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Russia Offered as a Conservative Bulwark Against Repugnant West

By Ivan Nechepurenko

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Activists showing support in Britain for the LGBT community in Russia, where pride parades are not allowed.

In choosing conservative values, Russia represents "the final hope" for the modern world, which has been corrupted by the Western debauchery of individualism, consumerism and globalization, participants of a Moscow forum agreed Wednesday.

The Large Family and Future of Humanity Forum opened inside the Kremlin's walls in a Soviet-era concert hall, bringing together conservative politicians and activists from 45 countries, including the U.S., according to organizers.

Participants lashed out against abortion, same-sex marriage and gay pride parades as threats to Russia's traditional spiritual core.

President Vladimir Putin sent a greeting to participants via an official from his

administration. In his message, Putin spoke about the "large-scale demographic crisis" that civilization faces and "the erosion of moral values" around the world.

The forum was organized by a number of conservative foundations and centers that are patronized by several high-ranking Russian officials and businessmen. The Center for National Glory and Andrew the Apostle Foundation headed by Russian Railways CEO Vladimir Yakunin appeared to be the main sponsor of the event.

Yakunin, whose wife Natalya moderated the proceedings, attended the forum, taking to the stage to talk about Russia's departure from the Western model of development that, according to him, does not lead to either material or spiritual well-being.

"Our current constitution does not define what a family is. We must enshrine marriage in the constitution as the union of a man and a woman," he said.

Yakunin has been linked to several corruption scandals, most recently over his alleged mansion in the village of Akulinino outside Moscow. The mansion reportedly boasts a separate building for storing furs in freezing temperatures, alongside an air-conditioned prayer room decorated with rare icons.

The lineup of conservative crusaders also included "the Russian Soros," Konstantin Malofeyev — founder of Marshall Capital Partners investment fund that has been linked to insurgents in Ukraine — and Yelena Mizulina, a conservative State Duma lawmaker who has championed laws banning the adoption of Russian orphans by Americans and banning the promotion of "nontraditional sexual relations" to minors.

Both were sanctioned by either the U.S. and EU — or both — over their alleged involvement in the Ukraine crisis and Crimea annexation.

Mizulina, who chairs the Duma's committee on family, women and children's issues and has advocated a law requiring women to get their husband's permission in order to have an abortion, lashed out at the West.

"I am sure that in contemporary Europe it would not be possible to hold a forum like this," Mizulina told the audience after reading a welcome note from State Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin.

"Even if they are held there, they are not hosted at the Kremlin, like in Russia, but somewhere on the outskirts," she said.

The speakers praised Russia's role in defending what they called correct moral and spiritual values.

"Russia has passed laws that ban gay propaganda, while the first thing the new government did in brotherly Ukraine is allow a gay pride parade there," Malofeyev, who also heads the St. Andrew the First-Called Foundation, told the cheering crowd.

The forum will continue Thursday with panels on family policy and the relationship between family and Christianity, among others.

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