges from house to hip-hop and from mainstream pop to jazz, was perhaps the most prominent performer to be caught out by hostilities.

Dorn's mistake was to give an interview to a Russian journalist and to describe the war in Eastern Ukraine as a "quarrel" between "brothers." He said that the "younger" brother, Ukraine, was aspiring to catch up with the "older" brother, Russia, in the music world.

His mild characterisation of the 3 year old conflict brought about harsh criticism at home. Soon after publication, Ukraine's Culture Minister Yevhen Nishchuk called Dorn's comments "unacceptable." A smear campaign against Dorn followed: Ukrainian media, which had previously praised Dorn as one of Kiev's most talented artists, turned against him.

But Nedashkovskiy says the interview was blown out of proportion on Ukrainian social media: Dorn was simply trying to say that Moscow's pop scene was always richer and more developed than Kiev's. The singer is known to speak his mind and, unlike many of his colleagues in the industry, does not speak through his PR agent.

"Many of his competitors were waiting for someone to bring him down," says Nedashkovskiy, adding that it's unreasonable for the artist to be forced to have a political position but Ukrainian society expects him to have one.

Since then, Dorn has been reluctant to give interviews to the media, including to The Moscow Times. There are rumours in Ukraine's and Russia's music community that Dorn is so shaken by the incident that he refuses to leave his apartment in Kiev.

The fallout has made other UkrPop artists wary, and firmer in their apolitical stance.

"[What happened to Dorn] is extremely unpleasant. Thank God it has not happened to me," says Luna's Kristina Bardash.

Gorbachev says liberal Russian opinion makers were disappointed in the way Kiev's political class was so quick to take a hit at Dorn. "The Ukrainian government has a chance to be more European and humane than Russia, but so often they behave in exactly the same way," he says.

In Russia, artists who supported Kiev in its conflict with Moscow experienced problems at home. The concerts of Diana Arbenina, lead singer of rock group Nochnye Snaipery, and musician Andrei Makarevich were cancelled across Russia, reportedly ordered by the Kremlin.

Naturally, the conflict with Russia has created difficulties for any Ukrainian singer choosing to perform across the border as well. Some decide to take a conscious decision not to perform in Russia. Okean Elzy, Ukraine's most successful band, for example, has boycotted Russia since 2014. The band's lead singer, Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, is a particularly engaged voice in Kiev — so popular at home that he is sometimes even mentioned as a future president.

Boombox, a band formed in 2004 by Cherkassy-born singer Andriy Khlyvnyuk, also stopped performing in Russia after the Crimea annexation. But the group's fame is nowhere close to Okean Elzy's and Boombox lost a huge amount of money following its decision to shun the Russian market. "Other artists were put off by that," says Nedashkovskiy.

No Politics Please

For most UkrPop artists, however, the Ukrainian market is not enough. The big buck is to be made in Moscow, and many Ukrainian pop stars are ready to tolerate criticism back home in order to access it.

"There is a huge demand for this type of music in Russia," says Odessa-born Russian music critic Boris Barabanov. And judging by the Russian charts, which are now dominated by Ukrainian artists, he seems to have a point.

Many Russian commentators have begun wondering what the Kiev pop scene has that Moscow's doesn't.

Music critic Barabanov points to the shortcomings of the Russian producer industry, which, he says, is far less flexible than its Ukrainian counterpart. "Russia, unlike Ukraine, has a tradition of powerful producer clans in show business," he says. Even in the internet age, if Russian pop stars want to make it to nationwide fame they have to go through traditional television and radio channels. Barabanov says Russian artists are used to working like this and often do what the producers want.

"I am not talking about state censorship but rather a strict producer format which often dampens creativity in Russia," he says. Ukraine also has those structures, "but on a lesser scale."

For others, it's a matter of history and national character. "When I watched TV with my parents a kid [in Soviet times], Ukrainian artists would always stand out," says Luna's Kristina Bardash. For her, the Ukrainian capital provides a warmer home for artists: "Kiev is not as big as Moscow, where you can lose the calm you need for creativity."

Over the past three years of conflict, culture has proven to be a remarkably resilient area of relations between Russian and Ukraine. Despite the two countries moving further apart, creative collaboration has continued.

And this Spring in Moscow, Russians will be busy dancing to Ukrainian tunes. You'll hear them on the bus; find Griby t-shirts in gift shops and see parodies of their videos on social media. One Russian Griby fan said: "I don't care where they're from, they have their own style that makes them different to the pop we are used to." TMT

*"Virgilio Martinez takes all the elements of his homeland into deep consideration in creating his menu." - **David Gelb**, Chef's Table television series.*

1°C

Average temperature in Moscow during March.

2015

Year Russia and Peru sign strategic partnership.

Ceviche – a Peruvian dish based on raw fish cured in lemon juice.

THE WORD'S WORTH

Talking Like One of the Russian Guys

Слышь: Hey, listen up!

YEVGENY PARFYONOV

By Michele A. Berdy
Moscow-based translator and interpreter, author of "The Russian Word's Worth" (Glas), a collection of her columns.

Not every diplomat can become an overnight "хит интернета" (Internet hit) after just one speech at the United Nations. That honor goes to Vladimir Safronkov, deputy permanent representative from Russia, who publicly took to task Mathew Rycroft, the U.K. Ambassador to the U.N. last week.

The brouhaha was not because one delegate yelled at another delegate — that happens every day. And it wasn't because of the nature of Safronkov's accusations — everyone has heard Russia's version of the Syrian war a million times. No, the скандал (scandal) was over the way Safronkov spoke to his esteemed British colleague. Officially it was called достаточно жестко (sufficiently harsh). Unofficially it was called everything from грубое панибратство (crude over-familiarity) to приблатнённое хамство (obnoxious thug slang). In fact, much of the Internet thought he sounded like a гопник, one of those squatting, sunflower-seed-spitting, good ole boys who do manual labor and a bit of robbery on the side.

You wouldn't know this from the official transcripts, which cleaned up Safronkov's language, primarily switching his familiar, street-talking ты to the more decorous and collegial вы. So he didn't actually say: Посмотрите на меня и не отводите глаза (Look at me and don't look away). He said: Посмотри на меня! Глаза не отводи! Чё ты глаза отводишь? (Hey, look at me! At me, I said! Where you looking?) And he didn't end his tirade with the strong but literary: Не смейте, г-н Райкрофт, больше оскорблять Россию! (Don't you dare, Mr. Rycroft, insult Russia again!) He continued to use ты: Не смей оскорблять Россию больше! (Yo, quit putting Russia down!)

Should you ever need to put someone firmly in his place, let your business partners know how disappointed you are in them, or establish rules of behavior with your neighbors, you may want to master some гопник-talk. To channel your inner Russian Ratso Rizzo, all you have to do is remember a few simple rules.

First, forget the word что (what). Practice saying чё or чо. Cut it short and spit it out: Ты чё? (What's wid you?) Or stretch it out for five beats: Чё-ё-ё-ё-ё-ё? (What you saying? Say again. Are you nuts or what?) Чё нет? (Whadya mean, no?) should be used whenever you are displeased or surprised by someone's refusal. Чё да? (Whadya mean, yes?) should be used when you either require more information or when you think you've been disrespected.

Then, cut words in half. In fact, make as many words as possible one syllable, two at most. Remember: not слышите but слышь (listen); not сейчас or even щас, but ща (in a sec); not зажигалка but жига (lighter). The more adventurous could look to master the sound б—я [blya], (an abbreviation of a very nasty word for a woman of ill repute), which can be used to describe anything really good or really bad; to express surprise; and of course to address people, from your significant other to a salesperson. Or it can be added to any word to imbue it with a kind of cheery informality. For example, на, б—я is a friendly гопник way of asking someone to take your payment for goods of services.

And, best of all, eschew cases. Instead of Сколько времени, ask: Сколько время? (You got the time?)

Got it? Great. Next week: how to squat and spit sunflower seeds. TMT

MY MOSCOW

José Bustamante

By Emily Erken artsreporter@imedia.ru

Once an aspiring actor, the Peruvian Embassy's José Rodríguez Bustamante immerses himself in the arts

JOSE BUSTAMANTE

Jose Bustamante pursued a career in acting before turning to diplomacy.

José Roberto Rodríguez Bustamante is an actor, a poet, and the Counsellor at the Peruvian Embassy in Russia. Since his arrival in Moscow in 2015 with his wife, who was seven months pregnant at the time, Rodríguez Bustamante has immersed himself in Russian cultural life.

In March two years ago, I was working in Saudi Arabia, and I was called to ask if I wanted to go to Moscow to work. I said "Why not? Let's go!" I noticed the quantity of Russia's snow from the airplane. It was very impressive because I had come from Saudi Arabia. So I changed my life from plus 40 degrees to minus 14 degrees in the space of one week. The cold was the first shock, and the second was the heartbeat of the city.

At the end of 2015, Peru and Russia increased the level of their diplomatic relationship. The presidents signed a declaration in Paris, a strategic partnership. It includes all of the fields of cooperation, and keeps us busy.

At the end of last year, I moved to Frunzenskaya. My house is 200 meters from the Moskva river, and every morning when the day starts, I see the river through my window. It is a residential area for a quiet life, for families. It's what I missed when I was living on Tverskaya Street, right in the center of the city. I also like the peaceful atmosphere when I am walking along the Moskva River.

Maybe the thing I love most living in Moscow is learning about Russian culture and people. The Stanislavsky Theater is one of my all time favorites. I love drama and opera above all. But ballet is also a pleasure to see here in Moscow. All my life, I made theater. I was an actor: first as a hobby in my time at university, then professionally when I lived in Peru. I had to give up on my acting career in order to enter the diplomatic corps.

Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Music Theater, 17 Bolshaya Dmitrovka, Metro Chekhovskaya

I am personally convinced, 100 percent, that the best way to approach different cultural views of the world is through cultural liaisons. In Peru, we say that the best way to conquer the heart of a man is through the kitchen. But for me, it's through cultural life.

On the 17th of April, we presented Peruvian Week in Moscow at Chicha restaurant because it's a Russian restaurant with Peruvian foods. We presented alpaca wool clothing, make-up, cosmetics, tourism, gastronomy, Pisco – which is a national drink – and wine from Peru. The chefs have had a local experience in Peru, they studied with the most important internationally known chef in Latin America, Virgilio Martinez. They know how to cook Peruvian cuisine to Russian taste. It's a symbol of fusion. Ceviche is one of the national dishes of Peru. And it has to be accompanied by Pisco Sour, it's mandatory, ceviche plus Pisco Sour.

Chicha Peruvian, 31 Novinsky Bulvar, Metro Barrikadnaya
chicha.ru

We will close Peruvian week with a Peruvian piano concert on the 20th of April. We will invite Mr. Pablo Sabat, the Director of the Symphonic Youth Orchestra in Lima. He will do a piano concert in the Italian Courtyard in the Pushkin Museum. He will present some classic pieces from Latin American composers, and in the second part, he will play Russian composers. The day after, Mr. Pablo Sabat will offer a masterclass for the students of music at the Gnesin Institute.

artsmuseum.timepad.ru/event/475550/
State Museum of Fine Arts. A.S. Pushkin, Main Building
12 Ul. Volkhonka
M. Borovitskaya

I'm surprised what beauty you can find in the Metro system in Moscow. It's art. Ploshchad Revolyutsii is good, and I like Mayakovskaya. It's amazing how a metro station can be a literal piece of art.

Metro Ploshchad Revolyutsii. Metro Mayakovskaya

The Moscow Times
No. 5800

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

MOSKVA NEWS AGENCY

Built in 1694, the Sergeev Church now hosts daily services. The Trapeznaya cafeteria in the basement offers delicious (vegetarian) food and freshly-baked cinnamon rolls.

God and the Selfie Generation: A Monastery Reborn

By Emily Erken artsreporter@imedia.ru

Moscow's 700-year-old Vysoko-Petrovsky complex opens up to the world using the latest in smartphone technology

The twin gates of the Vysoko-Petrovsky Monastery beckon visitors into an oasis away from central Moscow's noisy streets. Inside the tall brick walls, children roughhouse in piles of snow, tourists snap photos, elderly beggars talk about their difficulties with heads held high. The Trapeznaya bakery yields heavenly smells of cinnamon rolls and pirogi.

For the monastery, it's a remarkable scene. After being shuttered for years under the Soviets, Vysoko-Petrovsky has returned to life. It became an active monastery again in 2009. Soon after, the Russian federal budget began to fund renovations in the compound's churches and Patriarch Kirill started returning its famous icons. The monastery now has 12 monks, 20 workers and seven churches.

But the most important development is human: A group of young men are taking a page out of the Protestant activism playbook to build a grassroots community around the monastery. Children and young adults now come here to learn more about the Orthodox faith.

The youthful looking Deacon Roman Krinitsyn plays a leading role in the outreach program. Dressed in flowing black robes, he speaks with a seriousness that befits his role as head of pilgrimage services. But he is also a man of the modern world. Every few minutes, he pulls an Android phone from underneath his oversized sleeves to check his WhatsApp messages.

He is a treasure trove of information about the history of the monastery. Its story starts in 1315, Krinitsyn says, when Metropolitan Peter ended a struggle between the principalities of Moscow and Tver by establishing the Holy See in Moscow. From that moment, the Orthodox Patriarchy remained closely connected with the Russian Tsars as they cemented control of the Eastern Slavic world.

Like their imperial predecessors, the Soviets used the Vysoko-Petrovsky Monastery for its symbolic value. But their approach was rather different, installing factories inside each of the magnificent churches. They built a kindergarten over graves to aristocrats and Orthodox saints. As if that wasn't enough, engineers building the Moscow metro dumped piles of dirt inside the monastery walls. Krinitsyn estimates two to four meters of dirt lie above the original ground level.

The monsastery was closed soon after the Soviet government took power. Over time, Vysoko-Petrovsky's 200-strong community disintegrated, and nine of the monks were shot. They are now consecrated saints.

Soon after the break up of the Soviet Union, the State Duma made a ruling to return all confiscated buildings to the church. By the end of the 1990s, the factories had vacated, though the kindergarten remains to this day.

In restoring the monastery, religious leaders have prioritized its future over past history. Krinitsyn organizes tours for new visitors, including adventure tours for children. Another deacon organizes a women's service group that visits the sick in hospitals every week.

The monastery has a new theological school, offering free free two-year courses (there are now 40 participants.) Children also attend a Sunday school at the monastery, where, like their Western counterparts, they learn the basics of religion through arts, crafts and music.

THE VYSOKO-PETROVSKY MONASTERY

Abbot Pyotr Eremeev judges the Easter egg painting festival.

Georgy Tarasov, a viola student at the Moscow Conservatory, leads Vysoko-Petrovsky's youth group. After one year, it has gathered about 200 members. Like Protestant youth groups, they organize excursions and musical nights, and invite famous people to talk about their spiritual journeys. Another conservatory student runs a youth choir.

"Young people feel the need for some kind of spirituality," Tarasov told The Moscow Times, "Everything has become free and open, and young people have become interested themselves, independent of who their parents are."

The younger clergy are also getting their hands dirty. Twenty-three-year-old Inok Makarii, who only received Holy Orders from Patriarch Kirill on April 12, 2017, maintains the monastery's website, takes official photographs, and uploads them to social media.

Evangelism is certainly an unusual step for the monastery. Located in the capital of Russian Orthodoxy, it was never in need of patrons or parishioners. But the new Vysoko-Petrovsky finds itself in a different place, and is committed to rebuilding its former community along with its historic churches.

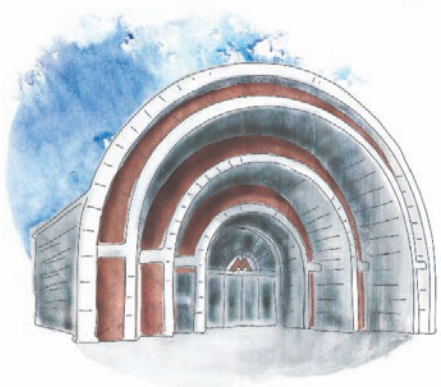
"Our future is our connection with the past," Krinitsyn says, before changing his billowing robes for a black leather jacket and jeans, and heading out through the iron gates. TMT

The Vysoko-Petrovsky monastery is open to the public every day. Tours are available by contacting Deacon Roman Krinitsyn on palomnik@vpmon.ru
28/2 Ulitsa Petrovka, daily 7am - 7pm
Metro Chekhovskaya, Pushkinskaya

Krasniye Vorota and Lermontovskaya Ploshchad

By Daria Demidova artsreporter@imedia.ru | Illustration by Alexandra Korolyova

Area takes its name from a triumphal arch that disappeared in the 1920s.



1) The Krasnye Vorota Metro Station's Southern Pavillion

The southern entrance to Krasnye Vorota station – a white-and-red pavilion encased in four embedded arches – reflects a shift in avant-garde architecture toward unsophisticated and simple forms. During construction, the project team struggled to prevent floods and potential rock collapses. At the last minute, engineers realised they had forgotten to add air vents. Luckily, they managed to get them from the factory and add them in time.

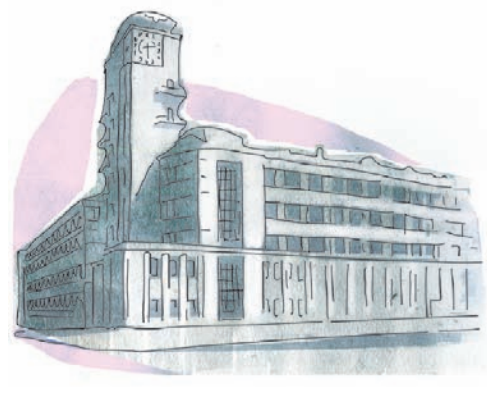
In 1952, Krasniye Vorota station was chosen as the first station to be fitted with the Moscow metro's new, cutting-edge turnstile system.

2) Krasniye Vorota Skyscraper
21 Sadovo-Spasskaya Ulitsa

One of the so-called Seven Sisters, this skyscraper marks the highest point of the Garden Ring. The major construction challenge was the shaft of Krasnye Vorota station's northern entrance, which could have caused the soil to collapse. So the engineers came up with an unprecedented solution: they froze the soil and deliberately tilted the 133-meter structure to one side so that it would settle downward when the soil thawed.

3) Lermontov Statue

City authorities came up with the idea for this memorial in 1941 to commemorate the centenary of Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov's death. To this end, they chose a site close to Lermontov's actual birthplace and gentrified the area. This is how Lermontovskaya Ploshchad got its name. But World War II thwarted plans for the monument, and it only opened in 1965. With the wind blowing his coat, the poet looks far away with eyes full of sorrow.



4) The seasonal worker

In the back of the garden, a 1929 statue depicts an old craftsman. The lean bearded man came here to seek a job and now is sitting in deep contemplation, paying no heed to the buzz of the city. Located on a former market of seasonal employment. The statue is the work of Ivan Shadr, author of the emblematic Girl with an Oar. The story goes that he embodies his father, a carpenter, in this figure.

5) The Ministry of Transport Engineering Clinic
5 Novaya Basmannaya Ulitsa

The robust locomotive house is matched by the sleek ministerial clinic, a rare example of Soviet Art Deco. Also designed by Fomin, the building's two long blocks link with a short one in the shape of a thunderbolt. The blocks have the rounded endings, which encase the stairwells. A line of columns support the second floor, which is lined with continuous sash windows, a voguish feature by that time.

Deep underground the Krasnye Vorota metro station housed the command center supervising transport routes during WWII.

6) The Locomotive House
2/1 Novaya Basmannaya Ulitsa, Bldg. 1

The founders of constructivism seldom redid someone else's work. But this house is an exception. An 18th-century warehouse for food stockpiles, it survived the 1812 invasion of Napoleon's army and escaped demolition. In 1932, architect Ivan Fomin stripped the building of excessive décor, reshaped windows and added two more stories as well as a corner tower resembling a chimney – hence the nickname "locomotive house.".

NOFAR

The appetizers at Nofar are a selection of meze in small dishes.

Nofar, so good

By Alastair Gill a.gill@imedia.ru

Arkady Novikov and Uilliam Lamberti team up to bring the taste of Morocco to Moscow

It's no surprise that Morocco has attracted generations of Western travelers in the last century: Tantalisingly close to Europe, it's an intoxicating assault on the senses, an alien land of startling beauty, disarming hospitality and ancient traditions.

The cuisine is as kaleidoscopic as the country's cities, medinas and markets. The pillars of Moroccan food are olives, chickpeas, preserved lemons and couscous, allied with the trinity of saffron, harissa (a paste made from red chilis and other spices) and ras el hanout, a medley of top-quality spices. This all finds its ultimate expression in the tagine—a slow-cooked meat and vegetable stew typically served in a ceramic pot with a conical lid.

So it's a mystery that Moroccan cuisine has yet to take off in Moscow, but two of the biggest names on the local dining scene are doing their bit. Arkady Novikov and Uilliam Lamberti have joined forces to open Nofar, one of the latest recruits to the growing restaurant scene around Kievskaya.

It's not easy to find, hidden in a building that was formerly part of the Badayev brewery complex, a fenced-off zone undergoing large-scale renovation.

Although Nofar pitches itself as a Moroccan restaurant, connoisseurs will quickly spot that around half of the items on the menu appear distinctly Israeli/Lebanese. In fact, the restaurant takes its name from the woman who developed the menu, who comes from Israel. The brand chef? Also from Israel. In fact, there's not a Moroccan in sight.

Still, at least Nofar offers tagine, and what a tagine it is. A version of the dish with rabbit, dried fruit and ras el hanout for 900 rubles ($16) turned out to be a contender for the best dish I have ever enjoyed in Moscow—a heavenly mound of tender coney, red onion, potato and golden raisins soaked in a symphony of spices.

So the decision to serve it buried under a compost heap of dill fronds was all the more mind-boggling—haven't we moved on from this? When asked for an explanation—and for the record, Moroccan cuisine does not use dill—the waitress blushed and proffered excuses, arguing that the popularity of the "herb" in Russia justified the decision. Happily the weed was easily removed.

The accompanying couscous was steamed to perfection and passed the key test, breaking easily into separate grains, its creamy fluffiness the perfect companion for the heady spices of the tagine.

The appetizers are a selection of meze in small dishes at 300 rubles apiece. The waiter's recommendation of creamed eggplant with paprika was no more than an overpriced cracker dip, but the roasted carrot salad with harissa was a true Moroccan tapa, with tangy tones of garlic, coriander and chili.

Moroccans drink so much mint tea that it is known as "Moroccan whiskey," and Nofar's (400 rubles) is the equal of anything you'll get there, without the sugar. Here it's served as it should be, stuffed with fresh mint, and the addition of red peppercorns and cinnamon lends it the subtlest tones of spice.

There are two dining halls and a mezzanine, but make sure you get a table in the inner hall, which is lavishly decorated with bright cushions, rugs and comfy sofa seating. It may be half-Israeli, but come for the tagine and you won't regret it.

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facebook.com/nofarrest/
12 Kutuzovsky Prospekt, Bldg. 3
Metro Kievskaya

NEWS & OPENINGS

FARSH

Farsh
Steaks at a burger chain

Farsh is a burger chain by Moscow's leading restaurateur Arkady Novikov. Farsh prides itself on the quality of its burgers (from 280 rubles) supplied by Miratorg meat producer. Farsh branch on Komsomolsky Prospekt started offering steaks made with Black Angus beef. The steaks are alternative cuts like Top Blade, Denver, and New York. Each weighs about 90 gams and costs just 480 rubles with a side of fries.

+7 (495) 937 8848
farshburger.ru
24 Komsomolsky Prospekt, Bldg. 1
Metro Frunzenskaya

SITO

Sito
Greek food at a night club

Sito cafe opened a new outpost inside the Squat ¾ space, famous for their electronic music parties, gothic interiors and bohemian atmosphere. Sito serves traditional Greek fare, its specialty being peynirli, boat shaped Greek pizza. You can get it with cheese and tomatoes, cheese and bacon, as well ground meat (from 250 to 380 rubles). There's also moussaka, a layered potato-based dish (350 rubles), as well as Greek salad (250 rubles) and kebab in a pita bread.

facebook.com/SITO-877608818976212 3
3 Teatralny Proyezd, Bldg. 4
Metro Teatralnaya, Lubyanka

BLACKSTARBURGER

Black Star
Burgers from a rap star

Black Star burger chain just added a second location on Tsvetnoy Bulvar. Black star was opened by Timati, probably the most popular Russian rapper. The first cafe generated so much hype, there were hour-long lines. There are ten types of burger in total, but the most popular is a VIP burger (777 rubles) with feta cheese, truffle sauce and blackcurrant jam. The VIP burger comes on a plate with fireworks.

+7 (929) 638 9817
blackstarburger.ru
11/2 Ulitsa Tsvetnoy Bulvar
Metro Tsvetnoy Bulvar

KITAYSKIE NOVOSTI

Kitayskie Novosti
Authentic Chinese

After the closure of Kitayskie Novosti (Chinese News) on Tverskaya street, another one just opened on Novy Arbat. Kitayskie Novosti serve Chinese dishes hard to find elsewhere in the city, like Taiwanese style "three cup" chicken or pork xialongbao dumplings served in bamboo baskets (390 rubles). Several dishes were added to the menu specifically for the Arbat branch, such as a lamb soup with daikon.

+7 (495) 960 8746
chinanews.moscow
17 Ulitsa Novy Arbat
Metro Arbatskaya

7 Places to Pick Up a Souvenir Your Relatives Might Actually Like

Instead of cramming your suitcase with nesting dolls and wooden spoons, search these shops for auteur scarves, modern pottery, cheeky rings, and historic porcelain.

Brusnika
Sweaters for the adventurous
Brusnika is a brand-boutique for daring fashionistas. Designers use natural materials, including fur, wool, and even feathers to gives off a confident cool. These sweaters are are costly – the embellished knit sweater runs for 11,800 rubles ($210) and a cropped lambswool cardigan for 7,300 rubles ($130) – but the collection frequently goes on sale.
brusnikabrand.com
39/2 Ul. 2-ya Bretskaya
Metro Mayakovskaya

Click-Boutique ↓
Russian brands for local teens
Click-Boutique stocks clothing and accessories for every budget. The Kolesnikov collection of light-hearted metal cat rings is only 350 rubles ($6). For a more substantial gift, go for funky silver earrings in animal shapes by Snifferson for 2,990 ($53) rubles or the Lokus line of leather backpack-purses for 9,990 rubles ($178), perfect for a chic teenage look.
Click-boutique.ru
9 Bolshaya Dmitrovka, Entrance 1, 3rd Floor
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RADICAL CHIC

Scarves are useful in Russia. Radical Chic offers tem in over 50 original styles.

Tea-Coffee Shop on Myasnitskaya
Sweet treats for afternoon tea
Nestled in the building where tea importers Perlov and Sons hawked their wares in 1893, the Tea Shop on Myasnitskaya offers the widest selection of cookies, Russian soufflé, gingerbreads and chocolate-coated waffles, all packed in beautiful boxes for around 500 rubles ($8). Alternatively, choose a simple black tea and pair it with a jar of honey or fruit preserves for 800 rubles ($14).
chai-cofe.com
19 Myasnitskaya Ulitsa
Metro Turgenevskaya, Chistiye Prudy

Moskva: My Favorite Bookstore
Coffee table books for higher minds
One of the city's largest bookstores, Moskva features a wide array of coffee table books, many of which are in English. Themes include architecture, ballet, painting and design from all over the world. Prices are reasonable for high quality photographic printing. Check out "Kandinsky and the Harmony of Silence" for 3123 rubles ($55), and "Russian Elegance. Country and City Fashion" for 774 rubles ($14).
moscowbooks.ru
8/1 Ulitsa Tverskaya
Metro Chekhovskaya

Dymov-Keramika →
Contemporary pottery from medieval Suzdal
Pottery is the millennials' version of your grandmother's porcelain collection. Dymov-Keramika creates contemporary place settings for Moscow's trendy restaurants, such as the spider collection tea cup for 1,080 rubles ($19), a black-baked salad bowl for 1,940 rubles ($34). Dymov-Keramika holds workshops for those who want to make their own, and they have a café on site.
dymovceramic.ru
VDNKh, building 186
Metro VDNKh


DYMOV-KERAMIKA

Radical Chic
Wearable works of art
Radical Chic offers inimitable silk print scarves. Designs include whimsical foxes and wolves, romantic cityscapes, and luscious floral palettes. Pocket-handkerchiefs run for 2,680 rubles ($47), medium square scarves go for 9,360 ($166) rubles, and large shawls cost 14,380 ($256) rubles.
radicalchic.ru
19/6 Bolshoi Kozikhinsky Pereulok
Metro Pushkinskaya, Mayakovskaya


THE IMPERIAL PORCELAIN FACTORY

Imperial Porcelain No. 15 ↑
Treasures from Russian history
The Imperial Porcelain Factory opened in 1744 and, to this day, Russians rich and poor collect replicas of their historic teacup and saucer sets. The gold-plated Cobalt Tulip set (two cups, two saucers, a teapot, and a sugar pot) will set you back around 28,000 rubles ($500), but you can also purchase a single teacup for 3,325 rubles ($59). The factory also produces "agitation porcelain" designed by early Soviet artists, including a teacup and saucer by the potter S. V. Chekhonin for 931 rubles ($16), and a three-piece geometric tea set by Kazimir Malevich for 237,500 rubles ($4,228).
ipm.ru
27/1 Ulitsa Tverskaya
Metro Belorusskaya

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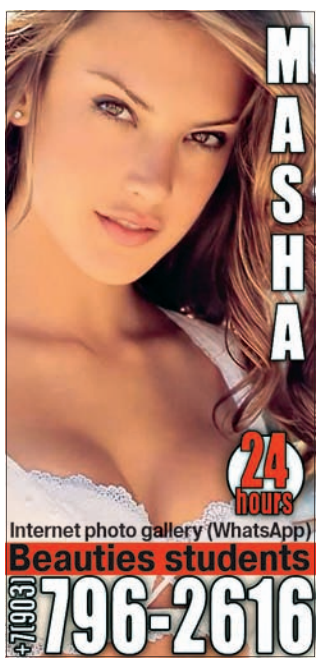

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Happiness on Canvas: Serebryakova at the Tretyakov

By Ruth Moore artsreporter@imedia.ru | Photos by Tretyakov Gallery

It's fitting that the Tretyakov Gallery's major retrospective dedicated to Zinaida Serebryakova coincides with the arrival of spring in Moscow. The 20th century Russian artist is known for her bright, joyful paintings and self-portraits.

The current exhibition focuses on the Russian period of Serebryakova's career. It was a time the artist would later refer to as her "happy years."

"What you sense from this collection of paintings is that she loved the life she had," Tatyana Yermakova, the curator of the exhibition, tells The Moscow Times. "It's tangible from the paintings she created."

The current exhibition boasts the largest collection of Serebryakova's works in over 30 years. It is a sequel to the gallery's well-received 2014 retrospective, which was dedicated to Serebryakova's life as an emigre in Paris following the 1917 Revolution. Organizers hope the current exhibition will acquaint a new generation with the artist, as well as delighting her many existing admirers.

The gallery began online ticket sales two weeks before the exhibition opened, capitalizing on the huge public interest in the show.

"She's an artist that is very much loved by the Russian public," says Yermakova.

Serebryakova was born into an artistic family. Her uncle, Alexander Benois, was a founding member of the art movement Mir Iskusstva, to which Serebryakova loosely belonged.

Yet Serebryakova didn't have the structured artistic education of her contemporaries. She incorporated styles such as realism, impressionism and neoclassicism into her works, which often depicted her friends, family and everyday life.

"She was a very independent artist," says Yermakova. "A lot of the works from her period in Russia were her own creations, inspired by the beauty she saw in the world around her."

Serebryakova's calling card, "At the Dressing Table: Self Portrait" (1909), was the painting that first brought her critical acclaim. Exuding youthful exuberance, expressive sensuality and a striking use of light, the work was acquired by the Tretyakov Gallery in 1910.

But while the Russian public may know Serebryakova best for her self-portraits, Yermakova is keen for visitors to become acquainted with the full range of her work.

"Serebryakova didn't paint a large number of self-portraits because she was vain," says Yermakova. "It was because she was the type of artist who only worked with what she knew."

The exhibition boasts over 200 works, including an entire room is dedicated to a series of paintings and drawings of her children. Many are from private collections and have never before been exhibited to the public.

According to Yermakova, it is the joy and beauty of Serebryakova's paintings that have made her so popular. The artist's brush could give everyday scenes an epic, almost ephemeral quality.

But the "happy years" couldn't last. As with many others, the Revolution proved to be a seismic event for Serebryakova.

During the unrest, her family estate in Neskuchnoye — near Kharkiv, Ukraine — was plundered and burnt down, along with many of her artworks. Her husband was arrested and died in 1919 of typhus, which he contracted in a Bolshevik jail. Serebryakova suddenly found herself widowed and the sole breadwinner for four children, as well as for her ailing mother.

She was forced to move to Petrograd — present-day St. Petersburg — and swapped oil paints for more affordable materials like pastel and charcoal.

Struggling to find work, she accepted a commission in Paris in 1924 with the plan of earning some quick money. However, the Soviet authorities prevented Serebryakova from returning home. She was able to bring her two youngest children to live with her in France, but the older two remained in Russia.

Life wasn't easy for Serebryakova in Paris, She admitted that she struggled creatively abroad and longed for her homeland and family.

Yermakova chose Serebryakova's monumental canvas "Bleaching Cloth" (1917) as the centerpiece of the exhibition. In it, peasant women at work are framed majestically against a low horizon. Smooth lines and a tranquil stateliness imbue the simple scene with an epic meaning.

"It's one of the last paintings she completed at Neskuchnoye in 1917," says Yermakova. "It was the year of the revolution and the big, happy peasant world so admired by Serebryakova was about to change forever." TMT

Zinaida Serebryakova is on show at the Engineering Complex of the Tretyakov Gallery through April 30.
tretyakovgallery.ru
12 Lavrushinsky Pereulok
Metro Tretyakovskaya

Japan (Odalisque), 1916; Boys in Sailor Shirts, 1919; Persia, 1916