RUSSIAN MIND

LA PENSEE RUSSE

№118/02 (4989)
February 2020

Russkaya Mysl
Russian/English

The magazine
was founded in 1880
www.RussianMind.com

9 770757 223144 00

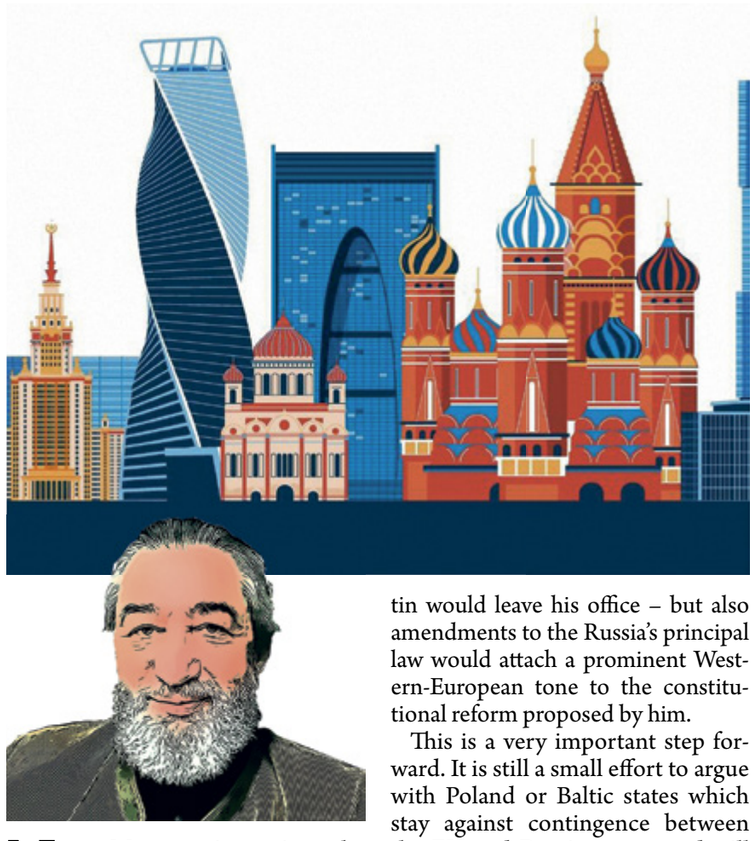
9 770757 223137 02
555045-2002 € 5,00

4 191808 005003 00118

UK	£4.00
Italy	€5.00
France, Spain	€5.60
Germany	€5.00
Belgium	€5.00
Austria	€5.00
Finland	€5.00

EDITOR'S LETTER

A NEW DIRECTION



Now Moscow is seeing the changes touching not only Russian citizens, but also all people who cannot remain indifferent to the future of Europe. Amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation introduced by Putin form a very positive message. This is how they were precisely perceived by European administrative offices, especially in France and Germany.

Berlin and Paris have been calling for a rapprochement with Moscow long since the break caused by the Maidan coup and taking back Crimea. In addition to it, Putin's authoritarian image supported anti-Russian propaganda predicting "eternal rule" for him. But suddenly everyone has acknowledged, that not only Putin would leave his office – but also amendments to the Russia's principal law would attach a prominent Western-European tone to the constitutional reform proposed by him.

This is a very important step forward. It is still a small effort to argue with Poland or Baltic states which stay against contingence between the EU and Russia now – and will continue to do so further. But it will be more and more difficult for them to create obstacles, because strategic challenges are too global and important – they cover the European Union as a whole, but not specific countries only.

Developments in Russia are specifically important due to the fact that they are backgrounded by a notable weakening of the US' influence on the Old Continent. There is a strange impression that the USA pulls away itself from Europe, while Russia, alternatively, approaches Europe.

It remains to be seen whether it is true or not. But there is a reason to rejoice at the idea!

Victor Loupan

Russian Mind
No118/02(4989),
FEBRUARY 2020

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COVER:

CIRCULATION: 47 000 COPIES

STRATEGIC CONTINGENCE

Western mass media surprisingly detect the rise of Russia's gravitas

VICTOR LOUPAN,
Head of the Editorial Board

During the "cold war" Western academic establishment developed a specific field of political science which was focused on study of the "Soviet system". American experts named it "Sovietology". One of the bases of this "science" included a postulate contemplating research of not only the objective sociological reality, but also a hidden, "dark" side of the system under study.

A conspiratorial field of "Sovietology" was financed at the same level as its official part. Such belief in a dual nature of the reality was not a phase, and "visibility – invisibility" division of the Soviet reality, which was important enough, surprised nobody. Closedness of the Soviet political and social structure facilitated entrenchment of this completely unscientific idea excusing incomprehension of the essence of the Soviet system. It continued till the middle of the 1970s until the first political refugees – intellectuals and academic professors – escaped from the USSR to the West.

After the collapse of Communism and dissolution of the USSR "everything became clear" for a while. The triumphant Western countries had been riding high over 10–15 years. Pauperization of the former Soviet society was stated as a fact, but was considered as a transient condition related to the so-called "transition period" between a "tyranny" and "freedom". To the applause of the West, the process of mass impoverishment of the population had been accompanied by senseless corruption, orgy of crime, moral degradation, and other perverse effects which in aggregate pushed many Russians towards the ideas being also unpleasant for the West.

In that exact social and political context, the "father of Russian democracy" Boris Yeltsin had been superseded by the "Chekist" Vladimir Putin. Twenty years later everything has been modified in Russia. Yeltsin's style still remains as is, but the management style and almost impossible restoration of not only economy but also the Russia's strategic influence led to a seismic shift in its perception in the West. Russia is again perceived as a puzzle, as something hardly understandable and even dangerous.

Background by such misunderstanding and opposition, receipt of Putin's speech of 15 January 2020 in the West gave us a new example of spiritual perplexity. When reading analytics presented by leading European and American mass media on the next day, it became laughably clear that "Putin surprised them". He immediately turned from a "dictator" and "autocrat" into a defender of parliamentary democracy and the concept of separation of powers.

Western experts have been predicting modification of the Constitution of the Russian Federation long before, but the draft on amendment of 22 articles of the Russia's principal law introduced by Putin, completely contradicted their suggestions. Even the most vociferous opponents of "Putin's power", forcing themselves, had to agree with the evidence that Putin had been preparing the ground for further functioning of the political system structured by him, upon his future vacation of the position of the country leader. This single fact made longstanding propaganda of Putin who would never step back from his post, null and void. There were different scenarios, but all of them could be summarized by saying that there was no more democracy in Russia. This is precisely why the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly has surprised Western analysts that much. According to them, Putin was able to "push" any bill. The State Duma, the Federation Council and the population – in case of referendum – would cast an affirmative vote in any way. This is why democratic and legislative changes proposed by the president have skinned even the most dedicated haters. The single fact that candidates for presidency will face more restrictions from now on, speaks volumes. The next Russian president will have less powers and authorities that the existing one has.

Rostislav Turovsky, a political scientist, thinks that "Putin's task is not eternal rule, but establishment of a controllable management structure in which he would be able to secure the ultimate arbitrator role to solve only strategic issues". It remains to be seen whether it is true or not. But one thing already became evident: Putin wishes to prevent chaos often accompanying change of power in Russia.

Putin has been ruling Russia a good while ago, so his vacation of the position of the president may be perceived as the end of his era. Similar transition points in Russian history were often accompanied by the time of troubles.

The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly was followed by the resignation of the government led by Medvedev. Medvedev's dismissal from the head of government position itself symbolises a change of landmarks. Russia's new Prime Minister, Mikhail Mishustin, is recognized as a major expert in economy and finance. In contrast to Medvedev who just strictly followed Putin's instructions, Mishustin, as experts suppose, will have to demonstrate his leadership skills. At the current stage of economical development and according to the current strategic situation with Russia, Putin will need not only an obedient executor, but rather a real professional who has potential for major reforms.

When overwatching rapidly developing events on the international scene, Western mass media surprisingly detect the rise of Russia's gravitas. It hardly fits their predefined description of Russia as a "developing country with Spain's GDP" or a "giant fuel station". Especially when backgrounded by "sanctions" and other measures aimed at tearing the Russia's economy "to shreds". We have already left this nonsense behind. But what we expect is a strategic contingence between Russia and the major EU countries.

DISSENTING OPINION

THE WORLD GOT TIRED OF LIES

Attempts to demonise Russia are not new

OLEG OZEROV

Many years ago I worked on a newspaper and was told a funny story. A Soviet journalist who worked in a Nordic country (I will not mention his name as he is still rated among the best European journalists) decided to play a hoax on editors sending them an article about a non-existing holiday that was done exactly on the 1st of April, All Fools' Day. Everything was lies on the article – the event itself and its celebration schedule; moreover, it was presented in a bizarre manner. To avoid taking it serious, the author completed the article with the following conclusion: "The celebration will be capped by a Soviet submarine emersion to take place in the metropolitan main fountain".

I recalled this story repeatedly. Every time I got news from Scandinavia regarding appearance of submarine shapes near some fiord, and every time I heard about a Soviet scout plane approaching the borders of any European country, I smiled at it: Western mass media generated a newspaper hoax again and again, on any day without focusing on the 1st of April only. People who got used to this kind of fake news usually smile and just shrug shoulders.

However, seven years ago in Milan, locals were shocked to see an impossible entertainment. Asphalt was broken with a submarine cabin sticking out of it, with firemen, emergency doctors and policemen fussing around it. Actually, the submarine "breaking" asphalt surface was just an installation, but its surroundings were a performance organised by an insurance company for promotional purposes. The performance was produced by the M&C Saatchi advertising agency which would never reach a desired effect through this entertainment without continuous messages on Russian submarines appearing from time to time near NATO borders. In essence, the advertisers ridiculed such fake news and their generators in their own way.

Even at a time when the Soviet Union and NATO member states were ideological foes to support different countries of the world often waging wars against each other, Western agencies kept distance from conducting such dishonest propaganda based on fake news and the "highly likely" formula. Instead, even military personnel of the Soviet Union and Western countries respected each other being the soldiers of competing, but not opposing states. It is not only supported by the fact of cooperation between our officers with NATO officers within the framework of joint peace-support missions held in the Middle East and other parts of the world, but also by mutual perception of navy sailors and military pilots of Russia and the Western world.

A pilot of the Soviet heavy bomber told me the following story. During the "cold war" our heavy bombers flew patrols approaching the North Sea where British fighters met them and supported them back to the Baltic Sea area. They flew so close that when matching schedules, the pilots could recognise each other and even waved with the hand. My acquaintance was sent to such flight on the 23th of February, the Red Army Day. As a British fighter got closer to his plane, a British aviator pointed at shoulder straps like asking if his Soviet colleague achieved a new rank for the holiday. When our pilot smiled and nodded his head, the British aviator also smiled and

waved his fist for a long time to congratulate his colleague.

It could happen due to the fact that people respected each other despite any world events or political infighting, and Western people had neither hatred nor venom for Soviet people. Over the recent 30 years Western mass media managed to fill most of their fellow nationals with the idea that Russian people were tortuous killers living in a country observing no rights or rules. But Russia itself was preparing to carry out strikes against Western countries and was likely to subjugate the whole of Europe using toxic matters and sending cruel crowds there until it is stopped forcedly. This is a ghost story mainly targeting housewives.

It is well known that Western mass media – especially those of them which are controlled by American or pro-American agencies and other structures receiving rich gifts from Washington, – continuously draw Russia as an aggressor. US military spending exceeds the Russian one by nearly 10 times, but this fact is ignored by the West. However, if Russia tests a new missile, it gives Western mass media an excellent excuse for a new hysteria aimed at further dehumanisation policy against Russia in concert with its strategic partners.

Following this policy, such countries as Lithuania or Ukraine even accuse the USA and Great Britain of becoming USSR's allies during World War II while the USSR was allegedly a warmonger along with Hitlerite Germany. It is black and white with them: National Socialists have special privileges in these countries. But why our former allies for anti-Hitler coalition fail to give as good as one gets? Don't they value our joint struggle against fascism? Didn't we break the back of Wehrmacht using our joint efforts? Didn't Mrs Winston Churchill organise the Aid to Russia Fund, didn't she stay by Stalin's side on a Mausoleum rostrum on the Victory Day? How much must they despise their history to completely forget all the abovementioned?

Attempts to demonise Russia are not new. Growth of Russia and its military power disaffected Western countries back in pre-Peter era, but later it mostly exasperated them. Reaction of the West gave birth to the trend of perceiving Russia as a backward, uncivilized country being unable to conceive Western culture. But when this "backward country" battered Napoleon's army, a new epithet arose immediately: "Russia is a gendarme of Europe". After the Russian Revolution of 1917 Western politicians imagined Comintern agents and Bolshevistic spies everywhere. It was just several years after World War II, when Russia was firstly dubbed "the occupant of Eastern Europe" and then "Evil Empire".

In the freewheeling 1990s the West quieted thinking that Russia found itself in the fringes of world history, lost its power, its allies, and its economy. However, a massive base created by the Soviet economy, Soviet education system and Soviet patriotism as well as Russian spirit chastened by travails and struggle against enemies were as strong as Russia succeeded to return to the political scene and even restore a significant portion of its potential being missed over those "lost years". It arose like a phoenix from the ashes.

Modern Western politicians cannot forgive Russia this particular thing. Essentially, they are conducting two wars together: one of them against remaining values inherited from scientific and cultural progress in industrial and post-industrial societies, and the other – against Russia and its allies which strive to save three principal elements of real humankind development: distinctiveness and independence of peoples, humanity, and international law. The struggle held by Russia and its allies is unequal contest. Their opponents not only have more powerful economic opportunities, but also manage a massive army consisting of hatchet journalists, and a huge number of fake methods, being completely unscrupulousness at the same time.

However, many colleagues of mine consider now: the world got tired of lies, dishonesty, and unfairness. It means, Russia will acquire more allies soon.

HAS RUSSIA ESTABLISHED A NEW INTERNATIONAL ROLE?

PAUL J. SAUNDERS

Moscow's largely successful defence of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, and its more recent diplomacy surrounding Turkey's efforts to establish a so-called "safe zone" on the Syrian side of their shared border, has prompted some Russian foreign policy analysts and commentators to refer to their country as a "security provider" or, more narrowly, a "sovereignty provider" in international affairs. Despite its high-profile activity in Syria, however, Russia's international security role may remain more limited than this view suggests.

As Russia's first significant military intervention outside the former Soviet region in decades, Moscow's four-year Syrian operation has appropriately attracted considerable attention. Russian military forces have demonstrated new capabilities, won substantial experience, and overcome some of the shortcomings exposed in their war in Georgia, such as in integrating air and ground combat. More important from an international affairs perspective, Moscow prevented Syria's collapse and kept its ally President Assad in power. Russia has accomplished this at a relatively low cost in lives and money while maintaining a fairly narrow definition of its role and campaign objectives.

It is understandable that a success like this would stimulate pride within a foreign policy and national security elite long frustrated by the gap between the Soviet Union's international standing and that of Russia today. Such sentiments would be especially attractive at a time when Russian observers see American power as declining. Nevertheless, Russia's experts – and leaders – would do well to maintain a sense of perspective about what Moscow has accomplished and why and how its Syria policy has generally worked so far.

Consider some of the key elements of the conflict in Syria that have thus far functioned to Russia's advantage. First, while Syria is outside the former Soviet region, it is not too far from Russia and, because it is a littoral Mediterranean country, it is easily accessible for the Russian military. The combination of these two factors means that Russia has been able to deploy and resupply its forces in a timely manner by sea rather than by air, which would have imposed greater stress on Russian capabilities.

Second, Russia has not faced a sophisticated or modern military force opponents in combat with Syria's rebel forces or Islamic State militants. This has permitted the Russian military to use helicopters without undue risk from surface-to-air missiles, for example, and has otherwise limited the dangers to Russian personnel and equipment.

Third, Moscow had an essential ally in Iran, which supplied its regular military forces as well as facilitated the operations of thousands of Lebanese Hezbollah fighters, who provided critical support to Syria's ground forces. This obviated the use of additional Russian ground troops, reduced casualties, and avoided additional strain on Russia's resupply mission.

Fourth, Russia benefited from an environment in which its main competitor – the United States – voluntarily limited its own involvement in Syria. This does not mean simply that former President Barack Obama and current President Donald Trump have rejected significant U.S. military operations in Syria; it has meant much more than that. Washington had long taken the lead in air strikes against the Islamic State, which in turn allowed Russia to concentrate its fire against Syrian opposition troops. Washington did not provide advanced weapons to Syria's opposition and has been working to deny them to ISIS too. Washington also worked to contain the conflict and to constrain regional allies and partners who might otherwise have supported the forces Russia has been fighting. Indeed, excepting Iran, regional players' participation in Syria's civil war may well have peaked before Russia launched its intervention.

Finally, as Russian officials like to point out, the Syrian government requested Russia's help and invited the Russian military into their country. On top of this, Russia already had a small naval facility in Syria and, with Syrian help, was able rapidly to establish an important air base. Where else will Russia receive a similar welcome?

With all of this in mind, Russia's leaders might ask themselves how likely it is that Moscow will be able to repeat its Syrian operation in another location away from their country's borders. But they probably do not need to ask that, because it seems fairly obvious that Russia cannot count on similarly favorable military conditions elsewhere. That makes the idea of Russia as a global "security provider" unsustainable.

Setting aside the military factors, there are also some important reasons to be skeptical about how international political conditions will influence Russia's global role. The biggest question is the United States, which has largely abstained from meaningful involvement in the Syria conflict, leading some to expect an enduring reduction in America's international engagement. That would be a mistake.

Long-term U.S. combat operations in Iraq and (to a lesser extent) Afghanistan have indisputably fueled public frustration with what President Trump calls "endless wars." This has even led some to compare these conflicts to America's troubled involvement in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s. But American foreign policy turned around fairly soon after the U.S. military withdrawal from Saigon in April 1975, an event that some are now connecting to Trump's decision to pull U.S. troops from their Syrian bases.

Yet by the early 1980s, the less-confident post-Vietnam America had given way to President Ronald Reagan's assertive and even confrontational approach to the Soviet Union and to new military action, such as the U.S. invasion of Grenada. In 1983, Soviet leaders sufficiently feared Reagan's newly energetic policies and worried that NATO's large-scale Able Archer military exercises might be a ruse to cover preparations for a major NATO attack on the U.S.S.R. Of course, Reagan's policies – and the domestic support behind them – were in part a reaction to Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, a decision influenced in part by Soviet dreams of American retrenchment. The difference between the Cold War's zero-sum rivalry and today's is that the U.S. side of the ledger is much bigger than Russia's. Playing a weaker hand well can yield short-term successes, but it is not a sustainable national strategy for international leadership.

Russia probably has greater prospects as a "sovereignty provider" than a security provider, if one defines this narrowly to mean that Moscow's great power status, United Nations Security Council veto, and demonstrated willingness to oppose the United States can give other governments somewhat more flexibility in defying Washington by turning to Russia. Ultimately, however, one must wonder how many of its partners Russia can protect from the United States simultaneously with an economy one-tenth the size of America's and improving but still comparatively limited military capabilities. One must also wonder how many of Russia's prospective new partners actually want to gamble on a break with America rather than using visible conversations with the Kremlin to get a better deal from the White House.

Russia is visibly capable of exercising significant influence on carefully selected matters where conditions allow Moscow to make the most of its strengths, whether military, diplomatic, or economic. Whether Moscow can build a broader international role is less apparent; it will require more than filling in the spaces that the United States leaves blank. Doing so on a long-term basis will also require preparing for the next inevitable cycle of American activism.

This article is an abridged version of the paper written for the Valdai International Discussion Club. globalaffairs.ru

MOSCOW'S IRON ACCELERATION

MARTA WIEJAK

There are many things for which Moscow is famous, and the metro is certainly one of the most prominent of them. The metro is the city's beating heart. During peak hours, crowds of people pour out into the streets to the rhythm of the trains entering and leaving the stations. The metro is Moscow's primary means of public transport; it's also a monument to its turbulent history and vibrant present, and a crucial element and major constituent of its identity. You can't understand Moscow without understanding its metro – this is why we're introducing its brief history to you here.

Moscow metro serves the largest number of passengers a day out of all the metro systems in the world: on weekdays this number goes up to nine million. It consists of 14 lines and 212 stations and has more than 360 km of tracks. Plus, 44 of these stations are cultural monuments. Why is that the case? And how did it all start?

The first plans for an underground railway in Moscow were created in 1875, and at least five general metro plans were submitted through the early 20th century. Finally, a metro project was launched when it became obvious that trams were unable to cope with passenger traffic engulfing the capital of the young and boisterous Soviet Union. On 6 January 1931, near gridlock was recorded in the city, with all vehicles, including horse-drawn carts, grinding to a halt.

On 10 December 1931, seven workers started digging the frozen earth in a courtyard at 13 Rusakovskaya Street, where construction of the first experimental metro line began. A route was designed in 1932–1933, and construction sectors were prepared accordingly. Construction proceeded on a grand scale through 1934, with the city completing 90 percent of the metro's first phase. It was 11 kilometres long with 13 stations.

The first line of the Moscow metro, the part of the red line from Sokolniki to the city centre, was 11km long. The initial plan included ten lines with a total length of 80km. Even though only Soviet workers and volunteers were employed in constructing the tracks and the stations, the metro system itself was designed by specialists who had previously designed the London Underground. The imported engineers got to know the topography of Moscow very well in the process, which, according to NKVD, was an offence punishable by arrest.

The Second World War had an influence on everything that happened in the country. The construction of the metro was no exception. Pro-socialist interior motifs were replaced with war-themed décor, the construction of new stations was delayed, and some of the old stations went out of service. Many of the stations served as air-raid shelters during the siege of Moscow in 1941.

After the war, construction picked up again. The most iconic of the lines, the ring line, was opened. It traces the Garden Circle (one of the main avenues of the city). The ring makes changing lines wonderfully easy. It is marked brown in all the official metro plans. Rumour has it that it was never a part of the initial design, but that Stalin put a coffee mug on the provisional plans that left a mark in the shape and location of the current ring line, and that it was then constructed because nobody then dared to oppose the Leader's note.

In the 1960s, new radial lines connected the city's newly-built districts, including Cheryomushki, Kuntsevo, Nagatino and Kuzminki, with the Circle Line. The orange and purple Kaluzhskaya, now Kaluzhsko-Rizhskaya, and Zhdanovskaya, now Tagansko-Krasnopresnenskaya, lines (Nos. 6 and 7) were built.

In the 1970s, metro lines continued to extend towards city outskirts and also linked up inside the Circle Line. Therefore, several new diameters were created.

The Cold War brought with it a reduction in both the metro's budget and extravagance. The Cold War stations, located a little bit further from the centre, can be recognised immediately: they all look almost the same, with a row of columns running on both sides of the platform. The only difference between them is the colour of the marble or ceramic tiles on the walls.

In 1983, the new Serpukhovskaya Line, now Serpukhovsko-Timiryazevskaya Line (No. 9), with eight stations, linked the Serpukhovskaya and Yuzhnaya stations. However, the 1985–1991 perestroika drive severely impacted the pace of construction.

Metro construction slowed dramatically in the difficult 1990s, with the city completing Soviet-era projects.

Since the early 21st century, the metro was expanded beyond the Moscow Ring Road (MKAD), and the Butovo light-rail line was also launched. The Arbatsko-Pokrovskaya Line also expanded beyond the MKAD and extended into the Moscow Region for the first time in the metro's history. Myakinino was the first metro station in the Moscow Region. In 2000–2010, the city built 42 route-kilometres of new lines with 27 stations.

Nowadays, the Moscow metro is constantly expanding, with new stations added to the lines every year. In 2012, the city passed an unprecedentedly ambitious metro-construction programme. The metro is reaching inside the remotest districts, and new interchange lines are being added. In the past seven years, metro stations have appeared in Brateyevo, Orekohovo-Borisovo and Troparyovo, as well as in the Novokosino and Vykhino-Zhulebino districts located beyond the MKAD and in the newly incorporated areas. New stations have opened in the city's northern, north-eastern, north-western and western districts. Many interchanges are now available outside the Circle Line, allowing riders to bypass central Moscow.

The Moscow metro is also an important element of culture: one of the most popular contemporary Russian writers, Dmitri Glukhovsky, set his post-apocalyptic novels entirely in the metro. The metro is, figuratively and literally, the heart of Moscow. If you want to truly get to know the city, start from the metro.

GRIBOYEDOV'S MOSCOW

Moscow is the home city of the author of the first Russian realistic comedy 'Woe from Wit'. Alexander Griboyedov spent his childhood on Novinsky Boulevard, studied at the Institute in Mokhovaya Street, and made his cousin sister's house renowned. We will take a walk through the streets the writer once walked, too.

Mother's house: primary education
17 Novinsky Boulevard

Alexander Griboyedov spent his childhood and youth in the house of his mother Anastasia (nee Griboyedova, too), a member of a renowned noble family. She inherited the estate on Novinsky Boulevard from her brother, Alexei Griboyedov.

The would-be author of 'Woe from Wit' was educated at home with a special focus on foreign languages: as a child, he studied French, English, German, and Italian. He was trained by the best teachers, including Bogdan Ion, a graduate of the University of Göttingen.

In 1812, Griboyedov enlisted as a volunteer in the Moscow hussar regiment. He went to fight in the war right from his house to never see it again, as the estate was later badly damaged by fire.

Another house was built on the site, but the writer disliked it at once. After Griboyedov's death, his mother sold the mansion. New owners rebuilt it many times. Today there is a building constructed in the 1970s.

University: first literary attempts
11 Mokhovaya Street

In 1803, Alexander Griboyedov entered the Moscow University Noble Boarding School. Three years later, he already studied at the Literature Department of the Moscow University. Fluent in four foreign languages, Griboyedov began to learn Persian, Arabic, Turkish, ancient Greek, and Latin. After graduation, he was enrolled in the law and physics and mathematics departments, as he also took interest in exact sciences.

Illustration to the comedy Woe from Wit

Griboyedov began writing his first works while studying. That was also when he befriended Pyotr Chaadayev, the Muravyov brothers, and Ivan Yakushkin.

The school in Mokhovaya Street built in 1782 was also damaged in the fire of 1812, as well as Griboyedov's house. Much of the library was lost. Restoration took a few years. The facades were designed in Empire style and decorated with reliefs.

The former Lazarev Institute: Griboyedov's visits
2 Armyansky Pereulok

The Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages was established in 1815. Initially, it was intended for young Armenian nobility, but later it became multinational. The Institute was named after its founders, Ivan and Yekim Lazarev, sons of a wealthy merchant from the old family Lazar Lazaryan, who changed his name to Lazarev.

The Institute, whose stone gates were decorated with snow-white pylons featuring lion sculptures, became at once very popular with writers and scientists who often visited it, with the 20-year-old Alexander Griboyedov, just beginning his writing career, among them. Back at that time, he concerned himself with international relations, too. By the way, Ivan Turgenev was among the graduates of the Institute.

The school occupied an ensemble of six buildings, with its own printing house in one of them, one of the best in Moscow. In 1822, an Empire-style obelisk was set up in the garden behind the main building in memory of its founders. In 1914, it was moved to the middle of the front yard.

Lazarevsky Institute has been renamed many times. For some time, it housed a Theatre Studio directed by Yevgeny Vakhtangov. In 1927, the Institute became part of the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies. Today this building houses the Embassy of Armenia.

Famusov's House: inspiration for comedy
3 Pushkinskaya Square

Alexander Griboyedov often visited his cousin sister Sophia and her husband Sergei Rimsky-Korsakov. This couple gave the famous guest nights to bring together Moscow nobility. It was their ways and habits that helped Griboyedov complete the images of the characters in the 'Woe from Wit' comedy, highlighting and ridiculing the life of Moscow nobles of that time. He began working on the play in early 1820 to finish the first version in 1823. The prototype of Sofia Famusova is believed to be the writer's sister. Muscovites called the mansion Famusov's House.

The building with a triangular pediment, arches, high windows and a plaster moulding frieze was built in 1803. It is one of the few buildings in Moscow that survived during the fire of 1812. In the late 19th – early 20th century, it housed Stroganov School, then the Seventh Moscow Men's Gymnasium built in memory of Emperor Alexander III, and later the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, where Joseph Stalin spoke to students.

In the late 1960s, the mansion was demolished to be replaced with the building of the Izvestiya newspaper. Muscovites tried to preserve Famusov's House, but they failed.

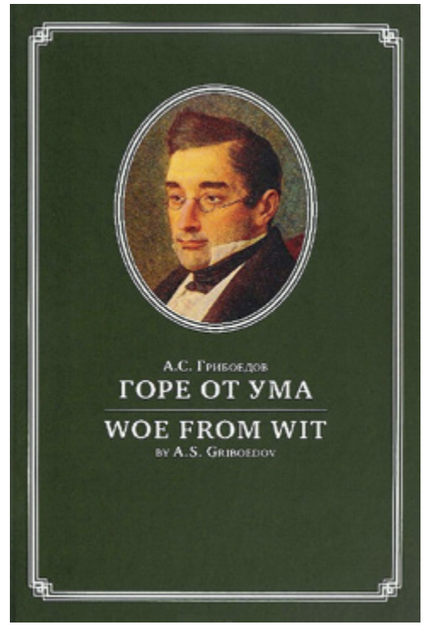
Vyazemsky's House: 'Woe from Wit' readings
9 Voznesensky Pereulok

Guests of the famous writer, Prince Pyotr Vyazemsky, were the first to hear the comedy finished in 1824. He was also Alexander Pushkin's friend, who, by the way, highly appraised the play. 'While listening to his comedy, I did not criticise, but enjoyed it,' Pushkin wrote. Two years later, he read his 'Boris Godunov' in that house.

Vyazemsky's House built in the early 1820s has been restored many times. In 1996, the Association of Moscow Sculptors moved in the building to establish the Moscow Sculptor's House on the new site.

Begichev's House: farewell to Moscow
15 Bolshaya Dmitrovka Street

Griboyedov, a renowned and experienced diplomat at the time, stayed



in the house of his friend and colleague Stepan Begichev in the winter of 1823–1824 on his way from Tiflis. He brought two acts of the play 'Woe to the Mind. Comedy in Verse' (the original name of the play). Here, in Begichev's House, the writer continued his work on the comedy. This was his last visit to Moscow, as five years later, Griboyedov was killed in Persia, where he was serving as Russia's Plenipotentiary Ambassador. He was killed in an attack by religious fanatics who had broken into the Embassy. Stepan Begichev took his death very hard, as it was him who had advised his friend to take the job.

Begichev's House has not survived. Today there is the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History on the grounds.

Bolshoi Theatre: 'Woe from Wit' premiere
1 Teatralnaya Square

The play premiered in Moscow at the Bolshoi Theatre in 1831, two years after the writer's death. The best actors were engaged in the famous comedy of manners starring Michael Shchepkin as Famusov, Alexander Lensky as Molchalin, and Pyotr Mochalov as Chatsky.

Actor Pyotr Stepanov was praised by Nicholas I for his Tugoukhovsky's part. The Emperor awarded him a ring and a thousand roubles.

Griboyedov Library: the first library courses
15 Bolshaya Pereyaslavskaya Street

Established in 1910, the Griboyedov Library is considered one of the oldest in Moscow. Three years later, the first Moscow library courses launched there. In another three years, the library housed the Society of Griboyedov Library Friends attended by Nikolai Gusev, Lev Tolstoy's personal secretary.

During the Great Patriotic War, the reading room was still open to lend out books and send parcels with different publications to the frontline. Library goers performed concerts for soldiers at assembly points.

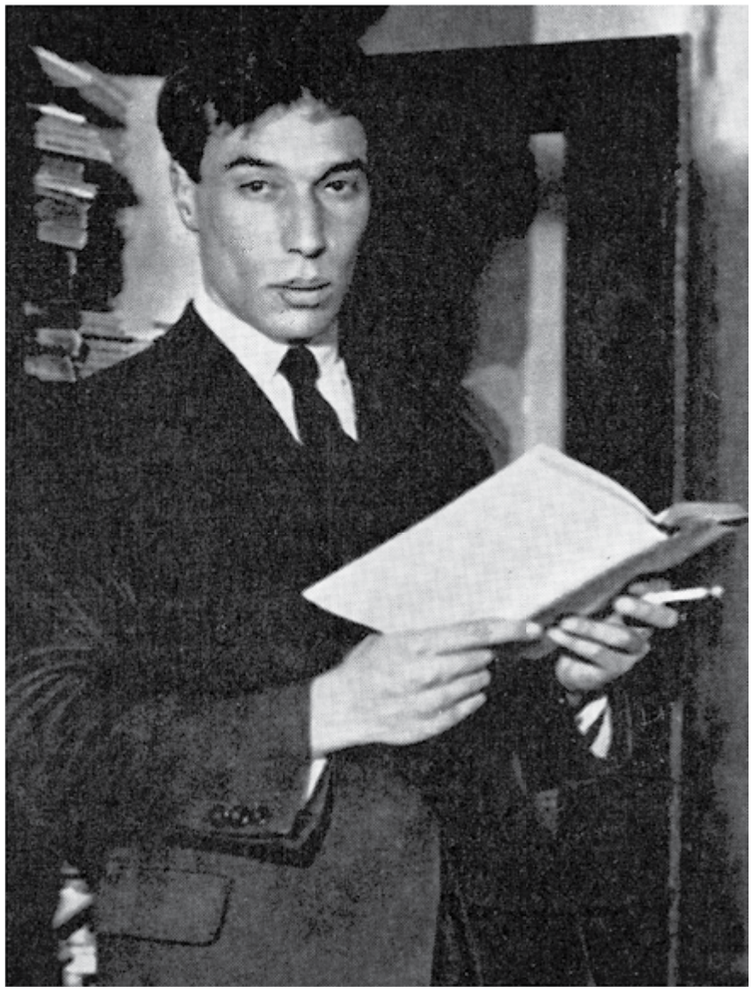
Initially, the library occupied a building on the corner of Samarsky and Orlovsky lanes. It had only two rooms. A year later, it moved to a larger premises at 7 Bolnichny Pereulok. In 1968, a building in Bolshaya Pereyaslavskaya Street housed the library. You can still find it there.

LITERATURE

HOW BORIS PASTERNAK WON AND LOST THE NOBEL PRIZE

The 130th anniversary of Boris Pasternak's birth

BEN PANKO

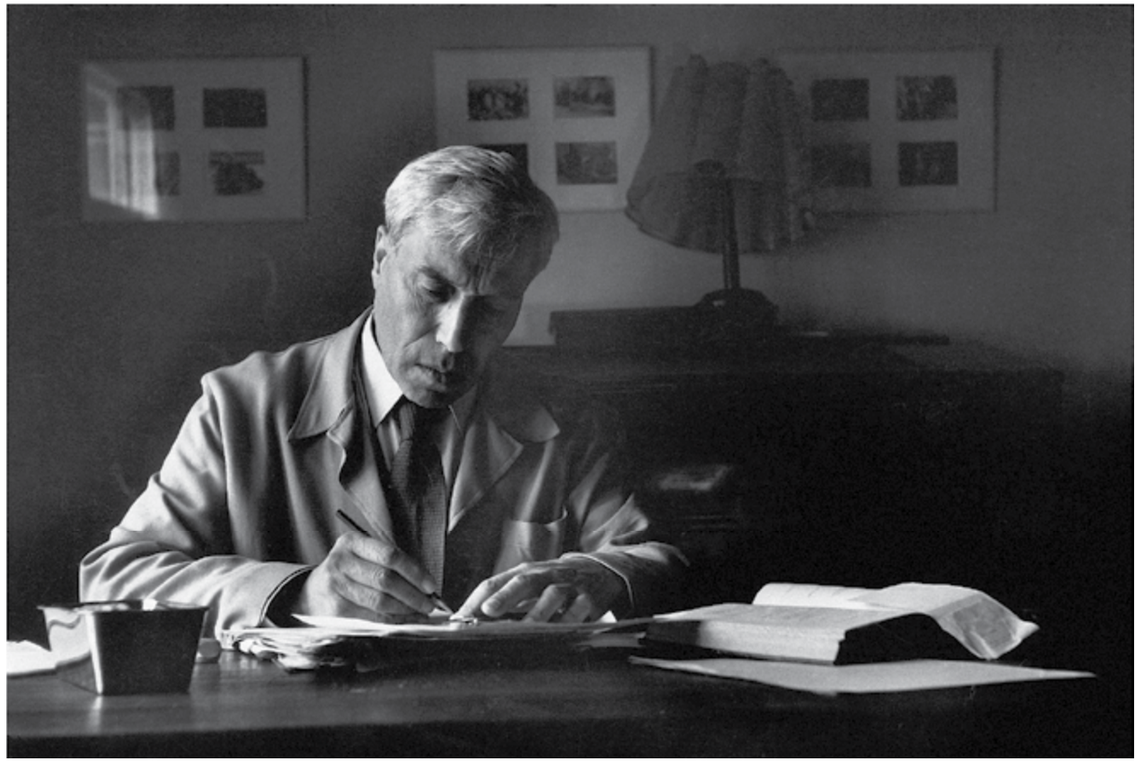


In 1958 Russian author Boris Pasternak, author of "Doctor Zhivago," was awarded the Nobel Prize. The book took a twisted and dangerous path to publication in a repressive state, and the government he resisted for so long prevented him from ever seeing that prize in his lifetime.

Pasternak was born in Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 to a family of artists and musicians, and unlike many of his family members and friends, he didn't flee when the Communists took over his country. He stayed and wrote, composing poetry and novellas and translating many works into Russian to support himself. His artistic, bourgeois background and beliefs quickly put Pasternak at odds with the Soviets, and he spent decades in their crosshairs. In 1934, Joseph Stalin himself called Pasternak to scold him for trying to get a poet friend of his released, and Pasternak's friend and lover Olga Ivinskaya was sent to the gulag for three years as a punishment to the man.

Through all of this, over the course of decades, Pasternak had worked on and off on his magnum opus, a story about a man named Yuri Zhivago and the two women he loved around the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. He submitted it for publication in the Soviet Union in 1955, but it was rejected for its anti-Soviet messages, with the country's foreign minister writing that it was "malicious libel of the USSR." However, a copy of the manuscript fell into the hands of a scout for an Italian book publisher. Working for a Western publisher was verboten for Soviet authors, but Ivinskaya convinced Pasternak to take a chance and Pasternak agreed to have the book translated and published in 1957.

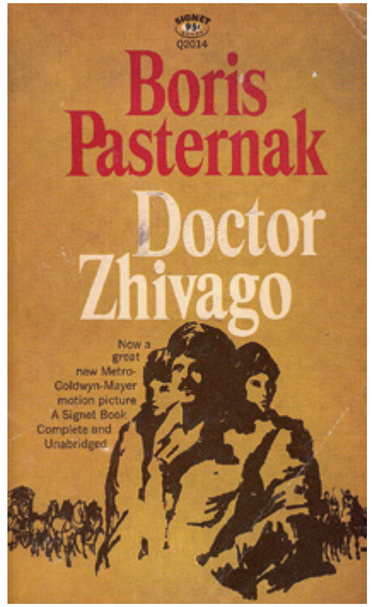
The Soviets raged against the book, but that only increased its popularity, and soon "Doctor Zhivago" was published in multiple languages around the world. The arch-rival of the Soviet Union, the United States, saw an opportunity to use the book



and its attempted suppression as a cultural weapon against the Soviets. Declassified documents show how the CIA purchased and distributed hundreds of copies of the novel to its embassies around the world to circulate to impressionable citizens, and even paid for a hasty print run of the book in its original language to discreetly hand out to Soviets visiting the 1958 World's Fair.

Pasternak had been already repeatedly nominated for the Nobel Prize, and it appears the worldwide buzz around his new book pushed him to the top of the list in 1958 (some researchers have claimed that the CIA manipulated the Nobel Prize committee to have it awarded to Pasternak, but declassified documents show no evidence of that). His prize was announced on October 23, 1958, with the committee citing "his important achievement both in contemporary lyrical poetry and in the field of the great Russian epic tradition."

The memoirs of the author's son detail his reaction: "Thankful, glad, proud, confused" read the telegram he sent back to the Nobel committee.



Backlash was swift, with the Soviet government forcing his fellow writers to denounce him and newspapers printing screeds calling him a "literary weed." Pasternak was told if he went to Oslo to accept the prize, he would never be allowed back into the Soviet Union, so he wrote another telegram to decline the prize.

"I couldn't recognize my father when I saw him that evening," Yevgeny Pasternak wrote about the author after that second telegram. "Pale, lifeless face, tired painful eyes, and only speaking about the same thing: 'Now it all doesn't matter, I declined the Prize."

Pasternak died less than two years later, never able to receive his Nobel Prize. It wasn't until 1988 that "Doctor Zhivago" was finally published in the Soviet Union, and the following year when Yevgeny was allowed to go to Oslo and retrieve his father's denied prize.

"This is a worthy ending of a tragedy [...] and I am very happy," Yevgeny told the audience that day.

MOSCOW FOOD GUIDE

With the ban on imported ingredients from the EU, Russia has turned to sourcing local produce and reinventing traditional dishes by giving them a fresh twist. The city's restaurants are very diverse – you'll find Soviet-themed canteens, glamorous upmarket establishments, and family-owned eateries alike. If you're ready to sample Russia's traditional culinary delights, here's what you should try in Moscow and where to find them.

Pelmeni

Dumplings are popular throughout Eastern Europe, but what sets Russia's version apart is the semi-circular shape and thinness of the dough. Stuffed with minced meat, onion and herbs, pelmeni are enjoyed with melted butter, sour cream, tomato sauce, or vinegar, depending on the restaurant. Muscovites like to keep their dumplings in the freezer, popping them into boiling pots of water for a quick meal as and when desired.

Where to try: Lepim i Varim's (Prospekt Mira 26/1) mission is "to cook the best dumplings on Earth", and you'll need to do a lot of travelling if you want to prove them wrong.

Borshch Moskovsky (Moscow style borscht)

There's much more to borscht than beetroot. Beloved by the Slavs, this sour soup has spread far and wide across Eastern Europe, adopted to local tastes along the way. When in Moscow, you'll want to try their version of the dish – expect to spot beef, ham and Vienna sausage pieces in the broth.

Where to try: Grand-Café Dr. Zhivago (Mokhovaya Street 15/1).

Blini

Similar to crepes, these traditional Russian pancakes are wafer-thin. They're made from wheat or buckwheat flour and served either sweet or savoury, with ingredients/additions such as jam, sour cream, butter and caviar. Although they come out of the frying pan round, it's rare to find them in that shape on your plate. Instead, they're folded neatly into triangles, squares or simply rolled up.

Where to try: Step into the stylised canteen of Grably (Pyatnitskaya Street 27) for its budget-friendly selection of blinis which includes sweet options, fruity options, meat options, or the classic savoury.

Ponchiki

Moscow's doughnuts are round and can be filled with just about anything sweet, but are always served piping hot and with powdered sugar. These treats are nostalgic for many Russians, as they're easy to make and common comfort food.

Where to try: Opposite the Ostankino palace (Ostankinskaya Street 1), there's a little pink house serving these hearty doughnuts in a traditional paper bag.

Kasha

This staple breakfast porridge is traditionally made of crumbly buckwheat that has been thickened with water or milk and seasoned with butter. It is often served with fried onions, or with sugar and milk.

Where to try: Coffee Piu (Chistoprudny Boulevard 9) is a cute little coffee shop, where kasha is a constant special.

Shchi

Cabbage soup has been around since the 9th century and is a large part of Russian culture, usually enjoyed in the summertime. This dish can be prepared in a wide variety of ways: with or without meat, with fish, roasting the vegetables beforehand or not.

Where to try: At Matryoshka (Kutuzovsky Avenue 2/1) you'll find many traditional Russian dishes set among furniture and curiosities with an old-world glamour feel/touch.

Pirozhki

Enjoyed as a snack, these large baked or fried buns are typically stuffed with beef but also come with other fillings, like salmon, mashed potatoes, mushrooms, onions and egg, or cabbage. Sweet-based fillings include fruit, jam, or cottage cheese.

Where to try: Skalka (Lavochkina Street)

Pastila

Once considered an expensive treat, this traditional dessert dates back to the 16th century and is made from baked fruit puree, egg whites, sugar or honey. Available in all colours and fruit flavours, these airy squares of confectionary are like a cross between jellies and marshmallows.

Where to try: Head to Café Pushkin (Tverskoy Boulevard 26). What better place to try this traditional upscale Russian treat than at a restaurant dedicated to style and history?

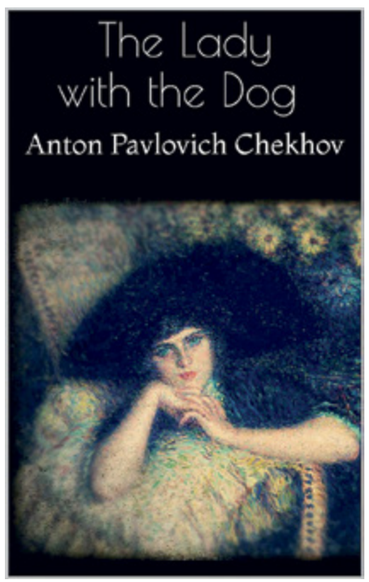
MOSCOW NOVELS

Moscow's rich history and innumerable paradoxes has inspired some of the greatest novels in Russian literary history

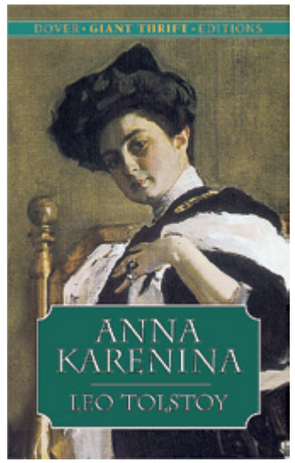
RUTH MOORE

The Lady with the Dog
Anton Chekhov

Vladimir Nabokov cited this as one of the greatest shortest stories ever written. Dmitri Gurov, the central character. is a Moscow banker trapped in a loveless marriage. He distracts himself by engaging in frequent adulterous trysts. Whilst holidaying in Yalta, his attention is caught by a lady, Anna Sergeyevna, walking her dog on the sea-front. He resolves to make her acquaintance and a brief love affair ensues before Gurov returns to Moscow, expecting to quickly forgot the event. Astonishingly, he finds himself unable to shake the memory of Anna and comes to the realization that he is falling in love for the first time. This is simple, but beautifully written prose; Chekhov is, after all, the unequivocal master of the short story. His seamless economy of words reaches deep into the inner turmoil of his characters in just a few short pages. Gurov is tangibly bitter towards the Moscow society, its customs and its restrictions. Anna and Yalta, who remain constant in his thoughts provide a reverie from his claustrophobic reality. Although some have voiced their frustrations at a novel focusing so much on the potentially selfish actions of an adulterous middle-aged man, Chekhov reveals, through third-person narrative, the futility of reason and sense of fate in the face of love.



Anna Karenina
Leo Tolstoy

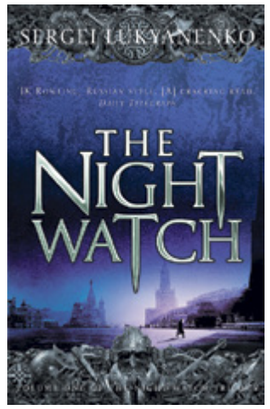


Tolstoy's Anna Karenina is a novel that delights in contrasting diametric opposites, from Levin and Kitty's marriage and Anna and Vronsky's love affair to the spatial opposition of Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Moscow is full of glamorous balls, elegant fashions and handsome officers. Moscow is where Anna and Vronsky see one another for the first time, and Moscow is where the novel ends. The text is ambitious and labyrinthine, creating a rich mosaic of human emotion that defies judgement of human actions. However you feel about Tolstoy's treatment of his heroine, he does an exceptional job of representing the minutiae of contradictory and complex motivations that govern human behaviour.

The Master and Margarita
Mikhail Bulgakov

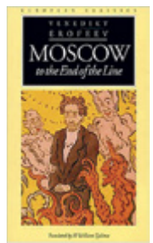
Bulgakov's masterpiece reaches past the concrete reality of an identifiable Moscow to an evanescent world beyond it. The novel follows a series of inexplicable and utterly hilarious events that ensue when the Devil arrives in fervently atheistic soviet Russia. Bulgakov satirizes the materialistic nature of Muscovite society to gesture to the spiritual void beneath it. Characters include a motley demonic band of individuals, and a droll-humoured cigar-smoking cat, wreaking havoc around town in a series of wickedly funny skits. From a magic show featuring a temporary decapitation, to a magical scene in which the eponymous Margarita flies over Moscow on a broomstick completely naked, there is no end to Bulgakov's incredible imagination. Those familiar with the opening scene will be delighted when they visit modern day Moscow's Patriarch Ponds, where a cautionary sign will advise you that it is 'forbidden to talk to strangers'.

Night Watch
Sergei Lukyanenko



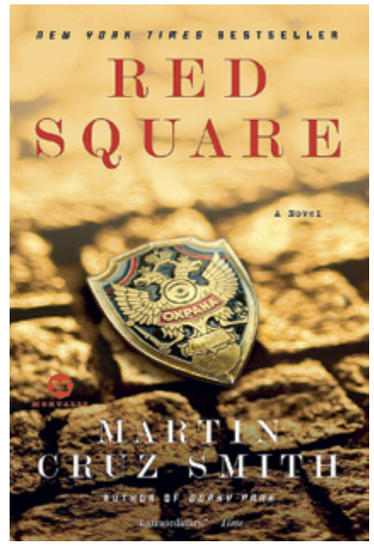
Night Watch was translated into English after the phenomenal success of the films based on Lukyanenko's pentology of novels. This novel is the first in the series, a gripping sci-fi fantasy that explores the supernatural underworld lurking just beneath the surface of our everyday world. Lukyanenko's novel reflects a trend for fantastical or allegorical fiction which is currently prevalent in Russia. In Night Watch, a supernatural race of primeval humans must ally either with agents of Dark or Light. The main protagonist, Anton, finds himself caught in the middle of this tumultuous battle and drawn into a world of moral incertitude. This is (in the most non-cliché terms) a really griping page-turner.

Moscow-Petushki
Venedikt Erofeev



This is a slight cheat, as the majority of the narrative takes place during a train journey between Moscow and Petushki, a suburban settlement that appropriates a utopian-like quality in the mind of Venichka, the drunken protagonist. There are many who believe that Erofeev's work is untranslatable, replete as it is with cultural references to classical poems, the orthodox faith and slurred streams of consciousness. Nevertheless, we believe it would be a pity to miss out on insight into the darkly witty, tremendously sad and sparkling mind of Erofeev. His prose-poem allows us to be simultaneously privy to Venichka's internal dialogue, the external dialogue of his accompanying passengers and to the author himself. Erofeev plays with all readerly expectations through Venichka, the proverbial holy fool who, through his tangled commentary on everything from Marx to Pushkin to vodka slowly unveils his authenticity as a character.

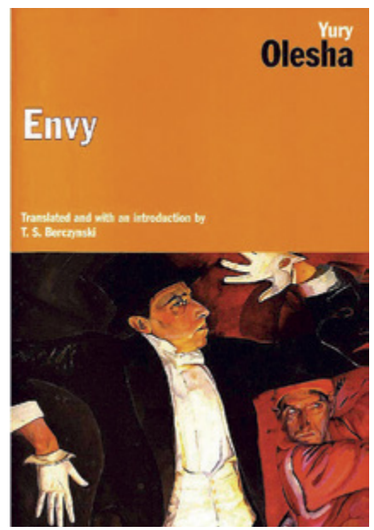
Red Square
Martin Cruz Smith



This is the third novel in the Investigator Renko series, following on from the incredibly popular Gorky Park and Polar Star. Red Square does not actually refer to the Moscow location but rather a missing avant-garde painting that recently resurfaced in the illegal black-markets of 1990's Russia. Renko is shown as an individual awash in a sea of corruption, attempting to cling to the law in an atmosphere of rapid and unprecedented change. Red Square provides an in-depth insight into the emerging capitalism taking hold of Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union, its setting an interesting comparison of Russia and cultural trends in Munich and Berlin during this tumultuous period. As ever, Cruz Smith's writing is engaging and darkly funny.

Envy
Yuri Olesha

Olesha's 1927 novel is a slapstick examination of the tussles between a smug sausage mogul and the drunken no-hope he chances upon in the gutter one day. If that's not the kind of scenario to secure your interest then be assured that this is a much over-looked, brilliantly-rendered and vigorously delivered poetic feat. Although Olesha only wrote one book, it seems he put all his genius into it. As with Moscow-Petushki, Envy succeeds in being simultaneously lyrical and satirical; Olesha's wry social commentary bubbles up from the pages with incredible energy. There are some fantastically disgusting descriptions that are utterly absurd and also oddly believable. This novel probably won't suit every taste but if you have a penchant for the avant-garde then look no further.



MOSCOW ON SCREEN

Moscow is a beautiful, complex and fascinating city. It has inspired scores of Russian artists, writers and, of course, filmmakers. Moscow makes for a perfect set for any film, from a psychological drama to a romantic comedy. We have selected some old blockbusters about Moscow that are definitely worth watching again.

Circus
Filmed in 1936
Directed by Grigory Alexandrov

In the 1930s, members of a US circus show called Lunar Mission tour the Soviet Union. The show's star actress Marion Dixon, played by Lyubov Orlova, steals the show and local audiences in the film go wild whenever they see her. The show's creator, a villain and corrupt circus agent named Franz von Kneishitz, blackmails the young woman who has given birth to a black baby, threatening to expose her. But the story has a happy ending, with Marion and her baby finding refuge, solace, happiness and love in the USSR.

The film was re-edited several times. The final scenes, when the Motherland Song performance, were edited in the 1950s. In early 1953, editors cut out a verse from a Yiddish lullaby, sung by famous stage director and performer Solomon Mikhoels, as well as another episode involving him. Mikhoels was "exonerated" after Stalin's death and his scenes were returned to the film. The film was given a new voice-over in 1960.

In one of the film's scenes we see a panorama of Red Square with two-headed eagles perched on top of the Kremlin's towers. Another scene shows the date, 29 April 1935, when these eagles were removed and replaced with today's five-point stars.

One can see an entire city block gently sloping towards the Moskva River right behind St. Basil's Cathedral. This block was demolished soon after the film was shot to make way for traffic exiting the new Bolshoi Moskvoretsky Bridge, which was originally built here in 1938 under the General Plan for Moscow's reconstruction and which was subsequently located a bit closer to the Kremlin than its older version.

Circus features only two episodes shot on location, including Red Square and the view from the roof of Moskva Hotel overlooking Teatralnaya Square.

Volga, Volga
Filmed in 1938
Directed by Grigory Alexandrov

The action begins aboard a steamship sailing from Melkovodsk, a fictional community, to Moscow. A small group of actors aboard the ship are on their way to Moscow to take part in a contest of amateur performers. The incomparable Lyubov Orlova stars as a letter-carrier, Dunya, who quickly becomes the centre of attention. Soon the plot takes on a new turn and events spin out of control. Orlova, who performs the movie's theme song, reads a telegram that changes her whole life and brings her to leave the now-stranded ship and venture off to Moscow where she takes part in the musical contest of her dreams.

In the mid-1930s, the Soviet Union hosted a multitude of contests, Olympiads, public shows and conventions. During one such event, film director Grigory Alexandrov got acquainted with a highly talented young village girl, whom he later invited to Moscow. Unfortunately, her boss refused to let her go. Alexandrov decided to reflect this real-life occurrence in the film by mocking bureaucrats who prevent their subordinates from realising their creative potential.

Volga, Volga is not just about success-hungry actors dreaming of making it big. It also showcases Soviet-era achievements, including close-ups of the newly-opened Volga-Moscow Canal, a symbol of that epic age. Most events take place en route to Moscow, but the Soviet capital is also depicted in its entire splendour. The film shows the newly-completed Northern River Passenger Terminal and Lock No. 3 of the Volga-Moscow Canal with its decorative Santa Maria-class caravels from the flotilla of Christopher Columbus. One can also see a bridge of the Moscow Railway's Riga Line spanning the canal and Pushkinskaya Embankment in Gorky Park. Interestingly enough, the embankment shows up after Dunya reaches the river terminal. It appears that the film crew considered Pushkinskaya Embankment more attractive than the one actually located near the terminal.

The Girl Without an Address
Filmed in 1957
Directed by Eldar Ryazanov

This is a classic situation comedy starring Nikolai Rybnikov as a builder and the main protagonist, Pashka, who falls in love with a provincial girl named Katya played by Svetlana Karpinskaya. The two of them get acquainted on a train headed for Moscow where Katya dreams of becoming an actress. Unfortunately, Pashka and Katya lose track of each other at the bustling Moscow railway station. Katya tries to tell him where she lives in Moscow, but all he can hear is the word "Nikolo …" probably denoting Nikoloyamskaya Street. But Pashka decides he must find Katya no matter what.

In all, 36.5 million people watched the film over a span of 12 months. Its success can probably be explained by the choice of actors, the light and frivolous plot of the movie, not to mention the magnificently conveyed atmosphere of Moscow's streets.

As the action unfolds, Pashka and Katya arrive at the sunlit Three Railway Stations Square. They will meet again here at the end of the film, only this time never to part again. But the audience is treated to the sights of the spacious Gorky Street, now called Tverskaya Street, Novokuznetskaya Street, Bolshoi Karetny Pereulok, Staraya Square, Kuznetsky Most Street and other beloved backstreets, lanes and squares of our city.

A Noisy Day
Filmed in 1960
Directed by Georgy Natanson and Anatoly Efros

A mother and her four children live in a less-than-spectacular building on a Moscow street. On a noisy day, members of the family clash over furniture cluttering the flat. In reality, furniture is just a pretext; in fact two different sets of values and world outlooks confront each other in a battle between generations.

Two provincial lads, businessman Ivan Lapshin, played by Yevgeny Perov, and his son Gennady (Gena), played by Lev Krugly, have arrived in Moscow. Gena's life changes here, as he finally comes to realize his father lives a petty and trite life. He confesses his love to a girl and hopes that the feeling is mutual. Oleg Tabakov stars as the main protagonist, teenager Oleg Savin, who rebels against a narrow-minded petty bourgeois

lifestyle. Tabakov's character came to symbolise the youth movement of the 1950s and the 1960s.

It is Savin who shows us his city, albeit practically at a gallop. After quarrelling with his brother's narrow-minded petty bourgeois wife, Oleg runs away from his flat on Starokonyushenny Pereulok and strangely ends on Sretenka Street and Garden Ring within a few seconds. The last scenes show a building on Sadovaya-Sukharevskaya Street, the entrance to Prospekt Mira and two towers with identical bas-reliefs depicting peasants with sheaf of grain. Only one of these towers survives today.

I am Walking Along Moscow

Filmed in 1963
Directed by Georgy Daneliya

Alexei Loktev stars as Volodya Yermakov, a young man from Siberia who arrives in Moscow for a meeting with a writer named Voronov. While riding in the metro, Volodya gets acquainted with a merry fellow name Kolya, played by Nikita Mikhalkov, who works for the metro construction administration. Volodya plans to spend some time in Moscow and live with his friends. Kolya volunteers to show him the city.

The theme song 'I Am Walking Along Moscow' became a top hit in the early 1960s. Screenwriter Gennady Shpalikov quickly wrote the lyrics to the song while on set in between takes.

In one memorable episode, a girl is shown strolling in the rain, a scene for which three different actresses were used. For some reason the first girl who starred in the long sequence shot on the first day never showed up again. Therefore they filmed a close-up involving a student of the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography on the next day. But this girl did not come on the third day because she had to take an exam at the institute. And so, an Izvestia correspondent who had arrived to interview Daneliya was the one who walked barefoot in front of the camera.

The final scene was shot at the Universitet metro station, with Volodya hopping onto an outbound train, although in 1963 this station was the final stop on the metro's Kirovsko-Frunzenskaya Line, now called Sokolnicheskaya Line (Line No. 1). Two more stations on this line were opened on 30 December 1963. Because the film was officially released only in 1964, the episode with Volodya's continuing journey did not look like a blooper.

Three Poplars on Plyushchikha

Filmed in 1967
Directed by Tatiana Lioznova

Tatiana Doronina stars as Anna, a married rural woman and a mother of two, who arrives in Moscow. Here she is met by a taxi driver, Alexander, played by Oleg Yefremov, who drives her to Plyushchikha Street where her husband's sister lives and where the café Three Poplars is located. Anna and Alexander quickly become attracted to each other, but the audience realizes that their relationship has no future.

The film is based on Alexander Borshchagovsky's short story "Three Poplars on Shabolovka" and was to have the same title. However, in the late 1960s, Shabolovka Street was closely associated with television, and it was thought that this would make it hard for audiences to grasp the meaning of the film. Therefore it was decided to shoot it on Plyushchikha Street.

In reality, the film was shot in Khamovniki, at 5 Rostovskaya Embankment. The action takes place in a real-life flat, rather than on a film set. The flat's owners graciously vacated it and moved to their dacha during filming. The café Three Poplars was built especially at 6 Rostovsky Pereulok for the film.

The film manages to show numerous beautiful city sights and begins with a wonderful panorama of Moscow in the morning. This view is followed by one of riverboats moored near Gorky Park waiting for tourists, with Frunzenskaya Embankment and Krymsky Bridge looming in the background. Dzerzhinskogo Square presents another magnificent morning cityscape, shot with the Detsky Mir (Children's World) department store, the unfinished Intourist Hotel building and the new wing of the Council of Ministers (Government) of the USSR all in view.

Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears

Released in 1979
Directed by Vladimir Menshov

The plot is set in the 1950s. The three provincial friends, Katya, Tonya and Lyudmila, arrive in Moscow and settle in at their dormitory. They are enthralled by the sprawling city and the many opportunities it presents. One of the main protagonists, played by Irina Muravyova, convinces Yekaterina, played by Vera Alentova, to pretend to be a professor's daughter so they can all invite some young people to "their" sleek apartment for a get-together. Yekaterina falls in love with one of them yet ends up alone as an unwed mother. In the long run, however, she becomes a successful factory director, but all at the expense of her non-existent personal life.

In 1981 the film received the Oscar for the Best Foreign Language Film. But Vladimir Menshov was not allowed to attend the awards ceremony in the United States, forcing the Soviet Embassy's Culture Attaché to accept it on his behalf. The attaché later presented the Oscar statue to Menshov, who was comforted by the film's overwhelming success at domestic box offices, with over 90 million people watching the film.

The film remains quite popular even today, with practically every Russian adult knowing the opening lyrics of the film's theme song: "Alexandra, Alexandra, this city is for you and me." Indeed, Menshov portrays Moscow as a cosy, warm and totally endearing city. Despite all its problems, the city offers its support to troubled Yekaterina, and the audience quickly is overtaken by this positive vibe. One wants to take a walk along Gogolevsky Boulevard and enjoy late-night Tverskaya Street, passing huge shop windows along the way, listening to Andrei Voznesensky's verses near a monument to Vladimir Mayakovsky and admiring actors at a French film festival. And, of course, one cannot help but be tempted to visit the legendary skyscraper on Vosstaniya Square, now Sadovo-Kudrinskaya Square. The building's interiors, however, were in fact filmed at another skyscraper on Kotelnicheskaya Embankment.

Carnival

Filmed in 1981
Directed by Tatiana Lioznova

After graduating from high school, Nina Solomatina, played by Irina Muravyova, comes to Moscow where she wants to study to be an actress. Although she flunks her theatre school's entrance exams, she remains undaunted and wants to try her luck the following year. She needs to earn a living in the meantime, but she gets kicked out time and again. Nina's boyfriend Nikita dumps her for another girl, yet she somehow remains optimistic about life.

Tatiana Lioznova decided to make a film about a touching provincial girl after she read Anna Rodionova's story published in the Film Art magazine. The story was about an unsophisticated girl from the Russian heartland who is determined to make a name for herself in Moscow. The story was quickly converted into a screenplay and soon thereafter work on the film set began. The Lioznova-Rodionova masterpiece scored breathtaking results. Commenting on the film, Eldar Ryazanov noted "it takes great ability to make a comedy so successful that people laugh so loud during the film that they drown out the film's music."

Nina is often seen wandering around the streets of Moscow. First, she arrives at Kursky Railway Station and then takes a taxi along Teatralny Proyezd, past the Bolshoi and Maly theatres, only to again stroll along Novy Arbat with her father. "Let's just roam the city's streets. It is so beautiful here that I feel like I am abroad…" the girl says. At this point, she decides that this wonderful city will remain with her forever, and her life will be a never-ending celebration.

TOP THINGS TO DO IN MOSCOW

DASHA FOMINA

As one of the most vibrant European capitals, Moscow is a powerful mix of history and edginess, full of world-famous sites and attractions. Russia's capital has been in existence for more than 800 years and has enough to keep visitors busy for months. Here's the ultimate first-timer's list of things to do in Moscow, from Europe's oldest fortress and grandiose cathedrals to lively green spaces and futuristic skyscrapers.

Moscow Kremlin

The apex of Russian political power and once the centre of the Orthodox Church, the Kremlin is the kernel of not only Moscow, but of the whole country. From here, autocratic tsars, communist dictators and modern-day presidents have done their best – and worst – for Russia.

Covering Borovitsky Hill on the Moscow River's north bank, it's enclosed by high walls 2.25km long (Red Square's outside the east wall). The best views of the complex are from Sofiyskaya nab across the river.

Before entering the Kremlin, deposit bags (free) at the left-luggage office, beneath the Kutafya Tower near the main ticket office in Alexander Garden. The entrance ticket covers admission to all five church-museums and the Patriarch's Palace. It does not include the Armoury, the Diamond Fund Exhibition or the Ivan the Great Bell Tower, which are priced separately.

During warm months (April to October), many people try to visit the Kremlin around noon in order to watch the change of guards at Sobornaya Sq in the centre of the fortress. The ceremony involves a few dozen horses and men in historical attire performing sophisticated square-bashing choreography.

Photography is not permitted inside the Armoury or any of the buildings on Sobornaya pl (Cathedral Sq).

Armoury

The Armoury dates to 1511, when it was founded under Vasily III to manufacture and store weapons, imperial arms and regalia for the royal court. Later it also produced jewellery, icon frames and embroidery. To this day, the Armoury contains plenty of treasures for ogling, and remains a highlight of any visit to the Kremlin. If possible, buy your time-specific ticket to the Armoury when you buy your ticket to the Kremlin.

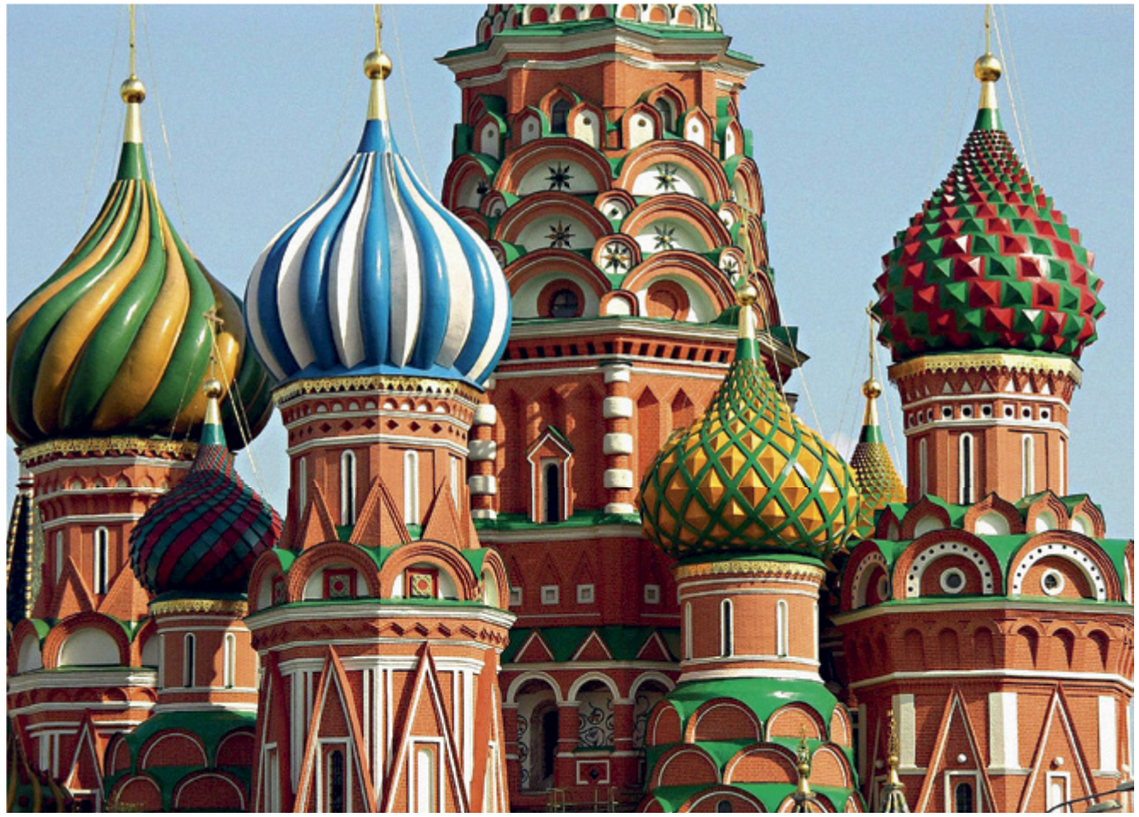
Your tour starts upstairs, where the first two rooms house gold and silver objects from the 12th to the 17th centuries, many of which were crafted in the Kremlin workshops. In Room 2, you'll find the renowned Easter eggs made by St Petersburg jeweller Fabergé. The tsar and tsarina traditionally exchanged these gifts each year at Easter. Most famous is the Grand Siberian Railway egg, with gold train, platinum locomotive and ruby headlamp, created to commemorate the Moscow–Vladivostok line.

The following rooms display armour, weapons and more armour and more weapons. Don't miss the helmet of Prince Yaroslav, the chain mail of Boris Godunov, and the sabres of Minin and Pozharsky.

Downstairs in Room 6, you can see the coronation dresses of 18th-century empresses (Empress Elizabeth, we're told, had 15,000 other dresses). Other 'secular' dress is also on display, including an impressive pair of boots that belonged to Peter the Great. The following room contains the joint coronation throne of boy tsars Peter the Great and his half-brother Ivan V (with a secret compartment from which Regent Sofia prompted them), as well as the 800-diamond throne of Tsar Alexey, Peter's father. The gold Cap of Monomakh, jewel-studded and sable-trimmed, was used for two centuries at coronations.

End your tour in Room 9, which houses centuries' worth of royal carriages and sledges. Look for the sleigh in which Elizabeth rode from St Petersburg to Moscow for her coronation, pulled by 23 horses at a time – about 800 in all for the trip.

A one-hour audio guide is available to point out some of the collection's highlights, or you can download the Armoury Chamber app on your smartphone and use it instead.



Red Square

Immediately outside the Kremlin's north-eastern wall is the celebrated Red Square, the 400m-by-150m area of cobblestones that is at the very heart of Moscow. Commanding the square from the southern end is St Basil's Cathedral. This panorama never fails to send the heart aflutter, especially at night.

Next to the cathedral, an elevated platform, known as the Place of Skulls, was used for reading out decrees and proclamations in the old ages and became the setting for Pussy Riot's anti-Putin video clip in 2011. Nearby, the Minin & Pozharsky Statue celebrates the heroes of the 1612 liberation war against the Poles.

The word 'krasnaya' in the name means 'red' now, but in old Russian it meant 'beautiful' and Krasnaya pl lives up to this epithet. Furthermore, it evokes an incredible sense of import to stroll across the place where so much of Russian history has unfolded. Note that the square is often closed for various celebrations or their rehearsals, so allow some leeway in your schedule.

St Basil's Cathedral

At the southern end of Red Square stands the icon of Russia: St Basil's Cathedral. This crazy confusion of colours, patterns and shapes is the culmination of a style that is unique to Russian architecture. In 1552 Ivan the Terrible captured the Tatar stronghold of Kazan on the Feast of Intercession. He commissioned this landmark church, officially the Intercession Cathedral, to commemorate the victory. Created from 1555 to 1561, this masterpiece would become the ultimate symbol of Russia. The cathedral's apparent anarchy of shapes hides a comprehensible plan of nine main chapels. The tall, tent-roofed tower in the centre houses the namesake Church of the Intercession of the Mother of God. The four biggest domes top four octagonal-towered chapels: The Church of Saints Cyprian and Justina, Church of the Holy Trinity, Church of the Icon of St Nicholas the Miracle Worker, and the Church of the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem. Finally, there are four smaller chapels in between. Each

chapel was consecrated in honour of an event or battle in the struggle against Kazan.

Legend has it that Ivan had the architects blinded so that they could never build anything comparable. This is a myth, however, as records show that they were employed a quarter of a century later (and four years after Ivan's death) to add an additional chapel to the structure.

The Church of St Vasily the Blessed, the north-eastern chapel on the 1st floor, contains the canopy-covered crypt of its namesake saint, one of the most revered in Moscow. Vasily (Basil) the Blessed was known as a 'holy fool', sometimes going naked and purposefully humiliating himself for the greater glory of God. He was believed to be a seer and miracle maker, and even Ivan the Terrible revered and feared him. This 10th chapel – the only one at ground level – was added in 1588, after the saint's death. Look for the icon depicting St Vasily himself, with Red Square and the Kremlin in the background.

Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts

This is Moscow's premier foreign-art museum, split over three branches and showing off a broad selection of European works, including masterpieces from ancient civilisations, the Italian Renaissance and the Dutch Golden Age. To see the incredible collection of Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings, visit the 19th & 20th Century Art Gallery. The Museum of Private Collections shows off complete collections donated by private individuals.

What's left in the main building is also impressive, with many masterpieces from the Italian Renaissance. Artists such as Botticelli, Tiepolo and Veronese are all represented. The highlight is perhaps the Dutch masterpieces from the 17th century, the so-called Golden Age of Dutch art. Rembrandt is the star of the show, with many paintings on display, including his moving Portrait of an Old Woman. The rest of Europe is also well represented from this period.

The Ancient Civilization exhibits contain a surprisingly excellent collection, complete with ancient Egyptian weaponry, jewellery, ritual items and tombstones. Most of the items were excavated from burial sites, including two haunting mummies. Another room houses the impressive 'Treasures of Troy' exhibit, with excavated items dating to 2500 BC. A German archaeologist donated the collection to the city of Berlin, from where it was appropriated by the Soviets in 1945.

The Greek and Italian Courts contain examples from the museum's original collection, which was made up of plaster-cast reproductions of the masterpieces from Ancient Greece and Rome, as well as from the Renaissance.

The 17th and 18th centuries dominate the 2nd floor, with several sections devoted to Italian and French artists. There is a separate gallery for the rococo period, featuring some appropriate dreamy paintings by Boucher.

The main building will remain open during the construction of the new museum complex on Volkhonka street, which is expected to be completed in 2019. After the opening of the new complex, the exhibits are likely to change locations.

State Tretyakov Gallery Main Branch

The exotic boyar (high-ranking noble) castle on a little lane in Zamoskvorechie contains the main branch of the State Tretyakov Gallery, housing the world's best collection of Russian icons and an outstanding collection of other pre-revolutionary Russian art. Show up early to beat the queues. The neighbouring Engineer's Building is reserved for special exhibits.

The building was designed by Viktor Vasnetsov between 1900 and 1905. The gallery started as the private collection of the 19th-century industrialist brothers Pavel and Sergei Tretyakov. Pavel was a patron of the Peredvizhniki, or Wanderers, a group of 19th-century painters who broke away from the conservative Academy of Arts and started depicting common people and social problems. Nowadays, these are among Russia's most celebrated painters, and the Tretyakov boasts some of the most exquisite examples of their work.

Hermitage Gardens

All the things that have improved Moscow parks no end in recent years fill this small, charming garden to the brim. Today, it is possibly the most happening place in Moscow, where art, food and crafts festivals, and concerts, occur almost weekly, especially in summer. Apart from the welcoming lawns and benches, it boasts a large children's playground, a summer cinema and a cluster of food and crafts kiosks. Come here to unwind and mingle with the coolest Muscovites.

The garden was created in 1894 around a theatre that saw the screening of the Lumière brothers' first film in 1896, as well as the 1898 Moscow premiere of Chekhov's Seagull – performed by the troupe that had just been scrambled together by Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko.

Gorky Park

Moscow's premier green space, Gorky Park, offers entertainment for every taste: outdoor dancing sessions, yoga and fitness classes all summer, as well as beach volleyball and ping-pong, rollerblading, skateboarding and cycling opportunities, along with segway and boat-rentals. In winter, half of the park turns into one of the city's biggest skating rinks. The park is also home to an open-air movie theatre and the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art.

Tsaritsyno Museum-Reserve

The former summer residence of Empress Catherine the Great was commissioned in 1775 and succumbed to deterioration during the Soviet era. The whole of Tsaritsyno Museum-Reserve has been fundamentally renovated since 1980s to look even brighter than the original. With its opulently decorated buildings, gardens, meadows and forests, Tsaritsyno Park is the perfect place for a green respite in Moscow.

Kolomenskoye

A 10-minute metro ride from the city centre will take you to Kolomenskoe Museum-Reserve, where you can get an idea of what Medieval Moscow looked like. Here you'll find ancient churches (one dating back to the 16th century), the oldest garden in Moscow and a favourite estate of Tsar Alexey Mikhailovich, father of Peter the Great.

Moscow City

Home to Europe's tallest office building, Moscow City, also referred to as Moscow International Business Center, is one Russia's most ambitious engineering projects over recent years. With its various high-rises, the business district is where you should come for great crowd-free shopping and the best panoramic views of the city.

LEGAL ADVICE

CITIZENSHIP BY INVESTMENT: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

MERIAM ALTAF

In a world of increasing globalization, more and more people are seeing themselves as global citizens of the world rather than citizens of one nation. The standard ways of acquiring citizenship are birth within a certain territory, descent from a parent, a marriage to a citizen and naturalization by residence. Citizenship is usually granted upon fundamental conditions being satisfied. These are normally good character, residence, relationship and other requirements that fit to a circumstance of the case.

While investors and wealthy individuals have more available routes to obtain residence through business or investment, there are countries which offer citizenship by investment programs. Some of these countries are Austria, Antigua and Barbuda, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Dominica, Grenada, Malta and St. Kitts and Nevis. The programs offer a quick legal opportunity to acquire a new citizenship without disturbances to personal life. Other countries such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, Portugal, Singapore, the UK and the USA offer citizenship by investment programs upon certain additional conditions such as residence in the country being satisfied. In either case a permanent right of residence (in case of EU application) must be obtained before proceeding to the citizenship application. If correctly submitted a PR application is normally approved with 2 - 3 months.

Cyprus for instance, offers the quickest, most assured route to citizenship of a European country through the Cypriot citizenship by investment program. One of the main objectives of such program is to further encourage foreign direct investment and to attract high net worth individuals to settle and do business in Cyprus. One of the ways to acquire citizenship is to make investment of € 2 million in real estate, in addition to the €150,000 split in two equal donations to the Government Research and Development Fund and to the Land Development Organistaion.

Cyprus having favourable tax regime for individuals and companies residing there make the country a favourable place not just to invest but to permanently reside in. It is a majority speaking country with 80% of population speaking English. It is considered to be a 32 safest country in the world holding six places ahead of the UK.

The required amount of the investment varies by country. For example, requirement for Bulgarian citizenship by investment program is €512,000. All EU countries that participate in the programme will be granted an EU passport, hence free movement rights, work, and education will come with it.

If considering investment in non-EU countries such as Antigua and Barbuda or St Kitts and Nevis, the advantages mainly lay in loyal taxation system and visa free entry to a large number of countries around the world. This citizenship is one of the most convenient ones when visa free travel is of primary consideration.

The citizenship investor programs offer great security and benefits to most schemes however, it is crucial to get present and potential future purposes of the citizenship straight before making a choice to make an application to the program.

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