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to view everything from a great height.*

*Joseph Chamberlain*



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# Welcome to Russia ...

## Editorial

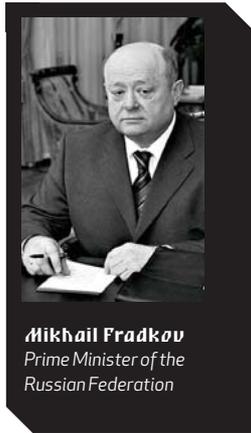
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**Mikhail Fradkov**  
Prime Minister of the Russian Federation

I offer participants and guests of the 59th World Newspaper Congress and 13th World Editors Forum the warmest of welcomes. Russia considers it a tremendous honor to host this most important meeting of the world's newspaper elite, and, with this, representatives of over 100 different countries.

The Forum and Congress have set themes this year to reflect the global trends in the newspaper business. Of course, it will be no secret to delegates that newspapers right across the globe are encountering difficult times. In this rapidly changing world, the competition from television, online and other electronic media is immense.

It is impossible not to admire the inventiveness with which the newspaper industry has set about responding to these significant challenges. It seems to me to be clear that, rather than objecting to circumstance, the industry has adapted, innovated and made its publications even more competitive. There can be no doubt that a large proportion of the credit for this success lies with publishers and editors.

I hope the conference will provide delegates with the most useful of professional exchanges, and offer unforgettable memories of both Moscow and Russia.



**Published by The Moscow Times at the request of Russia's Guild of Press Publishers for the 59th World Newspaper Congress and 13th World Editors Forum**

Publisher .....Maxine Maters

The Moscow Times  
3 Ulitsa Polkovaya, Bldg. 1  
127018 Moscow  
www.themoscowtimes.com

**Printed by Extra-M Media**  
Km23 of the Baltiya highway, p/o Krasnogorsk-5  
143400 Krasnogorsk district, Moscow region  
www.extra-m-media.ru

Print run 3,500



**Yury Luzhkov**  
Mayor of Moscow

Allow me to extend a warm welcome to Moscow to all participants in this international press summit. Hosting the world's journalistic elite from over 100 countries is both a great honor and a great responsibility for Russia. And the experience will also prove an extremely valuable one for the Russian editors and publishers involved, I am sure.

The Russian press marked its 300th anniversary in 2003, as historians tell us that in 1703, during the reign of Peter the Great, the first Russian newspaper – Vedomosti – made its appearance. The three centuries since then have seen both hard times and glorious moments for the Russian press. In the new Russia of today, the press has become free; but the right to be free and the skill to use that freedom are, as we have seen, two different things. The difficult conditions of the post-Soviet transition have combined with a lack of market experience to bring us to a point where our press is now pluralistic, but still not, in many cases, economically independent.

We see our task now as twofold: to help the mass media reach economic independence and at the same time to ensure access for our readers to the printed word. Newspapers are a means of interactive communication with the population. The problem of distribution and access to the press becomes less an infrastructural and more a political one, and a priority for our city government.

Once again, welcome. We wish you all productive professional exchanges and an unforgettable time in Moscow and Russia.

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Cover courtesy of the Mayakovsky Museum



# Dear colleagues,



**Gavin O'Reilly**  
WAN President

The world's press gathers here in Moscow at an important and historic time for both the global newspaper industry and for the media in Russia.

The huge participation in this year's events – more than 1,500 publishers, editors and their guests from 110 countries (the largest attendance in WAN's history) – are proof in my mind of two factors: first, that the themes of our conferences have seized on the most crucial issues currently facing our business; second, that we share a fascination for the great Russian nation and a desire to discover more about its life, politics, culture and history.

These are exciting times for newspapers, times of unparalleled innovation and change. We have much to learn from one another, as we all continue to experiment with new print models and strategies and new digital distribution channels in an effort to provide the best possible solutions to the changing needs of our readers and advertisers.

Over the next several days we will be looking, in our business sessions, at how some of the best companies in our industry are grappling with the twin challenges of increasing our print operations while exploiting to the full the opportunities provided by the new digital media platforms – and, of course, creating synergies between the two.

Outside the conference halls, at special breakfast and lunch discussions and, late into the night, at marvelous receptions and dinners offered by our hosts at the Russian Guild of Press Publishers and their partners, we will examine "Russia Beyond the Headlines," endeavoring as best as we can to grasp the complexities of this nation at the beginning of the 21st century.

From all accounts, it is clear that the Russian press has more than its fair share of challenges: low readership, low public credibility and an apparent unwillingness of authorities at the national, regional and local levels to let it do its job without pressure or hindrance. Developing the strong, professional, independent, influential and free press necessary for democracy to flourish remains a day-to-day struggle of immense proportions.

WAN hopes, modestly and with full awareness of the size of the challenge, that its presence here in Moscow will give our Russian colleagues new faith in the future of our great business and, above all, confidence that it is worth fighting for.

Welcome to Moscow. I wish you an excellent and productive conference.



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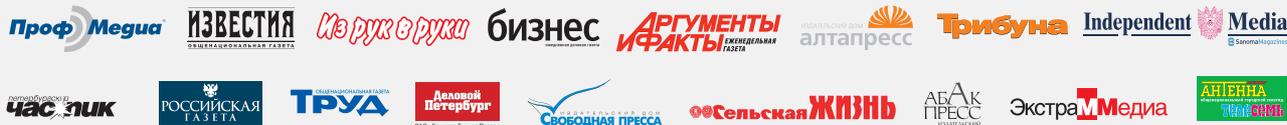
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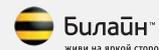
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# Publishers Pool

Hosts of the 59th World Newspaper Congress and 13th World Editors Forum

## Independent Media



SanomaMagazines

### Independent Media publishing house

IM began publishing in 1992 with the English-language daily The Moscow Times. Today, its main trade is in glossy publications, both women's and men's: the former include Cosmopolitan, Good Housekeeping, Harper's Bazaar, Yes!, Seasons and Yoga Journal, while the second group comprises Men's Health, Popular Mechanics, Robb Report Russia and Esquire. The other high priority for the firm is business news: Its assets here include The Moscow Times, The St. Petersburg Times and Vedomosti (a daily founded jointly with the Financial Times and The Wall Street Journal); the weekly Smart Money; and the b2b-format magazine Agrobusiness.

### Abak-Press holding company

Abak-Press is an interregional publishing and printing company whose core units are the weekly business magazine Business Quarter and the specialty magazine Ya Pokupayu (shopping), aimed at Moscow consumers of premium-class goods and services. The company also has a sizeable group of localized publications, including Ves Dom (interior design), Bizness i Zhizn (business and lifestyle), TekhSovet (technology); the newspapers Nasha Gazeta and Derzai; a group of b2b- and b2c-format reference works; and a business Internet portal ([www.dkvartal.ru](http://www.dkvartal.ru)). The publishing house also has its own press.



### AiF publishing house

AiF (Arguments and Facts) publishing grew from the weekly newspaper of the same name, which was founded in 1978. The weekly is the leader among Russian newspapers in both print run (3 million copies) and audience size (over 11 million readers). In 1990, the paper's print run of 33,400,000 copies was entered in the Guinness Book of Records. Today, the company owns the most powerful distribution network in Russia, running some 50 regional enterprises; country-wide it can claim nearly 2,000 owned and affiliated retail kiosks.



### Altapress publishing house

Founded in 1990, Altapress is now one of the country's largest regional media holding companies. The firm comprises 11 publications, among

which figure the general-interest newspaper Svobodny Kurs; the family-oriented television guide Telepark; the business newspaper Vashe Delo; the classifieds paper Kupi-Prodai; a youth-oriented paper for the Altai region; and the glossy magazine Komiflo. Altapress maintains one of the most popular regional Internet portals ([www.altapress.ru](http://www.altapress.ru)) and a radio station. The company's press regularly publishes 34 newspapers and 11 journals in addition to its own, while its distribution system includes some 300 retail outlets.



### Gazprom-Media holding company

Founded in 1998, Gazprom-Media is currently the largest media holding company in Russia and is additionally one of the largest in Europe. The company's newspaper assets include Izvestia, Russia's most famous national daily, which dates from 1917, and Tribuna, which serves as a free forum of opinion for employers, business-owners, labor organizations, ethnic and religious groups and NGOs. The company has additionally, since 1990, published the analytical weekly Peterburgsky Chas Pik (St Petersburg Rush Hour).

### Delevoi Peterburg weekly business newspaper

The business weekly for Russia's northern capital, Delevoi Peterburg (Business Petersburg) offers readers a broad spectrum of information from both city and region. The paper's publisher, Bonnier Business Press, is a subdivision of the oldest publishing house in Sweden, Bonnier Group, which publishes business dailies in 10 European countries; Sweden, Denmark, Russia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Austria, Slovenia and Bulgaria; and a business weekly in Croatia.



### Prof-Media holding company

Established in 1997 for the strategic management of the Interros company's media holdings, Prof-Media is today the largest private diversified media holding company in Russia, a leader in the newspaper, magazine, radio and film markets. The company's principal newspapers are Komsomolskaya Pravda, Express-Gazeta and Sovetsky Sport. Guiding the company are principles of honesty, transparency and openness. As such, Prof-Media is audited annually to international accounting standards by Deloitte & Touche.

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**Trud national newspaper**

Trud (Labor) first appeared in 1921 and today has a general print run of 1,580,000. Trud serves as a forum for a wide range of figures, and aims to defend society and civil harmony from a position of political neutrality.

**InterMediaGroup publishing house**

IMG's principal asset is the national urban television guide Antenna-Telesem, which comes out in 55 Russian cities and three CIS capitals. A-T boasts the largest national print-run figures and the largest audience among all Russia's print media: Its peak run of Dec. 28, 2005, was 4,741,235 copies. As of 2005-06, A-T has been offered to readers in a more convenient, A4 magazine format.



**Коммерсантъ**

**Kommersant publishing house**

Established in 1990, Kommersant was the first private publishing house to open in the Soviet Union. Its holdings include the daily national business paper Kommersant, one of the most authoritative and influential publications in Russia. Beyond its business daily the company also issues the analytical weekly Vlast (Power), which specializes in the technologies and secrets of the powers that be in Russia and in the world; the economic weekly Dengi (Money), focusing on how to make, keep and spend money; and the monthly Avtopilot (Autopilot), which offers news of the Russian and international automobile markets.

**Rossiiskaya Gazeta daily national newspaper**

Chartered by the government of the Russian Federation in November, 1990, Rossiiskaya Gazeta is both the official publication of the Russian state and a broader-based publication for readers interested in news, features and interviews with state officials, in addition to expert commentary on state documents. The daily print-run exceeds 400,000 copies. The paper is printed in 35 cities, appearing with regional inserts and thematic supplements.



**БИЗНЕС**  
ежедневная деловая газета

**Sekret Firmy publishing house**

The business weekly Sekret Firmy (Company Secret) was set up in 2001; three years later the publishing house of the same name was established. The publisher is now the only vertically integrated company in the Russian publishing market with equal offline and online capabilities: The former include the magazines Sekret Firmy (business) and Imeyesh Pravo (consumer affairs), the newspapers Biznes, Vse Yasno (philosophy), and a book publishing operation; the latter include Russia's leading online publication gazeta.ru.

**Svobodnaya Pressa publishing house**

Svobodnaya Pressa (Free Press) is one of the largest publishing houses in central Russia. Active in the mass-media market for over a dozen years, its weekly newspapers now appear in press runs of 645,000 copies in Voronezh, Volgograd, Belgorod, Lipetsk, Tambov, Kursk and other cities. These are independent, politically neutral, mass publications, including general-interest papers, entertainment publications and a free informational-advertising directory. Svobodnaya Pressa is part of the larger holding company Eurasia Press-21st Century.

**Сельская ЖИЗНЬ**

**Selskaya Zhizn national newspaper**

Selskaya Zhizn (Village Life) is a national publication whose history traces back to the daily Bednota (Poverty) from 1918. Already carrying its current name, the paper peaked in 1975 with a print-run of 9,000,000. The latest stage in the paper's life began in 1991, when it was re-registered as a publication for the defense of economic, political, social and legal rights of the rural population. Selskaya Zhizn remains a mass-audience socio-political newspaper known for its analytical approach in covering political and economic issues and the problems of the agro-industrial complex.

**Из рук в руки**

**Pronto-Moskva holding company**

Over its 14-year history, Pronto-Moskva has emerged as the largest media holding company in Russia. Specializing in advertising publications, the company today includes over 120 media projects in its fold and boasts the widest regional chain throughout Russia, the CIS countries and the Baltic republics. The company's principal asset is the group of publications issued under the trademark Iz Ruk v Ruki (From Hand to Hand) in 97 cities of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Lithuania. Along with its print media, the company includes Internet portals, a television station, a marketing communications agency and a call center.

**ЭкстраММедиа**

**Extra-M Media publishing house**

One of the largest publishing houses in Russia, Extra-M Media includes a publishing concern, a printing complex and a distribution service. The monthly print-run of the group's free advertising and informational-advertising newspapers runs into the tens of millions of copies. Among its offerings are Extra-M, the most popular advertising publication in Moscow; Okruga (Districts), a free weekly city paper; and various magazines, directories and catalogs. The typographical complex offers printing on chalk-overlay paper, in which it has become the unquestioned leader in the field.



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# Russia: Never the Stereotype

11 time zones (GMT+2 to GMT+12)

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60,000 km of borders from Norway to Korea

Area - 17 million sq km

Population - 143 million (urban population 73.3%)

Religion - Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism



Faced with unrelenting news feeds of Russian woe, it is sometimes difficult to form an accurate picture of life inside the world's largest country.

In reality, that picture is extremely diverse.

Russia is itself a country of many countries, home to over 100 nationalities and ethnic groups. Vast in size, it is the same one territory that holds together the megalopolis of Moscow, imperial capital of St. Petersburg, behemoth industrial towns in the Urals and tiny wooden homes tucked away in the breathtaking reliefs of the Far East. [For reports from all corners of Russia, turn the page.]

Russia is also a country in the middle of a transformation, sometimes brash,

often subtle. There is a new economy, with much potential and some real successes, while in the arts and sciences a generation of talented professionals are reinterpreting Russia's rich heritage with an appetite for renovation and reform. [For Russia's more unusual successes, see page 13.]

Of course, for all that the country now shares with the rest of the world, there will always be something irreducibly unique about Russia. At times exasperatingly irrational, at others magically enigmatic, a charge of monotony is something that you can never lay at her door. [To see how well you actually understand Russia, take our quick test on page 14.] **o**

# File Russia: Reporting the World's Largest Country

Five Moscow Times journalists file stories from across Russia



## Khutor Sadovy

By Maria Levitov

In Khutor Sadovy, a town of 1,000 people in the southern Krasnodar region, a former Soviet state farm that grew grapes is trying to reinvent itself as a modern winery called Chateau Grand Vostock.

In an effort to live up to its new name, the winery brought in a young French couple, both graduates of the National School of Agriculture in Bordeaux, to teach French winemaking techniques.

Nikolai Pinchyuk, who has headed the winery since 1986 and led its privatization, says the poor reputation of Russian wines is the greatest obstacle. "Russian consumers have been duped one time too many," he says.

Krasnodar's wineries now produce 20 percent of all wine consumed in Russia but they have not benefited as much from double-digit growth in Russia's wine market as imports have. This could change, though, if the government does not lift a ban imposed in March on wines from Georgia and Moldova, which were the most popular imports.



## Tolyatti

By Anna Smolchenko

Tolyatti, home to Russia's biggest carmaker, AvtoVAZ, and its joint venture with General Motors, has been a rough place in which to do business and work as a journalist. In the 1990s, shootouts and contract murders were common as rival gangs fought for control over AvtoVAZ and its dealerships. Six journalists, including two successive editors of a local newspaper, have been killed since 1995, most because of their efforts to report on the car business.

AvtoVAZ, maker of the clunky Lada, landed on the Kremlin's radar screen late last year. The longtime manager resigned after meeting with President Vladimir Putin, who then sent in the head of the state arms dealer, an old colleague from the KGB, to take charge.

When I visited the plant, I walked through a maze of grim production lines with equipment dating from the 1970s. The new management is counting on a hefty injection of petrodollars to build a new plant and already claims to be making progress toward restoring order. But when I was there, the newly appointed general director was still accompanied everywhere by armed guards and drove an imported car, a Toyota Land Cruiser.



## Nefteyugansk

By Catherine Belton

Arriving in Nefteyugansk, a bleak west Siberian oil town, is like reaching the front line of the Russian state's battle for control of its energy resources.

At the heart of the town is production unit Yuganskneftegaz, whose vast oil fields in the surrounding marshes produce almost as much crude as Indonesia. When the Kremlin embarked on a drive to regain control of the nation's oil riches, it zeroed in on Yugansk as the prize unit in jailed tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky's Yukos oil empire.

Oil workers feared for their future when prosecutors froze the company's earnings in 2004. "Psychologically, it was very difficult," says Vladimir Semigan, who works at Yugansk's Priobskoye field. "We didn't know what was going to happen to us."

Now that state-owned Rosneft has taken over the unit following a forced sale at a knockdown price, the Yugansk headquarters have been repainted. Rosneft's slogans in white, black and gold appear everywhere.

Residents are still waiting to see, however, if state ownership will improve their lives.



### Ulan-Ude

By Stephen Boykewich

There's more than a little out of Gogol in Ulan-Ude, the capital of Buryatia, where a reporter can cause a sensation just by stepping out of the shadow of the world's largest Lenin head and announcing himself in the building of the regional administration.

Cries of "A journalist from Moscow!" ring from desk to desk, and if the president of the republic isn't available for an on-the-spot interview, the apologies are numerous and sincere.

Far as it is from Moscow, Buryatia is at the heart of two stories dear to the Kremlin: President Vladimir Putin's initiative to merge many of the country's far-flung regions and the planned construction of a major oil pipeline to feed Asian markets.

Ulan-Ude has been a rallying point for opposition to both. Though local Buryats who fear losing their culture failed to stop the merger of the neighboring Irkutsk region with the Ust-Ordynsky Buryatsky autonomous district it encompasses, local environmentalists can count one recent victory. By Putin's order, the pipeline's route no longer skirts the shore of Lake Baikal.



### Nogliki

By Valeria Korchagina

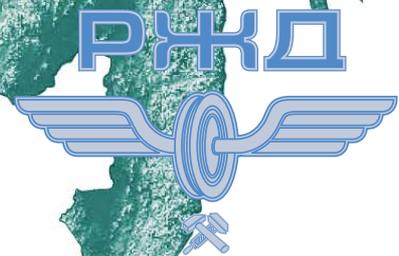
The best story is often not the one we set out for. I went to Nogliki, a town of 10,000 people on Sakhalin Island, to report on energy and ecology – the Sakhalin-1 and Sakhalin-2 oil and gas projects are nearby. But what made the trip special was meeting Irina Rud, the owner of a local B&B.

Rud, 47, told me the tale of how she overcame grinding poverty and an alcoholic husband to build her own business in a place that at the time had no banking system and no legal framework. Now happily remarried and with three children, she runs the 36-bed Kuban for subcontractors, ecologists and others who visit the oil projects on the coast. Since my visit, Rud has also opened her own zoo, with a long list of animals including monkeys, deer, foxes and polar foxes, birds of prey and a yak.

For me, the Kuban was a cozy spot in the remote, otherwise gloomy town, whose name means Smelly Settlement in the language of a local tribe. And it made for a good story.

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V. I. Yakunin  
President  
Russian Railways Ltd.





# Mr. West Comes to Russia

By Valery Panushkin

Here's a short quiz about my wonderful country to test if you understand Russia the way Russians do. There are three possible answers to each question; the number before the answer is also the amount of points you get for choosing it. Add up the total number of points and check your score at the end of the quiz. And don't be offended. If you got a different score, we'd really be in trouble.

## Is the city of Karaganda part of Russia?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Is it? Damned if I know

## What is "sovereign democracy"?

1. Democracy that doesn't recognize the right of the United States to influence elections
2. Dictatorship
3. A propaganda term dreamed up by Vladislav Surkov for personal gain

## Who is Vladislav Surkov?

1. Deputy chief of staff of the presidential administration
2. Former partner of Mikhail Khodorkovsky
3. Were you born yesterday?

## What is "real politics"?

1. Political strategist Gleb Pavlovsky's TV show
2. The height of political incompetence
3. The height of political cynicism

## What is the "mysterious Russian soul"?

1. A symptom of alcoholism
2. A form of infantile behavior
3. A propaganda term dreamed up by Fyodor Dostoevsky for personal gain

## What is anti-fascism?

1. Anti-fascism
2. Fascism
3. An ambitious business plan to mobilize young people

## Is Roman Abramovich a good person?

1. He's good
2. He's bad
3. He's not a person

## Why don't Russians wash windows?

1. They don't?
2. Because their maids are Ukrainian
3. They don't?

## Why do Russians salt tomatoes?

1. I don't know
2. Because winter tomatoes have no taste, and it's winter here all year round
3. How the hell could anyone eat them without salt?



If your score is 9-18 points, you're a foreigner and you don't understand a thing about Russia.



If your score is 19-26 points, you're a supporter of Boris Berezovsky or Mikhail Khodorkovsky, and all your friends think you earn five times more than you really do.



If your score is 26 points, you're in the ruling elite, and don't even try lying to me that you have nothing to do with the KGB.



If you score less than 9 or more than 27 points, you're a typical Russian who has gotten everything all mixed up. As usual.

Not only does the body lose heat most rapidly through the head; it has also been proven that a cold cranium can cause indifference, poor judgement and the inability to solve complex problems. At Troika Dialog our minds are hard at work every day contributing to the wealth of our clients. It has made us the #1 investment bank\* in Russia – not something you can achieve with a numb noggin. So to answer your question once and for all:

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# The Russian Press: Past, Present and Future

Media analyst Alexei Pankin explains that the history of Russian newspapers is just a history of censorship



## **282 Years Without Freedom**

The history of the free press in Russia is not a happy one. The first edition of the country's first newspaper, *Vedomosti*, was published as far back as Jan. 13, 1703 – now celebrated as Press Day – but for most of its history, the Russian press was censored by the state. Only the severity of the censorship varied over the years.

The first breakthrough in freedom of the press took place during the short period of constitutional development between the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. Dozens of newspapers with various political views appeared, and most in opposition to the tsarist regime.

But after the 1917 Revolution, the free press virtually disappeared in Russia for more than 70 years. For the Bolsheviks, newspapers were just an instrument of indoctrination, a way to exhort the people to support Communist Party initiatives. Only during “the Thaw” – a period of relatively relaxed state control after Nikita Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalinist atrocities in 1956 – did newspapers come to life with fresh and lively discussions of the country's future. But this period didn't last long, and was followed by the so-called period of stagnation under Leonid Brezhnev.

## **Revolution Financed by the State**

In April 1985, the new general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev, announced a policy of reform that came to be called *perestroika*. The key element of *perestroika* was *glasnost* – freedom of expression. At first it was limited, but by the end of the Gorbachev period censorship had been eliminated.

During the first years of *perestroika*, newspaper readership and print runs hit record highs. It was an unusual period. Even papers that had turned into revolutionary, anti-communist forces remained part of the planned economy: They were subsidized by the state budget and used the existing centralized system of printing and distribution.

The first independent newspapers appeared during this period. *Kommersant*, founded in 1990, was the first daily newspaper that was truly a “news-paper” providing information not filtered through opinions, journalists' or otherwise.

## **Pluralism Without Independence**

“Under *glasnost*, we were promoting the idea of a market economy, but we had no idea what it actually meant,” said Yegor Yakovlev, the legendary editor of the *Moscow News* weekly, as he looked back on the newspaper business under Gorbachev.

Publishers discovered what a market economy was in 1992, when the Russian government introduced liberal economic reforms after the breakup of the Soviet Union. This was a serious blow to the newspaper industry. All the economic conditions changed literally overnight: Inflation wiped out editorial budgets that had been based on the previous system, and the costs of production and distribution rose dramatically at the same time that readers' spending capacity fell drastically. Income from advertising was minimal, and Russian newspaper publishers had no experience working in market conditions.

The most popular national newspapers that had the largest print runs were hit the hardest. Papers like *Izvestia*, *Trud*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and *Argumenty i Fakty* that once sent their publications to every corner of this vast territory – covering a fifth of the world's land mass – suddenly couldn't meet their obligations to subscribers.

The news media were saved from total collapse by an influx of direct and indirect state subsidies, political money and hidden advertising, that is, the practice of publishing advertising materials under the guise of news articles. After the presidential elections of 1996, financial and industrial groups began to see the media as an instrument of political influence and to take control of newspapers and television stations in both Moscow and the regions.

During this period, the newspaper industry saw drastic reductions in print runs but an increase in the number of publications. The regional press developed rapidly, with regional papers gradually surpassing the print runs of the “central” newspapers published in Moscow. The central papers then lost their national distribution. There was pluralism of opinion, but no economic independence. And hidden advertising and political agendas seriously undermined the credibility of the press.

## **The Second Revolution: The Crisis of August 1998**

“In essence, publishing became a business for us only after Aug. 17. Before then,

we were just printing four newspapers,” said Vladimir Lapyrin, head of the Nizhny Novgorod publishing group BirzhaPlus, about the consequences of the 1998 default. Banks folded, the ruble plummeted, and the advertising market fell to 30 percent of its pre-crisis volume. This was what it took for the media community to realize that newspapers were also a business, and like any other business had to be capable of making money. This psychological change was as important as the elimination of censorship for the development of modern newspaper publishing in Russia.

### New Times

Under Vladimir Putin, there have been both positive and negative trends in the development of a free press. On the one hand, at the beginning of his presidency Putin announced that economic independence was the guarantee of a free press, and the rapid growth of the economy since he came to power in 2000 has helped more and more newspapers become profitable. Consumer spending has risen along with the standard of living, and the booming economy has fed the advertising industry, which got an additional boost when advertising expenditures became tax deductible. The Russian economy also has become more attractive to investors.

On the other hand, control over the media has become stronger. Although this has primarily concerned television, newspapers also, as a whole, have become more cautious in their criticism and resort more frequently to self-censorship. During the past few years, many of the central newspapers, such as Argumenty i Fakty, Trud and Izvestia, have been purchased by financial and industrial groups that are either directly controlled by the Kremlin or loyal to it. This process shows no sign of abating.

### Foreign Capital

A telling indication of the contradictory state of the newspaper industry in Russia is foreign investment. Almost all the world leaders in the magazine market are represented – Axel Springer, Hubert Burda Media, Bertelsmann, Conde Nast, Hachette Filipacchi Media and many others – but foreign investment in newspapers is minimal. The first foreign-owned newspaper was The Moscow Times, founded by Dutch-owned Independent Media in 1992. Since 1999, Independent Media has been publishing the Russian business newspaper Vedomosti with the Financial Times and The Wall Street Journal. The Swedish Bonnier Business Press now publishes Delovoi Peterburg. In 2002, one of the largest Norwegian media groups, A-pressen, bought a blocking stake in Komsomolskaya Pravda, a tabloid with the largest circulation of any paper in Russia. It also has invested in two regional newspapers.

### Cause for Optimism

Besides all these impediments to establishing a politically and economically independent newspaper industry in Russia, there are also two “natural” complications: the enormous size of the country and limited accessibility to some territories, which makes the establishment of a distribution network extremely difficult; and the worn-out infrastructure, especially printing presses, which have only received serious investment in the past few years.

In light of all these factors, the following successes of the Russian newspaper industry in the 15 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union are all the more striking: ..... In 2005, the market volume (sales of newspapers and advertising) was \$3.57 billion, and investment was more than \$1.2 billion; ..... The growth rate of the newspaper industry in Russia is the third in the world after India and China, with 5.7 percent predicted for 2005-08; ..... There is a strong group of industry leaders who combine effective management with adherence to the principles of independent journalism, such as Vedomosti and Kommersant in Moscow and a number of regional newspapers that have formed an Association of Independent Regional Publishers.

The path of the free press in Russia has been difficult and filled with setbacks. But considering that just 20 years ago this was a totalitarian country without a single private enterprise, it is clear that Russia's newspapers have come a long way. ▀

## Bucking the Trend

Three national newspapers that have found their own path to success ... and a regional paper in Siberia that sowed the seed for an entire publishing house



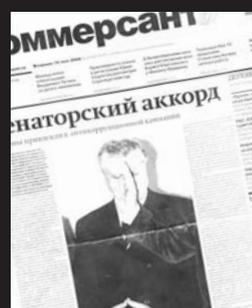
**Altapress**  
Success in the regions

Created in 1990 to publish the first independent newspaper in Siberia's Altai region, Altapress today comprises 11 separate publications for a variety of audiences, with a total print-run of 240,000, as well as a web site and a radio station. The company's press prints 34 newspapers and 11 magazines beyond its own. Expanding into other regional markets since 2004, Altapress now boasts some 300 retail outlets. Founded by professional journalists, the group cites "Creativity, Growth and Independence" as its motto.



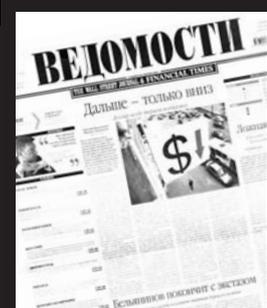
**Komsomolskaya Pravda**  
Unique growth

Initially the mouthpiece of the Young Communist League, KP emerged as an advocate of reform in the 1950s and became hugely popular in the Gorbachev era. This is a rare example of a traditional brand adjusting to new economic conditions. KP now combines elements of quality journalism, yellow press and consumer news for its broad readership. It openly supports Vladimir Putin, which seems to have done nothing to dim the paper's popularity: the daily print run is 780,000, with a weekend run of 3 million.



**Kommersant**  
The initiators of a Russian school of journalism

Founded by Vladimir Yakovlev in 1990, Kommersant was intended as the first Soviet newspaper offering strictly factual information and the first to be run as a business. The paper was later sold to media magnate Boris Berezovsky, who attempted – unsuccessfully – to use it as a forum for unmasking “the bloody Putin regime”. So embedded was the culture of impartiality already, the paper forced Berezovsky to run his articles as paid advertisements.



**Vedomosti**  
A collaboration of unlikely bedfellows

Vedomosti is the first Russian newspaper founded solely by foreign concerns, the product of an unusual collaboration between the Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal and the Dutch-Finnish Independent Media group. It is a business paper of eastern standards, which claims a modest 65,000 readers yet draws 21.2 percent of the advertising market. Vedomosti also boasts a devoted non-business audience attracted by its diverse columnists and controversial editorials.

# A Veteran Print Outsider

Derk Sauer is a Dutch journalist-turned-media magnate who has been publishing newspapers and magazines in Russia since 1992. Here he discusses why he sold his publishing house; the major trends in the Russian media industry; foreign involvement in the market; the problems the print media are facing in Russia; and last but not least, the effects of the changing political environment on the media market and press freedom.



**D**

erk Sauer, the CEO of Independent Media, began his career in journalism as a war correspondent for the Dutch magazine *Nieuwe Revu*, covering crises in Lebanon, Vietnam, Cambodia, Zimbabwe, Angola and Northern Ireland. Having come to Moscow at the invitation of Soviet journalists, Sauer stayed to experience the changing media culture in post-Soviet Russia. In the early 1990s, he founded Independent Media, a company that grew from being the publisher of one English-language newspaper into a venture responsible for the production of 25 magazines and newspapers. In 2005, Sauer oversaw the sale of Independent Media to Finnish media conglomerate SanomaWSOY for \$186 million, which was the biggest deal in Russian print business history.

Sauer spoke to Andrei Zolotov Jr., the editor of *Russia Profile*, a monthly published by Independent Media and RIA-Novosti.

**BTH** .....Why did you sell Independent Media, and why to Sanoma?

**Sauer** .....First of all, why sell? There were two reasons for that. One was a timing issue. In 2003, we made a deal with [Vladimir Potanin's media conglomerate] Prof-Media, selling it a 35 percent share. That relationship did not work out as expected and, in 2004, we bought back the shares. It created a new situation. Second, the timing seemed right. I wanted to work for another five years or so. But everyone we talked to over the years about selling part or all of the company

always insisted that I stay for a couple of years. So, if I had postponed the sale for another three years, I would have had to work for another eight years.

Why Sanoma? First of all, Sanoma came to us. Second, it's a Finnish company, and Finns are known around the world for their integrity and for their high standard of journalism. Sanoma also trusts local management.

**BTH** ..... How does the changing political environment affect the Russian media market?

**Sauer** ..... If you talk about media in Russia, you always have to make this huge distinction between television and the rest. We all know that television is very tightly controlled by the state – I don't think anyone is pretending that it's not. By the way, Russia is not the only country in the world where this is the case. I don't like it, but we shouldn't overdramatize the situation. I think that this is the case in 80 percent of countries. Even in countries like Italy or France, the state has a very big say in television – in the most civilized countries of Western Europe.

In the print media it is not a huge issue. Of course there are newspapers that are owned by the oligarchs or local governors, who are more concerned now about what they write than before because they have other businesses that have sensitive relations with the state. But if you operate as an independent publisher with no other interests in connection with the state, I think you are free to write what you want to write.

Before we started Vedomosti, people were telling me: Now you are going to get into trouble. You did Cosmopolitan – no one could care. You did The Moscow Times – no one could read it, you were all set. Now that you are stepping into the real Russian world with Vedomosti, you will see that you are running into trouble. Well, Vedomosti was started in 1999, and I have never had any trouble.

**BTH** ..... Business-wise, what do you see as the major trends in the print-press market in Russia?

**Sauer** ..... One trend – and it's not just in the press market – is consolidation. You see it in the metals business, in the oil business, the supermarket business. It is understandable. In the 1980s and 1990s, there were entrepreneurs who started businesses and built them to a certain size. As markets grow more mature, people either get together and merge, or they buy and sell. You get this process of consolidation, which fits with the development of markets all over the world. There is nothing wrong with that.

**BTH** ..... What about the foreign media business? We have seen several major publishing businesses trying to get in – either with their own projects, such as Axel Springer, or by buying local businesses – such as Sanoma with IM. In other East European countries, it was mainly Western media moguls who came,

bought pretty much everything that was there, and started to develop it. Will there be more Westerners coming in? Is there much resistance to that?

**Sauer** ..... There will certainly be more Westerners coming in. Russia is a big market. They are players all over the world – in China, in India – so why not in Russia?

I come from Holland. The Dutch magazine market is dominated by Sanoma, a Finnish company. The five biggest Dutch newspapers have been sold to an English-American investment group. I don't think this is nec-

**Before we started Vedomosti, people were telling me: Now you are going to get in trouble. You did Cosmopolitan – no one could care. You did The Moscow Times – no one could read it, you were all set. But there's been no trouble.**

essarily wrong or represents a dilution of the culture of a country. In the end, the products are produced by local people.

**BTH** ..... What are the major problems that you foresee in the print-media business?

**Sauer** ..... In our business, there is one huge problem – distribution. Publishers have developed very quickly, but the distribution channel has not developed with it. You see a bottleneck: many magazines being published with very few outlets where they are

sold. The system is very underdeveloped. To make things worse, in Moscow, they closed all the kiosks in the metro – that was the major outlet to sell newspapers and magazines. In European countries, there is one kiosk per 1,000 people. Here, there is one kiosk per 4,000 people. There is certainly an awfully long way to go.

**BTH** ..... I remember this talk 10 years ago. Back then, there was also printing...

**Sauer** ..... Printing is solved. We have been instrumental in bringing modern technology to this country. They always said: "You cannot have production in Russia, Russians are bad with production, they always make a mess out of everything" But now we have state-of-the-art printing facilities here and the quality is excellent. We print on the same level as they do in Finland or Sweden.

**BTH** ..... What is the percentage of what you print here, as opposed to what you print abroad?

**Sauer** ..... Practically 100 percent. We print even the luxury magazines here.

**BTH** ..... Has the state had any consistent policy with regard to print media in general, and particularly with regard to foreign investment in the sector?

**Sauer** ..... No, I don't think so. I think it's great, because as soon as the state gets involved, you get strange competition. One party gets support and the other doesn't. Now it's a pretty level playing field for everybody. It's a very open competition.

**BTH** ..... But that seems to be changing, doesn't it?

**Sauer** ..... In television – obviously, but not in print.

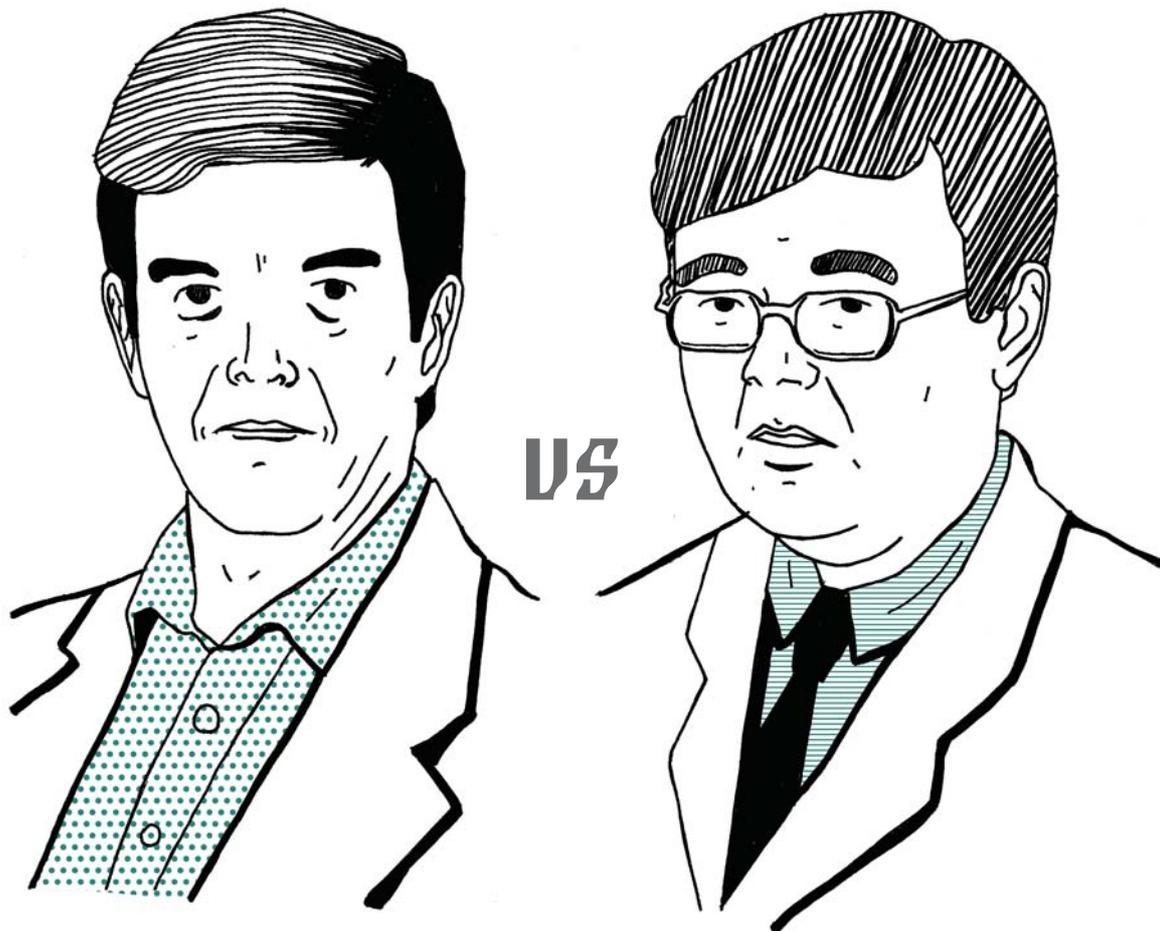
**BTH** ..... You said once that, in Russia, there is freedom of the press for the informed and no freedom of the press for the uninformed. Do you stand by that statement and, if so, what did you mean by it?

**Sauer** ..... What I mean is that the masses watch television. And you see the coverage – it's pink, it's all through rose glasses, it's all about how wonderful everything is. First of all, I think it's not fair and honest. But, second, I don't think it's good for the government either. They fool themselves. They watch the news and it's great, while no one understands what is going on in the society. The pensioner thing [monetization of previously free services] is a very good example of how this is a self-defeating policy. If there had been a lively debate, this whole thing would have been solved so much more effectively. It is just not a smart policy. Newspapers are for intellectual people. They read papers, they read books, they search the Internet. They are more informed anyway. **Q**

# On-line, Off-message

*Mr. Mamontov: "It seems to me that Russia's opponents are looking at problems through a huge gas pipeline."*

*Mr. Brock: "Thank you for a very thorough answer. It seems that we do not agree about much."*



*George Brock  
Editor in Chief, Saturday Edition of The Times*

*Vladimir Mamontov  
Editor in Chief, Izvestia*

## **Dear Mr. Mamontov,**

Greetings from London. The world's editors will arrive in Moscow in less than a month. Although the World Editors Forum provides a platform for discussion of many global editorial issues of interest and importance, it is a fascinating moment for journalists to be looking at the Russian media, just weeks before Russia hosts the G8 summit.

You will not need me to tell you that there are concerns outside Russia about the lack of independence and freedom of the Russian media. As far as we can tell, this does not seem to be so much a problem of old-fashioned censorship (except perhaps in the main TV channels) as a gradual dwindling of the sources of independent reporting and comment. In a speech in Moscow last September ([www.editorsweblog.org/2005/09/kremlin\\_ducks\\_o.php](http://www.editorsweblog.org/2005/09/kremlin_ducks_o.php)), I described the Russian government's approach to the media as a technique of "predatory manipulation." Recent changes in ownership seem designed to reassure the Kremlin that major newspapers are not going to be unsympathetic to the government. Some Russian commentators regard recent changes at your own newspaper as evidence of this trend.

But we are also aware that the Russian media face enormous economic and financial difficulties. One of the consequences of this appears to be what I think you call "black PR" or paid journalism. Is this very common in Russian newspapers?

Meeting Russian editors and journalists twice last year I wondered – given the fall in newspaper circulations and apparent mistrust of papers by many people – whether Russia might be a country in which we would see online media outstrip printed media in reach and influence sooner than we imagine? I realize that the number of Russians online is not yet very great, but might Russia one day be seen as a large country where a media revolution happened?

Best wishes,

**George Brock**

## **Dear Mr. Brock,**

Thank you for your questions. They raise important issues for us all.

You begin by stating a view often held abroad about a supposed lack of independence and freedom in the Russian media. You also bring up the issue of paid journalism, or the "zakazukha" as it is known in Russia. Now, I am certain that we can give this word to many other languages around the world – just as we did with "perestroika" and "sputnik" – but I'm also certain this is not because the word has any special relevance to Russia. Indeed, I often find myself suspecting zakazukha when I read the identically argued, clichéd articles that write about the lack of freedom of expression in Russia, the reign of a Chekist regime and the return of totalitarianism.

Half-serious, half-joking, many Russians react to such articles by saying, "Berezovsky paid for all of this." Others still would tie the sharp and mass criticism of Russia from abroad with her clear economic recovery and unambiguous attempts to return as a major player in world politics.

I sometimes feel as if I have returned to my own youth; as if I am living in the Soviet Union once again, hearing the accusations of human rights' abuses and the absence of free speech. The one significant difference between then and now is that then I agreed with the criticism wholeheartedly. In order to travel abroad – even to Poland! – I had to undergo vetting by the Party committee. If I wanted to buy a Beatles record, I had to go to the black market, and then spend half of my monthly salary.

Knowing all this, I find it hard to agree that the Putin regime has strangled democratic freedoms in the country. No, what we are seeing is something different, and far more significant: A large part of Russia's elite – the freethinking and sober-minded part – is abandoning its superficial and childish belief in the universal values of Western democracy. This is truly a trend and, in my view, it's not a bad thing for *Izvestia* to note it.

But let's come down from the heights of foreign relations to the everyday business of newspapers for a moment. On this front, I share your worries about black PR and paid journalism. Oh, if only there were a magic wand that could be waved! Even if you were to regulate all your relations with PR agencies, you certainly wouldn't be guaranteed a free and independent paper as a result. It's perfectly possible that this whorish paid journalism would simply transform itself and take on the appearance of an angel.

Paid journalism is often interchangeable with more noble notions, such as influence and familiarity. And personally, I don't know who is worse: the poor journalist who tries to place an article for a hundred bucks; or the noble knight of the newspaper, whose impeccable reputation is really just the flip side of being in bed with the political elite. Or, for that matter, the colleague, whose opposition to the authorities provides a source for financial and moral advancement.

It seems to me that many of Russia's opponents are looking at her problems through a huge gas pipeline, the very same pipeline that might allow an exasperated Russia to raise her head from under the parapet. I'm trying my best not to mention Dick Cheney here; the one who, having perfected a system of total surveillance, decided to deliver a famous lecture on Russian democracy. Well, I almost didn't mention it.

About newspaper credibility and the Internet: Sociologists have shown that people trust us only a bit more than the government. I don't think that the Internet is considered any more trustworthy, but the possibilities of the Internet – the infinite space and the sense of personal contact – is utterly bewitching. I'm personally very happy it exists. Every time I surf the web, I feel much younger. I say goodbye to my stereotypes; I argue; I get annoyed; I find people who think like me. If these are the signs of an Internet revolution, then I'm very much a fellow traveler. Provided, that is, young Internet revolutionaries don't decide to issue a decree outlawing books, love and Scottish whiskey.

Respectfully yours,

**V. Mamontov**

## **Dear Mr. Mamontov,**

Thank you for a very thorough answer to my initial questions. It seems that we do not agree about much, but we do certainly share the excitement of the Internet. For newspapers in Britain, finding the right balance and relationship between online and print journalism is probably the key question for editors in this era.

You seem to be saying that people who criticize the lack of media freedom in Russia are either being bribed to say so by Boris Berezovsky or reacting to Russia's economic recovery and re-emergence on the world stage. I'd better start by saying that neither would be true of me. If large numbers of Russians really believe this, then they are deluding themselves. They should use the freedom of the Internet to look at the web sites of the respected global organizations that monitor press freedom (untouched by Berezovsky and uninterested in geopolitics) and look at the ratings that Russia receives. I can send you some links if you like.

None of this is to say that things were better under communism; Russia has undergone enormous changes for the better. But countries that attend the G8 are normally assumed to be democracies. All that commentators are doing in the run-up to the G8 summit in St. Petersburg is comparing what happens in Russia with democratic principles. What Russia chooses to do is a choice for Russians to make. But if, as you write, part of the Russian elite is ceasing to believe in "the universal values of Western democracy," and if this is a real trend, then we may come to understand that you do not share our values. That would be sad.

Meanwhile, you are perfectly entitled to be making fun of Dick Cheney. The American media does so all the time.

You say that you share our dislike of paid journalism. Yet you also say that paid journalism may be the same as influence and inside knowledge. I disagree: They are not the same. Certainly journalists everywhere can and are influenced against their better judgment, sometimes perhaps by too close a friendship with a source. These are mistakes, but they are not corrupt. Paid journalism corrupts because the reader does not know that the journalist or the paper has taken money, which replaces its own judgment. Newspapers make judgments which are disputable all the time; they make factual errors as well. These weaknesses are not in the same league as taking paid advertising and pretending that it is journalism.

With best wishes,

**George Brock**

## **Dear Mr. Brock,**

Thank you for your good-natured letter in response to my voluminous one.

The balance between the printed press and the Internet is a question that frankly concerns us all. *Izvestia* has a highly popular web site, but that doesn't stop us from worrying that its very success might threaten the print edition. Then again, there may be another, more positive side to all of this. A few years ago, I found myself in Florida, studying an example of convergence in several newspapers that combined editorial staff, producing print, Internet, radio and TV versions of the same publication. It got me asking the question whether such experiments might not bring benefits by pooling together resources and advertising revenue.

Now on the matter of Berezovsky. I did not try to say that he pays for every article. What I did say was that many Russians relate to him with a great deal of irony.

Please also allow me to put your mind at rest on the issue of whether the Russian elite shares the universal values of Western democracy. Surprisingly enough, you will find a great number of Russians who not only share these values, but also live by them, freely promote them and just as freely criticize other

value systems. Many earn a living doing this. Even so, I would certainly cast doubt over the relevance of the words “universal” and “Western” in the phrase “the universal values of Western democracy,” firstly owing to the nature of the enigmatic Russian soul, and secondly knowing certain things about Russian history, abounding as it does with examples not only of totalitarianism but of lawlessness, too.

Please understand that many Russians are sensitive to this issue as they understand that “values” are not always applied as intended. Sometimes even the most noble of aims become an instrument by which to achieve political results. Which does not of course cancel their essential importance.

One final point. I did not try to equate paid journalism with familiarity. The one thing I said was that the border between the two can be vague. You offered your version of the problem, and I agree with you. I don't want to argue with you on this subject as there is nothing really to argue about. No less than your good self, I want to keep Russia a free and democratic country. Without allies in Europe and America, it would be impossible to do this.

Perhaps this dialogue will help us understand each other better? If so, I would be prepared to continue the exchange right up until Christmas.

Yours truly,

**Vladimir**

## **Dear Vladimir,**

Thank you: I feel I understand your position a bit better now. I still think that you are being unduly defensive and complicated about what is well-meant, what-you-see-is-what-you-get criticism of a clear decline in media freedom in your country.

You are quite fair in saying that human rights standards become political issues and thus can be distorted. But the risk of misuse does not invalidate the standards in the first place; it does not mean that rights and values are not real ideas that need to be debated seriously.

You mention the Internet and “convergence” of media. This is not quite how the issue plays in Britain. We have an unusual newspaper market that combines local and regional papers with “national” papers that compete in circulating throughout the country. My newspaper, *The Times*, for example, is not based in a single city but has always been national in its reach. (And more recently international, thanks to the Internet and to satellite printing; we print in Europe and are about to begin printing in New York). Laws regulating competition have meant that media companies often do not own different media in the same place. So we do not tend to debate convergence as it is often discussed in places like Florida.

For us, the dilemmas posed by the Internet are ones of the changing behavior of readers. Do they get more of their daily information from their screen when they arrive at work? If so, how do we adapt? Does the “body language” of the Internet affect what readers expect from our page design? Above all, how does the peer-to-peer plurality of digital communications affect journalism as it has been practiced through several eras in which access to media was restricted by technology and by the capital required to be a publisher or broadcaster?

I was debating these issues at a conference in London recently in front of an audience largely consisting of new media gurus and bloggers. I said that I thought that there was a difference between communication and journalism, that journalism implied that efforts and standards had been applied to ensure the truth of what was being published. I said a good deal else that was complimentary to bloggers – for example, that their power to rapidly correct errors in the established media was already formidable – but my message did not go down well. It was clear to me by the end of the discussion that the very idea of journalism needs redefining and re-defending.

Best wishes,

**George Brock**

## **Dear George,**

As with any two people who were first strangers to each other, we began by laying out our own positions and fears (not to mention phobias). I hope readers found this in some way interesting. By the third letter, we can approach things a little more calmly. Indeed, it would seem that our positions are not that much different.

I am entirely prepared to agree with you that, of themselves, democratic values and freedoms are a constant. Were we to live in an ideal world, I would undoubtedly march with you under the same banner. But alas, this world is far from ideal. It is only now, for example, that Russia is returning to the womb of democracy. And perhaps we are not always ready to accept the wave of criticism that accompanies the process.

I was very interested to read about the press market in Britain. We find a similar thing happening with some newspapers in Russia: They remain national, but compete with the local press, and in order to do this successfully introduce regional sections and supplements. As in Britain, U.S.-style convergence is not ideal for Russia – though in *Izvestia's* holding we do interlink our papers, TV and radio.

Now onto perhaps the major headache: the Internet. As you say, a newspaper of yesterday's news and nothing else is of no use to anyone. What we are now focusing on is the way the news is interpreted, on looking for new angles or exclusive commentary. Naturally, sites are also interested in doing this, and are also updating news quicker and quicker. But I do see a future in the print versions, simply because of habit and the convenience of the format.

Like you, I think an awful lot about news journalism. Will it not, for example, be consumed by the monstrosity of blogs and chats? I suspect not, but cannot be sure.

Maybe we also had something similar in our own youth? Maybe we worshiped other things as people nowadays worship the blog? Maybe our blog was that we listened to one type of music and read one type of book?

All this is cold comfort, of course. As you say, rethinking the essence of journalism is very important if old men like ourselves are to continue to earn a living.

Yours,

**Vladimir**

## **Dear Vladimir,**

We may be somewhat lost in translation here, but I'm reluctant to admit to being an old man with phobias! I have to admit, however, to no longer being young.

I'm very struck by how often you return to the theme of Russians and their sense of their country's place in the world. To judge from what you say, this seems to be the framework in which many Russian journalists see their work. To illustrate one of the many cultural differences between journalists in my country and yours, I think that it would occur to only a very few journalists in Britain to see their work in this perspective. This is not to say that journalists are uninterested in politics – quite the contrary – but that they do not think about politics and their work much in a geopolitical context.

I think – or at least hope – that this is because the journalist's task is to discover the truth and to tell it. Needless to say, much journalism in practice falls short of this ideal.

And, of course, much of this truth is gathered and published in a political context and with political effects. Among competing media, truth will be endlessly disputed and may emerge only by iteration. What I'm gently trying to suggest here is that the business of "getting it right," of establishing the facts and of explaining their meaning to readers, is so hard anywhere, anytime, that this is what editors have to focus their energies on. Let politicians and diplomats (and our correspondents who specialize in geopolitics and diplomacy) worry about the world stage.

A last word on new media and blogs. There can be no doubt that digital media will change the entire context in which newspapers work. I see news media as a spectrum. At one end are the least-frequent publications, such as books. At the other, 24-hour news that is transmitted by any channel always available. Newspapers appearing once a day lie somewhere halfway along this range. To justify their existence in the future, newspapers have to be very clear that they can add real value to consumers who can choose other news outlets that may offer more or less frequent news. That value may be reporting which broadcasters can't or won't do, it may be adding depth and context to the bare facts of news, analysis or opinion. But to survive, newspapers have to do something which people with other choices will value. Looking at the circulations of Russian newspapers over the past 15 years, I'm wondering if your media may not go digital very much more quickly than ours?

If "newspapers" are mostly delivered digitally and not in print, then we face the issue of whether the idea of a newspaper – a printed bundle of varied elements that we persuade people to buy as a package – can exist at all. Come and hear Professor Eli Noam on this subject at the opening keynote session of the World Editors Forum in Moscow; he should be fascinating on just this subject.

In all this, blogs seem to me to be a bit of a distraction. Some are competing journalism (some of it very very good), some are nonsense, and most are conversation. Conversation is great, but I can't see why it threatens journalism.

I've enjoyed this conversation. See you in Moscow.

Best,  
**George**

### Dear George,

Here in Russia things are a bit different, so phobias can occur even among young folks like you and me.

Now let me turn to our journalists. You seem to have gotten the impression from me that they do little else here in Russia besides pondering the place of the Fatherland in today's world. It appears that I really have led you a bit astray: I would say that the fraternal tribe of Russian reporters hardly outdo their English colleagues in this regard. I have more than a few colleagues – and their number is growing – who are today re-examining the events in Russia and the world over the last decades. I see no danger whatsoever in this for genuinely democratic values; on the contrary, many people understand today that democracy, freedom of speech and free thought generally are possible only in a strong nation; a nation in which the people and government clearly recognize their national interests and in which lawlessness, corruption and arbitrary bureaucratic tyranny have been overcome.

Though if you say that democracy is the instrument for achieving this goal, I will respectfully beg to differ, bearing in mind the Russian experience. Either the democracy we had was the wrong kind or we took it in the wrong dosage, but for an entire generation of Russians such democratic changes are closely identified with unjust privatization, corruption, disorder and a drop in living standards.

One more word on this theme. There are a great many things lacking in Russia's political and social life today. In whichever problem area you care to look – corruption, bureaucracy, limitations on freedom of speech, xenophobia – you will find either vivid examples or a whole bouquet of them. And I'm ready to take both professional and friendly advice as to how to defeat these things.

I agree with your notion that conversation, the exchange of opinion is a great thing – and that it's hardly a threat to journalism. And I want to believe, dear George, that this holds true for our exchange of opinions as well. See you in Moscow!

Best,  
**Vladimir**



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Ruben Vardanian  
Chairman of the Board of Directors  
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Valery Okunov  
General Director  
Aeroflot-Russian Airlines

# Eastern Approaches



**Kim Murphy**  
*Moscow Bureau Chief*  
*Los Angeles Times*

Kim Murphy has been the Los Angeles Times' Moscow bureau chief since 2003. A journalist for more than 30 years, Murphy has been a Times reporter since 1983, with assignments in the Pacific Northwest, the Middle East, the Balkans, Afghanistan and the former Soviet Union. She won a Pulitzer Prize in 2005 for her coverage of Russia and a Sigma Delta Chi award for her work in the Middle East.



# M

My first story in Russia should have given me a clue.

The old Moskva Hotel – the oversized, misshapen edifice squatted prominently just outside Red Square – was about to be torn down and replaced with a new hotel that, the builders assured, would look just like the old one.

Except it wouldn't. Oh, the ugly gray exterior – mismatched, the myth goes, because Josef Stalin had carelessly approved two facades, and no one wanted to point out his mistake – would remain. But the fine, colored marble salvaged for the stairways when Stalin ordered the destruction of the original Christ the Savior Cathedral, the grand pianos that stood in every suite, the imposing hall where Stalin's 50th birthday was celebrated, everything that made it not a commercial building, but a remnant of Russia's history – tragic, oversized and gorgeous – would disappear with the bulldozers.

Great story, I announced to my new staff. Let's go interview the mayor and find out why he's allowing this to happen. They looked at me blankly, as if it was indeed going to be a tedious process, breaking me in. The mayor doesn't often give interviews, they said. How about his wife, the woman who's become a construction billionaire by erasing the old face of Moscow and giving it a new one? Nyet, they replied. Not going to happen. The city zoning staff? I already had a sinking feeling.

In the end, the heart of my story came not from officialdom, but from one of the Moskva's old "floor ladies," the usually dour hangovers from the Soviet era who hand out chips of soap and quarter-rolls of rough toilet paper to guests deemed worthy of the perks. She wore a wrinkled uniform and soft-soled shoes, so she wouldn't scuff the once-elegant parquet floors.

Warming to my enthusiasm, she led me up the grand stairway to the rooms in the back with the best views of the Kremlin, confided how the KGB had secretly wired the guest chambers, smiled softly when she described the grand restaurant when it was aglow with Communist Party luminaries. I learned with that first story that Russia would not be a country that could be confronted head-on, eye-to-eye. It did not respond to demands. Its stories would have to be coaxed out of the corners, and, in the end, I would never know whether I had gotten it right, or seen only a small piece of what really happened.

"We will never know the truth!" a Russian friend's mother-in-law once snapped exasperatedly at his wife, after the two of them spent hours unsuccessfully confronting him about a suspected affair.

It became my mantra for my three years in Russia.

President Vladimir Putin's government has earned international criticism for stifling the media, and while it is in many cases richly deserved, the situation is not as simple as it seems.

I have written about the takeover of private television channels by the government, the firing of journalists who satirized or criticized the Kremlin, editors who had their newspapers bankrupted or even went to prison for "libeling" a visibly corrupt local governor or judge.

I wrote about journalists who were murdered when they attempted to probe the complex web of connections between money and power, not least of them a fellow American, Paul Klebnikov, editor of *Forbes Russia*, who was shot to death just outside his office in 2004. In May, his accused killers were acquitted by a jury.

Yet to open the newspapers here is to dig in for a lively and often nasty commentary on what the government is doing wrong. The opposition gets prominent play in some papers, and the liberal-leaning (but low-rated) radio station Ekho Mosky has daily talk shows with an independent, and often controversial, bent.

Putin insists it is any government's aim to try to manipulate the press – just as it is the press's job, he once said, not to let it. "A real man should always try," he said, quoting a line from a favorite Italian movie, "and a real girl should always resist."

When foreign journalists were invited to Putin's dacha at Novo-Ogaryovo early in my term as a correspondent, the president spent more than three hours carefully responding to our questions, and brought to the exchange an amazing, indeed exhausting, command of facts, figures and details. I got kidded by my colleagues when, after the meeting, Putin made a bee-line for me and began complimenting me, in rough but polite English, on the merits of my hometown, Los Angeles. Why me, everyone wanted to know? So did I. I wondered if it wasn't because he thought I was a "real girl" (God forbid) because I had asked him why so many people saw imprisoned Yukos oil billionaire Mikhail Khodorkovsky as a political

**Putin insists it is any government's aim to try to manipulate the press, as "a real man should always try and a real girl should always resist." I wondered if he thought I was a "real girl."**

prisoner, and why democracy seemed to be on a backward course in Russia. He had a ready answer. Khodorkovsky was a criminal who was suspected of illegally privatizing the nation's oil wealth and evading billions of dollars in taxes, he said. Yukos was Russia's Enron – why shouldn't he go to prison?

It was true, in its way. Of course, it wasn't the whole truth. The nuances would be raucously debated throughout my stay in Russia. Many reporters would write that Khodorkovsky was punished for promoting a free-market economy, political pluralism and links with the West. They wrote stories pointing out that the Kremlin's cancellation of regional governor elections, its careful construction of a national political party that would come to dominate every corner of the country and its clampdown on domestic human rights organizations and foreign NGOs meant that political life in Russia was moving increasingly into a single airless room with locked doors, referred to in Russia as Putin's "vertical of power."

And some of them noted, with no small amount of admiration, that Russia under Putin's watch had built an energy empire that will, like it or not, probably control the gas valves to Europe for much of our lifetimes. For the most part, the Kremlin let the arguments flow, watched dispassionately as the verbal attacks whizzed by. I wondered for a while whether all the hollering was surely not evidence that free debate had won the day in Russia.

But had it? Or had the inscrutable faces behind Spassky Gate merely spun the web so tightly that they knew, even if those trembling and shouting in its cold embrace still did not, that there was no one able to storm the fortress any longer? **o**

# Who Is Mister Putin?



**Andrei Kolesnikov**  
Kommersant's  
Kremlin correspondent

Andrei Kolesnikov has covered the Kremlin for Kommersant since early in President Vladimir Putin's first term. His reports, written in an as-it-happened narrative style with great attention to detail, contain a particularly Russian brand of irony and even insolence. Even so, he is said to be well-liked in the Kremlin, and he has received a presidential Golden Quill award. In 2004, he published a two-volume collection of his reports titled "I Saw Putin!" and "Putin Saw Me!" He also co-authored "From the First Person: Conversations With Vladimir Putin," which was released during the 2000 election campaign.

U

ntil the end of their lives, the people who offered me a chance to work in the Kremlin press pool will probably maintain that they had the best intentions. They don't need to justify themselves. Who needs it? Who will listen? What is this - grade school? They had the best intentions, and they got what they asked for.

When I was offered a chance to work in the Kremlin press pool in 2001, I had only a vague notion of what it would be like. Actually, I didn't have the slightest idea.

Have I understood Vladimir Putin? Do I have some kind of secret insights that no one else has? Some things have gotten clearer, but more have gotten even more confused.

All I knew was that from time to time select journalists from the newspaper Kommersant went to some meetings with the president of the country, came back tired but pleased, and sauntered around the newsroom. Just looking at them you could tell: These guys had seen life.

At the time I was trying not to think about politics. What was the point? It would only upset me. All around me was real life in all its dimensions. Of course, I knew that politics played a role in the world, and since I was working on a daily newspaper, I even had to think about politics and write about them occasionally - but only in passing. This suited me just fine.

I was an average, ordinary person who had nothing to do with the well springs of power. True, people who know me might point out that by that time two of my friends - Natasha Gevorkyan and Natasha Timakova - and I had written a book called "From the First Person: Conversations with Vladimir Putin." But believe me, the book didn't take much out of me. In fact, it didn't even make a deep impression on me. And it didn't, thank God, leave a scar on my heart or some kind of black mark on my soul. You shouldn't overestimate a collection of talks with the future president of Russia. Yes, we talked - quite a lot: probably more than 24 hours all together. I don't think I could talk for more than 24 hours even with my best friend about his life. Only the stark necessity of work could force me to do that.

I'm also sure that the book didn't leave an indelible mark on the soul of the book's subject, either. It was the same stark necessity of work for him that it was for us. Sometimes we allowed ourselves to have a good time, and then it was enjoyable. But have I ever read the whole book even once? No. I didn't even want to. And the subject of the book has also said that he's never even opened it.

Why? Probably because we all knew that no matter how much we talked with him, Vladimir Putin would remain an absolutely private person. Yes, he told about some episodes from his life, and if you wanted to, you could draw some profound conclusions from them. But there's no sense in doing it, because you could

draw entirely different conclusions from different episodes. It was a book for everyone, because it was all true. I'd swear to it.

After the book came out, I quickly forgot about it. I continued to write about people's lives, not about politics. But every once in awhile, I began to cross paths with the subject of that book. When the Kursk submarine tragedy occurred in August 2000, I went to Vidyayev and lived on a ship for two days with the families of the trapped seamen. There I saw Vladimir Putin, who came to Vidyayev to meet with the relatives of the submariners. There were no Kremlin pool journalists there. They weren't taken along. They were told that the subject required a great deal of tact. Which was absolutely true.

I listened very carefully to the president. I literally tried to catch every single word. I was utterly caught up in what was happening. Sitting on the stage of the Palace of Culture was an entirely different man from the one we had met with when we were writing the book about him. I understood a great deal after that one meeting, although I didn't ask a single question. I didn't have any question I wanted to ask.

Then I met with him at a Hanukkah celebration. I was amazed again, and intrigued. It was yet another Putin. And it was a third Putin at the Tartar holiday of Sabantui. I might have suspected that I was seeing Putin's doubles: These men were totally different from the man we met and discussed life with in such great detail.

I wasn't working in the Kremlin pool then; I had attended all those events almost by chance. But each time I was fascinated. And each time I wrote honestly about what I saw. I'd swear to that, too.

So when my editor asked if I wanted to work in the Kremlin press pool, I agreed right away. True, I thought that I wouldn't need much time to figure him out. Three years passed. I saw the president live and in person nearly every day. Of course, I stood about 30 meters from him behind a red velvet rope. Did I see anything that you didn't see? Yes, of course I did. Although in some cases you could see more on television than I did.

Have I understood Vladimir Putin? Do I have some kind of secret insights that no one else has?

Some things have gotten clearer. But more has gotten even more confused. As I observed Vladimir Putin almost every day, it was like I joined a strange race and began to chase him. To catch up with him would be to understand him. And from time to time I had the sense that I got it. Subject closed. And then I was bored. Or disappointed. But then I would see that I missed something. He got away from me. And the chase went on.

Then I decided to give readers the chance to watch this race and draw their own conclusions.

I collected the articles that were published over three years in Kommersant in a book called "I Saw Putin!" I didn't change anything in them, so you can follow the public life of Vladimir Putin without anything added or subtracted. I even decided to put in the bits that didn't make it into the newspaper. I put everything back in.

Why were the articles cut? Neither the editor nor anyone else had had anything personal against me. It was just the usual, annoying battle at the newspaper: You write as much as possible in every article, but the seemingly (yes, seemingly!) limited space in the paper sometimes meant that one of my colleagues won the battle for space and my article got cut. This didn't happen too often. Sometimes I wrote on my lap, on the back of a document laying out the territorial features of the Khanty-Mansiisk autonomous district and then dictated my own barely legible squiggles by phone (that kind of work makes up at least half the articles in the book). But when I was still weighed down with information and impressions, I wrote articles in the peace and quiet of my study or a hotel room (but also in a rush). Those articles are published in full in the book.

I warn you: This man is not an easy subject. Be on guard. Don't believe everything people tell you. There are a lot of dangerous reefs under the water. Sometimes the subject crashes into them himself. You'll know when that happens. He avoids confrontation, but sometimes he takes it on.

But - that's enough from me. ◊

**In my time I managed to convey two important truths to my readers.**

**The first was that there was a way to write about Vladimir Putin.**

**The second was that, apart from Kolesnikov, no one knew how.**

**Andrei Vasilyev,  
Former Editor in Chief,  
Kommersant-daily**



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# Internet Rules

Bypassing the first of the country's perennial miseries – roads – and staying largely clear of its second – fools – the Russian Internet has proven to be one of the country's most resilient strengths



Over the decade or so of its existence, the Russian Internet has been mostly the preserve of the urban intelligentsia, presiding over highly innovative experiments in the fields of news provision, blogging, online libraries and even the creation of Internet novels. Over the last few years, however, the sector has found itself in a fascinating period of transition, with many previously amateur projects progressing into sustainable businesses. Statistics continue to impress: Internet audiences are now growing at a healthy 30 to 40 percent per year, while advertising is set to increase this year by nearly twice that figure.

**Anton Nossik** is one of RuNet's foremost pioneers. Beginning in 1998, Nossik launched a series of online news services, including the present-day leaders Gazeta.ru, Newsru.com and Lenta.ru. Considered by many to have played a crucial role in turning web-based political journalism into a mainstream Russian phenomenon, Nossik to this day continues to edit online publications.

For Beyond the Headlines he offers his assessment of the present state and future of Russia online.

**1. Russia now has over 20 million Internet users**, which would represent a small and miserable minority if it were the United States. All the same, this figure equates to 100 percent coverage in certain layers: There is complete coverage in the capitals, and among the wealthy and the educated classes, for example.

**2. Unlikely as it may seem**, the Russian Internet today is free from censorship. No one tries to pretend that the apparatus for content modification is not in place, but up until now that apparatus has only acted as a monitor. Changing this policy would require a decision at the highest level, since adopting a Chinese model would generate headlines worldwide. Personally, I'm not sure President Vladimir Putin wants those headlines.

**3. I have my own news feed in English**, Mosnews.com, but I'm yet to be convinced that the West is truly interested in Russia. When there is interest, it is usually in terms of a threat, or an absurdity. Our most popular story ever was from the Novosibirsk zoo, about how a lion had mated with a tiger and produced a hybrid cub, called a liger. Far more requests for that story than for any other.

**4. The Russian Internet is sometimes** portrayed as a beacon for democracy, but its impact is rather limited. Certainly, there is some 10 percent of the population who are active people, who make decisions regarding their own lives and the lives of their families. This is one part of Russia, for which the Internet is an indispensable part of life. But there is also another Russia that is ruled, managed, dominated, operated; a Russia that wants to receive instructions. If we are really talking of democracy, and the expression of the majority's will, then we should be clear that this other Russia will always prevail.

**5. The Russian Internet has at last** begun to work as a business, which can only be a good thing. Believe me, when you have a situation where one person has to work full-time to support his family, while at the

**The Russian Internet is free from censorship, and changing that policy would require decisions at the highest level. Personally, I'm not sure Putin wants the headlines.**

## Leading Russian news sites

[www.vzglyad.ru](http://www.vzglyad.ru)  
[www.lenta.ru](http://www.lenta.ru)  
[www.rbc.ru](http://www.rbc.ru)  
[www.km.ru](http://www.km.ru)  
[www.newsru.com](http://www.newsru.com)  
[www.gazeta.ru](http://www.gazeta.ru)  
[www.utro.ru](http://www.utro.ru)  
[www.pravda.ru](http://www.pravda.ru)

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same time maintaining the world's biggest Internet library [Maxim Moshkov's Lib.ru project], then all you can say is that it's a great pity for the library.

**6. One of the most exciting areas** of the Russian Internet today is blogging. What makes the Russian blogosphere different is its focus on quality rather than quantity. It isn't like the United States, where you have millions of people with nothing to say, writing that they've got a good mark at school and so on. In Russia, many newsmakers, many prominent opinion leaders – politicians, writers, high-tech managers, pop stars – are all now producing high-quality content at Livejournal.com.

**7. My prognosis for the future?** No matter what happens, text will always remain at the center of electronic media. People will still be reading. People will still be writing. There will be a demand for multimedia, certainly, but I don't think there will be any requirement to get rid of text. The Internet isn't going to be based around the needs of the illiterate any time soon. **o**



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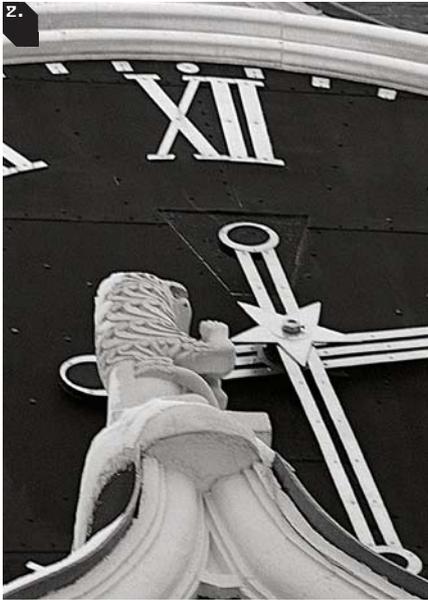
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# The Power Of Photographs

A selection of photographs, taken from the 1930s to the present day, tell the story of Moscow's place at the center of a proud and mighty country

1. Yevgeny Khaldei | 'ZIMs', Manezh Square, 1962
2. Vladimir Grevi | Tsar Bell, Kremlin, 1955
3. Emanuel Yevzerikhin | Shukov radio tower, 1930s
4. Yevgeny Khaldei | Moscow State University, 1951
5. Emanuel Yevzerikhin | Gorky Park, 1930s
6. Vladimir Grevi | Kremlin Chimes, 2004
7. Georgy Perov | I love you, 2002





## Cults, Power and Unrequited Love

By Olga Sviblova, Director of the Moscow House of Photography

Right from the moment the city became the capital, Moscow has breathed power. The energy of power is evident everywhere you go; it reflects the tempo of the town, the structure of behavior. Yevgeny Khaldei's shot (1) captures the essence of this perfectly: the threatening lines; the ZIM governmental cars; and the Moskva Hotel itself, built as a symbol of power.

A power subtext also underwrites Grevi's fantastically erotic Tsar Cannon (6), standing ready for action; and his shot of the Kremlin chimes (2), symbolic of Russia's physical and historical time.

Perhaps the only thing that has informed Moscow's history more than power itself is the legitimization of this power through cults. There was a tremendously successful cult of education, captured here in Khaldei's "Moscow State University" (4) (note the Party delegation arriving to inspect its new shrine); and a cult of sport, analagous to the Roman example (5).

Technological inferiority complexes similarly led to a short-lived cult of rationality and functionality. Built in the 1920s, the Shukov radio tower (3) was one of the most brilliant examples of this new golden, constructivist era. But by the time of Yevzerikhin's photograph, you could see that the tower had already started to dance and turn. Russian reality had, in other words, triumphed. Note also the gallow-like lamppost in the foreground, highly symbolic at a time in which the gallows were indeed looming in Russia.

The final picture (7) is especially important in that it says, "I love you." For anyone visiting Moscow, it is important to realize how much its citizens actually love Moscow. Sometimes the city repays this affection. At others, it is more reticent. ◻

# Brief History Of Time

Hidden among the Stalinist spires, gaudy neon casinos and construction scaffolding in Moscow are centuries of history and culture. Much has been lost, but you can still beam yourself back in time to experience life under Ivan the Terrible, the home of Leo Tolstoy or friendship between nations under Nikita Khrushchev **By Michele A. Berdy**

## Ancient Muscovy

Start near Red Square on Ulitsa Varvarka with a visit to the Old English Court, where English merchants, diplomats and doctors resided from 1555 until 1649, when Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich evicted the English in protest over the beheading of King Charles I. This small museum provides a short history of Russian-English trade and diplomatic relations in vaulted chambers both cozy and grand, and you leave wondering what the world might have been like today had Queen Elizabeth I accepted Ivan the Terrible's marriage proposal.

Old English Court: 4a Ulitsa Varvarka. M. Kitai-Gorod. 298-3952. Tues., Thur., Sat., Sun. 10 am – 6 pm; Wed., Fri. 11 am – 7 pm.

## 19th-Century Family Life

To experience Moscow family life of 150 years ago, go to the meticulously preserved Leo Tolstoy house, in which the writer spent 19 winters with his enormous and complicated family. Both floors of this simple and comfortable house are open to visitors, from the rather austere bedrooms downstairs to the hall on the second floor, where you can hear a recording of Tolstoy reading to children. From the hall, go down the narrow corridor the family called the Catacombs to see Tolstoy's study (and his handmade shoes and bicycle).

Leo Tolstoy House Museum: 21 Ulitsa Lva Tolstogo. M. Park Kultury. 246-9444. Tues. – Sun. 10 am – 6 pm.

## Moderne

The most outstanding architect of Russian Art Nouveau was Fyodor Shekhtel, and the most brilliant example of his work was the house he built for the banker Sergei Ryabushinsky in 1900, which from 1931 to 1936 was home to the writer Maxim Gorky – hence it is called the Gorky Museum and displays the writer's memorabilia. There is nary a sharp angle in the house, from the furniture, fixtures and wrought-iron fence to the floors and stained-glass windows. The architectural centerpiece is the curved limestone staircase called "The Wave," crowned by a lamp that looks like a jellyfish.

Gorky Museum: 6/2 Malaya Nikitskaya. M. Pushkinskaya. 290-0535. Wed. – Sun. 11 am – 6 pm.

## October Revolution

If you are a fan of the avant-garde, head for the brilliantly bizarre Vladimir Mayakovsky Museum. After trooping up four flights of stairs and peering into the small room where the poet of the Revolution lived for 11 years (and where he shot himself in the heart in 1930), you spiral down a ramp of Constructivist and Futurist madness. Mayakovsky's hand-drawn posters, constructivist drawings and models, manuscripts, letters and photographs are affixed to twisted girders, furniture hanging from the ceiling, crooked typewriters and piles of junk.

Mayakovsky Museum: 3/6 Lubyansky Proyezd. M. Lubyanka. 621-9387. Fri. – Tues. 10 am – 6 pm, Thur. 1 – 8 pm.

## Socialist Realism

Opened in 1959, the All-Russia Exhibition Center was created to showcase the very best of the Soviet economy. The complex has a slightly different feel to it now, with a garden center taking pride of place in the Space Pavilion, but you can still admire the country's finest collection of healthy and hearty workers and peasants atop the glorious gold fountain in the center of the park.

All-Russia Exhibition Center: M. VDNKh. 9 am – 7 pm.

## The Space Race

If you are nostalgic for the Cold War, stop in the one-room Memorial Museum of Cosmonautics in the base of the space rocket obelisk next to VDNKh metro station. It is filled with original spacesuits and equipment from every era of the Soviet and Russian space program, and even exhibits the first dogs to make a round-trip space flight, Belka and Strelka, who were stuffed for posterity.

Memorial Museum of Cosmonautics: 111 Prospekt Mira. M. VDNKh. 683-7914. Tues. – Sun. 10 am – 6 pm. **o**

## ... and five unusual ways to be entertained

### 1. Olives on Red Square

Moscow is a synthesis of glamour and totalitarianism, and the best place to get a sense of both in one go is Bosco cafe and bar. Located within the GUM shopping mall and looking out onto Red Square, this place has a cheery policy of serving with every order what some regard as Moscow's finest olives. Eat them, and remember that less than 100 meters from you lies Lenin. 3 Red Square M. Okhotny Ryad

### 2. View From the Top

Moscow is a town with absolutely chaotic planning, which makes looking down on it from a height particularly rewarding. There are two main options available to the interested tourist: the restaurant on the roof of the Ararat Park Hyatt hotel on 4 Neglinnaya Ulitsa, near the Bolshoi Theater (M. Teatralnaya), and City Space Bar, located 140 meters above ground level in the new Swisotel, 52 Kosmodamianskaya Naberezhnaya (M. Paveletskaya).

### 3. Drink With the Recently Departed

Moscow's cemeteries are a microcosm of life here and in the hereafter. Head over to the Vagankov Cemetery and wander among the graves of poet Sergei Yesenin, singer Vladimir Vysotsky and other luminaries of theater, sports and literature. Impressive gravestones depict hockey sticks, basketballs and other earthly pursuits. More likely than not you'll see relatives sharing bread and a bottle of vodka with each other, and with their loved ones on the other side. 15 Ulitsa Sergeya Makyeeva M. Ulitsa 1905 Goda

### 4. Bathe With the Dolphins

For a curious 50 minutes, go to the no-frills Utrish Dolphinarium and see Yegor, a Beluga whale, Sara, the baby walrus, and a fleet of cheerful, chirpy bottlenose dolphins. Be sure to cover your ears when Yegor starts singing his ear-splitting songs. Shows Wed. – Fri. at 4 pm and 6 pm; Sat. and Sun., noon, 2 pm and 4 pm. Photo-op with the gang after the show. For information, call 369-7966.

27 Mironovskaya Ulitsa M. Semyonovskaya

### 5. Bathe With the Oligarchs

The Sanduny banya is Moscow's most prestigious bathhouse and the second residence of many an important politician and oil baron. The baths themselves are arranged into three classes: "upper," "second upper" and "first" (mens' only). Follow the tourists to the upper section if what you want is to sense the opulent luxury of a 19th-century merchant court. If, on the other hand, you are more interested in the quality of the steam, you will be better off in the cheaper section below. Surprisingly, this is also where you'll find the capital's millionaires.

14 Neglinnaya Ulitsa M. Kuznetsky Most

# Moscow: Culinary Capital of Eurasia

Writer, gastronome and general know-it-all Alexander Genis introduces Moscow's multi-ethnic cuisine



**F**rom a culinary – read indisputable – viewpoint, Moscow is the very center of Eurasia, offering a diversity of cuisines that few other cities can rival. Soviet history played its part here, with “friendship between nations” cultivating foreign cuisines and restaurants in the capital. For the average Soviet citizen, there was no equivocation – the idea of delicious food clearly equated to dishes from the Caucasian and Central Asian repertoire, or more exactly, shashlik (kebab), plov (pilaf), chebureki (fried dumplings), satsivi (chicken in garlic and walnut dressing), chanakhi (mutton soup), pressed chicken and lyulya kebab.

A feast for the Slavic soul, **Georgian** cuisine offers the most dazzling alternative to the phlegmatic – though also delicious – Russian cuisine. Wonderfully diverse, Georgian recipes bring together a passion for poultry, young beef – not just the obligatory lamb – and sour sauces. Main dishes routinely include a heap of aromatic herbs, while the signature shashlik is usually consumed with a voracity reminiscent of wolf eating sheep – rather appropriately, having reportedly conquered Alexandre Dumas.

A long dinner in the excellent and romantic restaurant Genatsvale should take in the

following: lobio (bean pate with walnuts and garlic), one of the many varieties of khachapuri (cheese bread), kharcho (a sour and savory soup made from lamb and dried Tkemali plums) and Georgian solyanka, a spicy and sour meat soup prepared in an ancient stone pan.

The most ancient of Caucasian cuisines, **Armenian** cookery creates a watercolor of taste from a base of some 300 wild herbs and spices. Most foreigners will be surprised by the extent to which fruits and nuts are included in main dishes: The subtle bozbash lamb soup, for example, is prepared with cherry plums, dried apricots, prunes, quince, chestnuts and chickpeas. Right on the other end of the scale, the legendary hangover cure of jellied khash is prepared using three main ingredients: tripe, neat's feet and garlic in unlimited measure.

The pinnacle of Armenian cooking is the ishkan trout from Lake Sevan. This is a rare high-altitude fish demanding particular attention: Gutted without being slit open – using instead a teaspoon inserted in the bronchial aperture –, the fish is delicately filled with tarragon and simmered in wine atop fruit tree twigs. This one delicacy lifts Armenian cuisine to the exquisite heights of its cognac, landscapes and poetry.

Domzhur, the restaurant of the Union of Journalists, is one location for trying the Sevan trout, with the fish flown in from Armenia on a daily basis. The remaining delicacies – dolma, piti (lamb and potato soup) and karsky shashlik (lamb loin grilled in one piece) – are best sampled in Yerevan.

**Azeri** (Azerbaijani) cuisine accentuates the Caspian Sea and, by definition, sturgeon fish. Sturgeon is the focus of an ingenious Azeri interpretation of the shashlik kebab, marinated in condensed pomegranate juice and roasted on coals made from fruit trees. This sturgeon shashlik can be sampled in the restaurant chain Shesh-besh (the best of which is located near Novokuznetskaya metro station).

Moving eastward, we come to **Central Asian** cuisine – the most outstanding of which is Uzbek. Here you are likely to meet the rice dish plov, a speciality that is dependent on a multitude of trade secrets, ranging from the size of the thick-sided metal pot to the particular fat from a Middle Eastern breed of sheep. Especially famed for its Bukharan plov is Uzbekistan, one of Moscow's oldest restaurants, dating right back to Stalin's time.

*If, after all these Asian adventures, you can still find some room for Slavic cuisine, remember that here, the secret is in the soups. Just two outstanding examples are: the crown of ornate Ukrainian baroque, borshch, a beetroot soup tanked up with traditional Ukrainian pig fat (try this one in **Shinok**); and sour Russian shchi, a cabbage soup brewed for two days in one pot and two different saucepans (a good bet at the unique but pricey **Pushkin**). ◻*

## Addresses

**Georgian** | Genatsvale 12/1 Ulitsa Ostozhenka, M. Kropotkinskaya. 202-0445. Noon – midnight

**Armenian** | Domzhur 8a Nikitsky Bulvar. M. Arbat'skaya. 291-5698. 11am – last customer

Yerevan 5 Oktyabr'skaya Ulitsa, M. Mendeleev'skaya. 288-7433. Noon – midnight  
**Azeri** | Shesh-besh 24 Pyatnitskaya Ulitsa, M. Tretyakov'skaya, Novokuznetskaya. 959-5862. Noon – midnight; 6a Smolenskaya Ploshchad.

Metro Smolenskaya. 241-6542. Noon – midnight; 1 Ulitsa Krasnaya Presnya, Building 5, M. Krasnopresnenskaya. 255-1883. Noon – midnight

**Central Asian** | Uzbekistan 29/14 Neglinnaya Ulitsa, M. Kuznetsky Most, Tsvetnoy Bulvar. 923-0585. Noon – midnight

**Slavic**  
Shinok 2 Ulitsa 1905 Goda, M. Ulitsa 1905 Goda. 255-0888. 24 hours  
Café Pushkin 26a Tverskoi Bulvar, M. Pushkinskaya. 229-5590. 24 hours





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