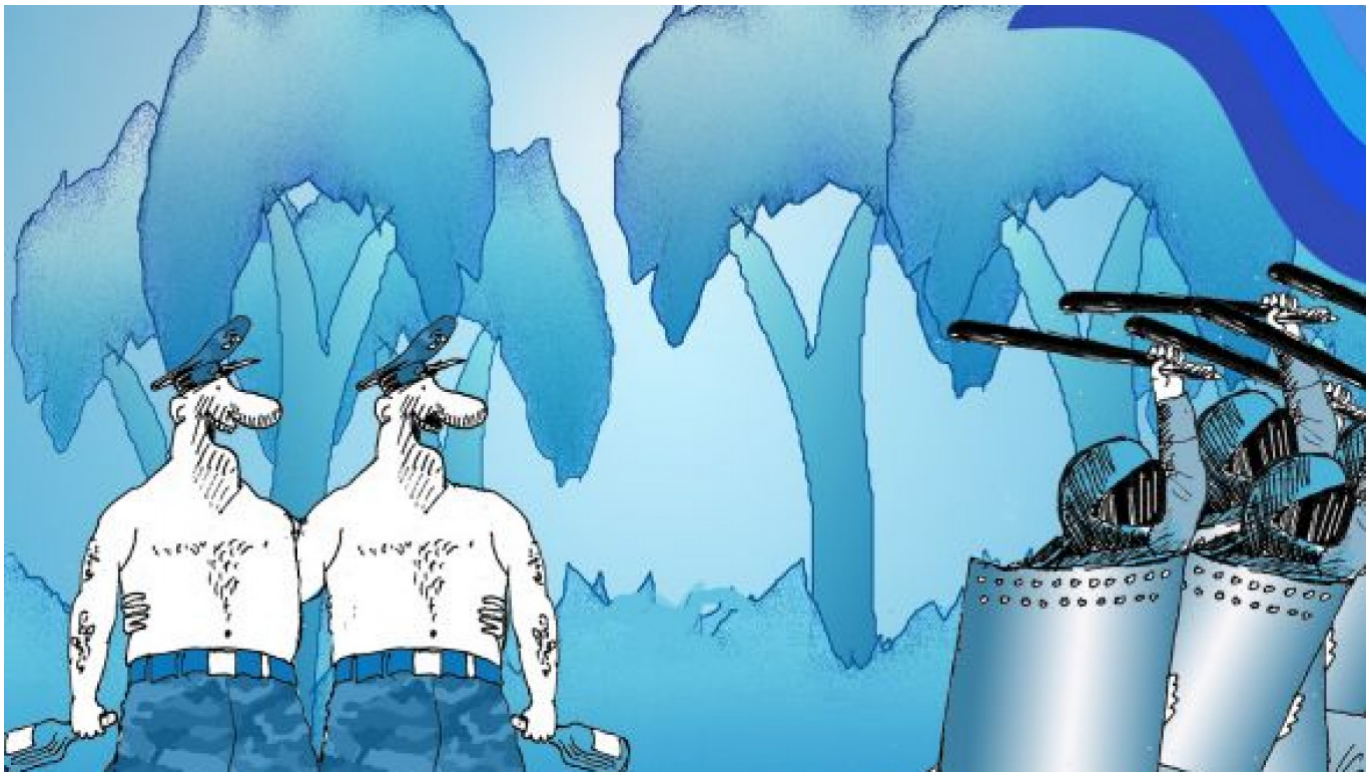
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

In the Spotlight

By Anna Malpas

June 02, 2011



This weekend's attempt to hold a gay pride event in Moscow was the usual truncated affair with protesters running the gauntlet of riot police, icon-brandishing fundamentalists and the fists of some very unpleasant bullet-headed types.

Before the event, organizer Nikolai Alexeyev gave a combative performance on Rossia One's "Duel" debate show, finally walking out in the middle, leaving oily host Vladimir Solovyov nonplussed.

The show is a virtual remake of Solovyov's former show "To the Barrier" on NTV, with debaters contesting a viewpoint and viewers voting by telephone but, in fact, watching a show recorded earlier.

Bizarrely, Alexeyev ended up arguing with a sexologist in a hat, Dilya Yenikeyeva, who is ubiquitous on talk shows. In a strident voice, she said she had written a book called "Gays and Lesbians" that prompted threats from gay men to rape her daughter, without specifying the content of the book. She asked Alexeyev whether gays were discriminating against the rights of the straight majority, or more specifically her and her daughter.

It was here that Alexeyev lost his rag, saying: "You sit there in your hat telling lies from show to show... You put on a wig and sit there telling lies in your wig... You scarecrow in a hat." He then got up, pulled off his microphone and walked out, crashing into something offscreen.

No one had ever behaved like this on the show, insulting a woman and then walking off, breaking props, Solovyov intoned solemnly, not even nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky. "This is all very touching, of course, but more than strange," he said wryly.

"I took revenge on that homophobic scum Solovyov," Alexeyev wrote on his blog. Rather bathetically, he added that he hurt his foot when he walked out and was considering legal action.

Alexeyev unexpectedly did not turn up to the parade but wrote in his blog that this was because he did not want to be jailed as his father has just been diagnosed with cancer and he wants to be there for his mother — a pretty good reason.

Some bloggers spoke out to support the parade, condemning the homophobes who even attacked women. Internet pioneer Anton Nosik wrote that he would like to hear an explanation from "the Orthodox — forgive me God — activist, who beat up a female activist... What was he aiming for when he hit a woman on the head, and is he happy with the result?"

The day of the parade was also the professional holiday of the Border Guards, when officers past and present walk around in uniform and get dead drunk, adding an extra layer of risk.

Channel One's mock news show "Yesterday Live" imagined what might have happened if City Hall had permitted the march and the two sides had gotten together to celebrate, in a surprisingly tolerant comedy sketch.

A news reader in a satin jacket reads from a pink page against a gay rights flag. "It would be curious to see gays and border guards marking their holiday on the same day," he says.

The sketch shows stereotypically mincing gay activists in Village People outfits and boas fraternizing with the swaggering border guards in stripy vests. "We've waited 17 years for Luzhkov to leave," one says, referring to the openly homophobic mayor, sacked in September.

The two sides join for a "West Side Story"-style dance routine to the tune of the song "America" with a joke about the sexual orientation of the pop singers at the traditional concert for the border guards.

At the end, the two groups separate, but one border guard confusedly stays with the gay group, before running back to his brothers in arms with a scream of alarm.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/06/02/in-the-spotlight-7396-a7396