

Russia's Fertile Grounds for Homophobia

By [Victor Davidoff](#)

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For Vitaly Milonov, a deputy in the St. Petersburg legislature and author of the law against homosexual propaganda, his meeting with author and gay activist Stephen Fry on Thursday was, in his words, "fascinating, like contact with an alien civilization." Milonov is probably the only regional politician in Russia with nationwide name recognition. Now, his nonstop war against Russian homosexuals has given him worldwide notoriety.

Milonov is like that broken clock that is right twice a day. His comment about an "alien civilization" is, in fact, true. Fry comes from a world where an openly gay man could be asked by the BBC to do a documentary film on homosexuals in the developing world. According to Milonov: "The authorities should think about the socially valuable population and not about the problems of perverts, like AIDS. Fighting against sodomy is an essential public health measure."

For Milonov, the universe isn't a comfortable place. In his version of Star Wars, the battle of good and evil is being won by evil, especially in the West. Milonov has asserted through Twitter that in Europe "sodomites have taken over the mass media. ... By modern European standards, a Christian family is less desirable than a sodomite colony." He also wrote that

Britain "has been destroyed by liberalism."

But the rest of the world is also in danger. "After the death of the Great Hugo [Chavez], Americans want to execute another color revolution," Milonov tweeted, and "the gray smoke of fire and brimstone seeps through every crack" of the Internet.

Milonov's world wasn't always so black and white. He began his political career in the early 1990s as a libertarian and published books about libertarianism in St. Petersburg. Then he followed the path of the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. Milonov had his first revelation when he was an aide to a State Duma deputy for the now-defunct Christian-Democratic Union. Apparently, Milonov had a vision that he couldn't enter Russian politics with libertarian views, so he quickly seized onto religion, first in the Baptist Church. Shortly before Vladimir Putin came to power in 1999, Milonov had another vision and converted to the Russian Orthodox Church. As a twice born-again Christian, he was elected to the St. Petersburg legislature.

But if Apostle Paul stopped his persecution of dissidents after his revelation, Milonov got started with persecution after his. He has been the author of the virulent law against gays in St. Petersburg and gained global notoriety for trying to bring the singers Madonna and Lady Gaga to court for their performances in his home city. He thanked the prosecutor's office for banning the child-free groups on the Internet and demanded that these "creeps be prosecuted and isolated from society."

Given all this, it was no wonder that the Milonov-Fry summit was a meeting of representatives from different galaxies. They couldn't even find a common language. Milonov concluded that "Stephen Fry has a very small lexicon. Throughout our conversation he just kept saying, 'Are you serious?'"

Of course, homophobic freaks like Milonov aren't a solely Russian phenomenon. They can be found all over the world, from Alaska to Kamchatka. The problem in Russia is that Milonov isn't an exception. A recent poll done by the [Levada Center](#) showed that 85 percent of Russians were against single-sex marriages, and 87 percent didn't want gay parades. But that's good news in comparison with the rest of the survey results, in which a significant part of the population not only disapproves of gays and lesbians but wants fascist measures to be used against them. Sixteen percent want to isolate them from society, 22 percent want compulsory treatment for them, and 5 percent want to "liquidate" them.

But Russian society's attitude towards homosexuals is just part of its overall xenophobia. Comments on Fry's visit on the blogosphere mentioned that he was Jewish as often as that he was gay. The blogger lelik wrote in his blog on the [Moskovsky Komsomolets](#) site: "I recently found out that 10 percent of Jews are gay. That's why they've come out of the closet and gotten so bold and obnoxious. Before you couldn't tell if someone was Jewish. But now you see them everywhere."

State homophobia is flourishing in this fertile soil. Using the St. Petersburg law as its model, the Duma has already passed in the first reading a draft law banning "homosexual propaganda" nationwide. On the day Fry was meeting with Milonov, the Moscow-based civil activist [Dmitry Aleshkovsky](#) was arrested for "giving an interview to an LGBT internet portal" at the airport in St. Petersburg according to a post on his Facebook page. Aleshkovsky flew

back to Moscow on a later flight after being searched by the police.

Meanwhile, the meeting with such a prominent gay activist as Fry seems to have inspired Milonov to new heights. Now he wants to prevent teenagers from attending an upcoming concert of Adam Lambert in St. Petersburg. In his letter to the prosecutor's office, Milonov wrote that Lambert might commit "illegal acts" during his show since "he is a homosexual and flaunts it."

So the Milonov Show is not over. Maybe Milonov agrees with Queen's legendary soloist Freddie Mercury that "the show must go on." Too bad for Milonov, Mercury was gay, too.

Victor Davidoff is a Moscow-based writer and journalist who follows the Russian blogosphere in his biweekly column.

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