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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Wanted: Botox

By Kevin O'Flynn

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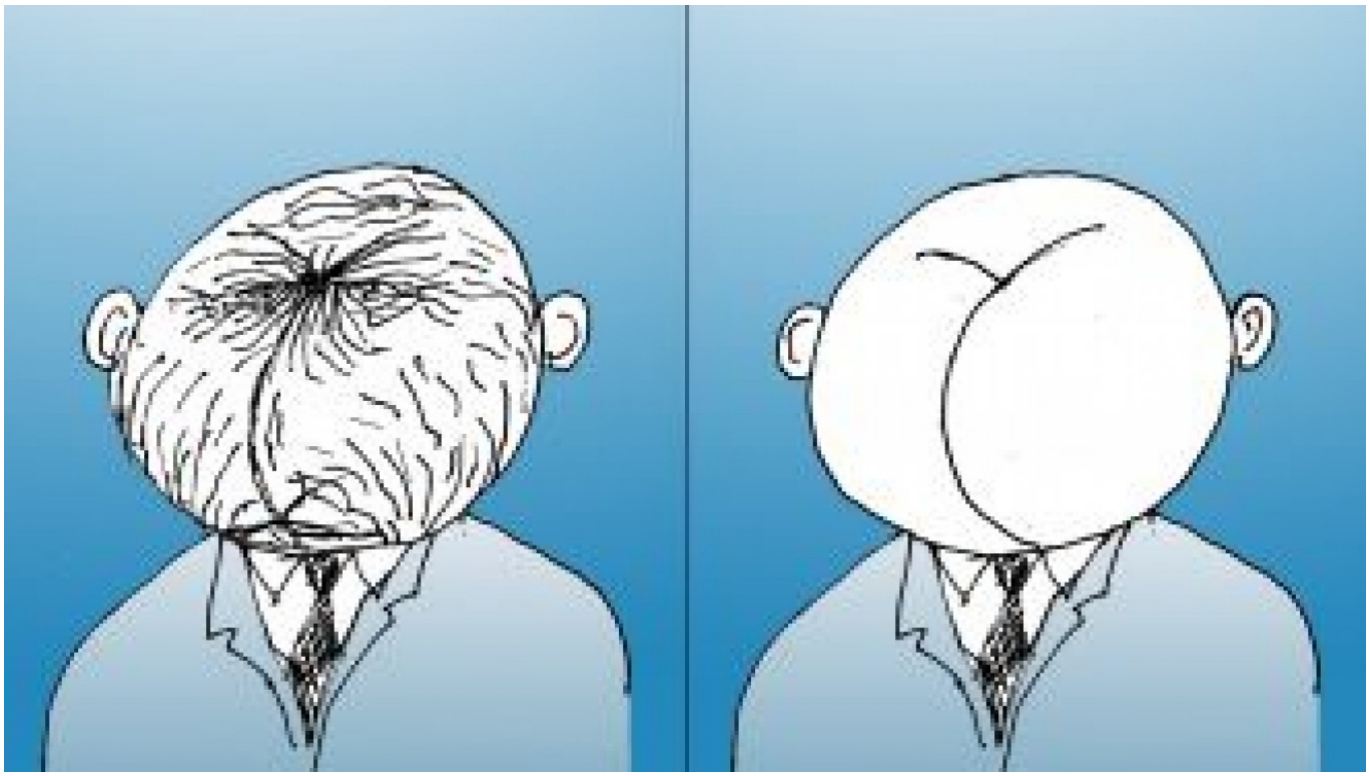

In a month or so, people will come into Moscow offices, their faces shiny and stuck in one pose. If you see someone like that before the freeze, it's probably Botox rather than the cold.

There are dozens of places offering Botox in Moscow now, and their sites are full of before and after photos showing men and woman with foreheads more like accordions — bulldog-like folds of wrinkles — that are then miraculously smoothed out. One clinic offers a 24-hour service to attract the kind of person who likes to examine for signs of aging in the mirror at 4 in the morning.

The thing I didn't understand was if Botox was so good then why did everyone seem to notice that a certain someone had allegedly stuck needles into bits of his face. A politician, who shall remain nameless as he is probably on Pages 1 to 10 anyway, is said to have had Botox to hold back the sands of time.

Clinic A was very friendly to the man, pretending to be a somebody whose laughlines were deadly serious.

“Ooh,” said the Botox specialist, “half the people we get in here are men.”

When I did mention Mr. P and his possibly new face, there was a giggle and then denials, suspicious denials as if he were just then sneaking out embarrassedly with a needle still stuck in his forehead.

“I don’t believe what people say. I’m not going to discuss P—” said Nadezhda, the charming purveyor of nerve-killing drugs at a clinic.

She then reassured me, though, that my face would not freeze like the wind had changed direction if I had some Botox injected.

“You will still be able to move your face,” she said.

“If you want to discuss Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi then we can discuss that,” said the no-nonsense Botox lady from another clinic, which was having a sale — 190 rubles instead of 250 until the end of the month. “Come here, and we can discuss that for 5,000 rubles.”

If choosing Botox rather than plunging your face into snow when it is minus 25 is your thing, then that clinic might be the right choice. They had an interesting Q&A section on their site that runs 25 pages long. It starts out looking like a PR setup but then turns real, with patients from other clinics asking why one eyebrow was still higher than another three days after the injection. “I’m scared to even go out on the street,” writes stuck-with-an-always-querulous-look Natalya.

The bigger fear is, of course, that in 12 years’ time, that certain face will remain very much the same, if slightly shinier, and the rest of us will feel the effects of gravity sink in. Expect a boom in Botox up to 2024.

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