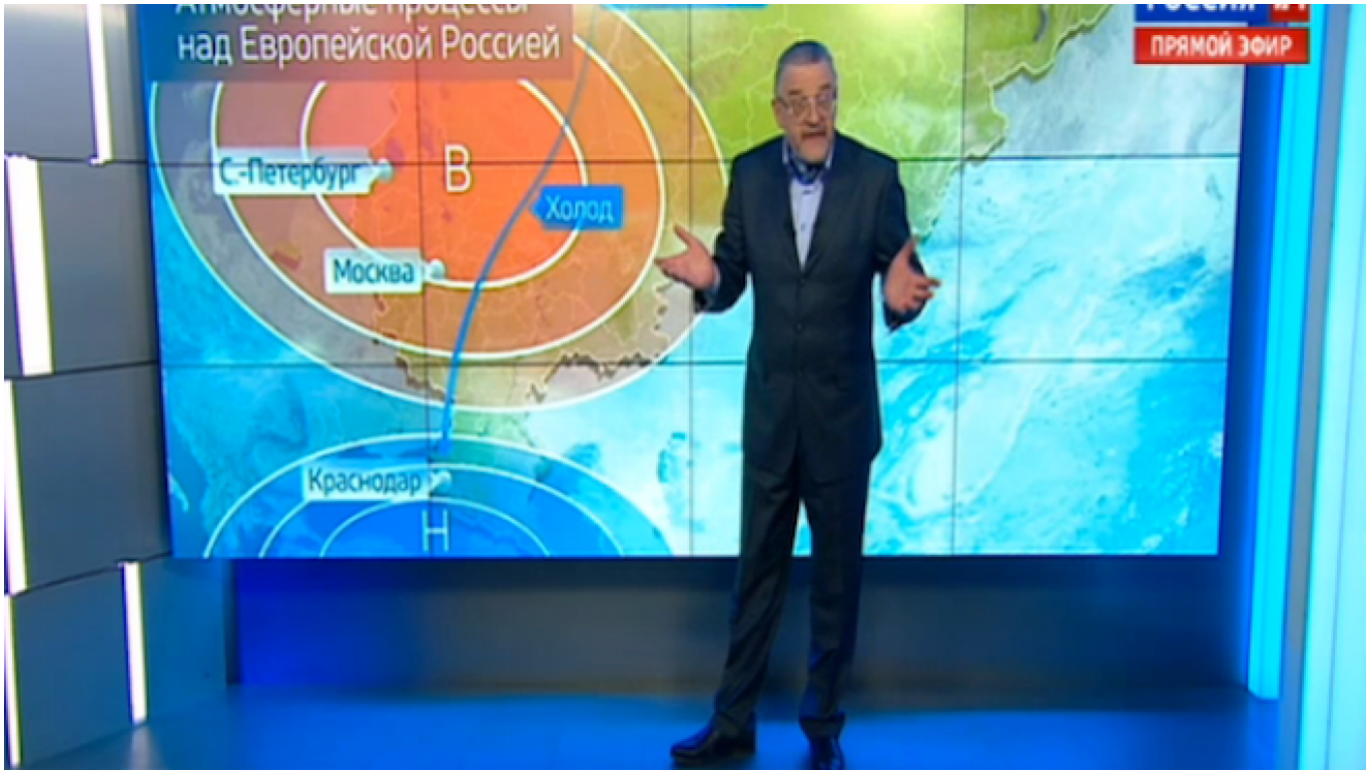
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Forecaster Uses Weather to Explain Developments in Ukraine

April 15, 2014



Russia's most popular weatherman Vadim Zavodchenkov.

In looking to the skies to predict weather conditions, Russia's most popular weatherman, Vadim Zavodchenkov, has realized that he can foresee both meteorological and political developments in Ukraine.

During his slot on state television channel Rossia on Monday, Zavodchenkov said "clouds have gathered over eastern Ukraine," and warned that its "effects would be felt in Russia."

Zavodchenkov said a cyclone from the Black Sea had caused "gusty wind, possibly the wind of change," in the Donetsk region.

"In the Donbass region, where the situation is strained to the limit, light rain is possible today and tomorrow. We don't know how much the confrontation will heat up, but the temperature on the thermometer in Donetsk will only rise," he said.

Clashes between pro-Russian militants and Ukrainian government forces have sharply

escalated in eastern Ukraine, with "special operations" getting under way in two towns in the region on Tuesday.

Zavodchenkov has used the weather to explain political developments in the country ever since protests broke out in Kiev in November, citing a study by Columbia University that linked societal stability to changes in the global climate.

"Could there be a link between temperature levels shown on Kiev thermometers and the pressure levels" in Kiev?, the forecaster asked during a December forecast.

The protests against former Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovych began just as there was a sharp drop in temperatures at the end of November, Zavodchenkov said.

Zavodchenkov said protests on Kiev's Independence Square broke out the same day as the Orange Revolution in 2004, when "a heightening in political tension also coincided ... with a change in seasons."

During the height of the protests on Independence Square, known as Maidan, winter temperatures were as low as minus 20 degrees Celsius.

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