

Weekly Wrap: Specters, Cults and Revolution

By [Unfair Observer](#)

July 02, 2015



Between the Grexit and the Islamic State rampage, this week was not really about Russia — but we can't admit that, can we? Everything in the world revolves around Russia, just ask the people on Channel One.

Russia could have taken the spotlight by bailing out Greece, but opted against it. This puts a dent in the image of Russia as a great global power, but then, per capita gross domestic product of poor, suffering Greece is at least five times greater than that of the mighty Russia. Go figure.

Alternatively, in another world, the top domestic news would have been the biblical flood that hit Sochi — media witch hunts, mass resignations of officials and criminal cases against developers would ensue. But in reality, who cares? The Olympics are done, and if you worry about Sochi now, you are so last season. Anyway, there are bigger and scarier things afoot.

Scary History

The Prosecutor General's Office is checking whether the Baltic states had any right to leave the Soviet Union in 1991. Aside from giving everybody in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia a major case of hiccups, this will not have any legal consequences — or so they say. Even the Kremlin raised an eyebrow at the prosecutors' sudden move, which means no polite green men in Tallinn — for now, at least.

Cue the obligatory jokes about legal revision of history here. They are quite funny — just imagine Ulan Bator filing an official claim in the International Court of Justice for the restoration of the Golden Horde from Beijing to Prague.

Also cue the "1984" reference — you know, "Who controls the past, controls the future." Nice to see some people still taking good books so close to heart and actually living by them.

But what this is really about is fear — and an embarrassing attempt to regulate it away. See, the ruling bureaucracy is really afraid of unplanned change — and so they try to ban, abolish and erase all past attempts of unwanted grassroots activity in the animalistic hope that if you pretend it never happened, it will never happen again.

I bet they check under their beds for monsters before going to sleep too. You never know where a revolution might hide.

Western Cults

Meanwhile in Nizhnevartovsk, Siberia, an occult practice was exposed and thankfully ended before it was too late. I'm talking about yoga, of course, and no, I'm not joking, they really banned it as evil foreign sorcery.

A different type of foreign sorcery was also exorcised in Nizhny Novgorod, where they sacked an American — a deputy rector for innovation at the local university, who gave 20 years of his life to Russia. This came straight after the psychotropic weapon known as television presenter Dmitry Kiselyov claimed that Russia's education establishments need to be saved from any subversive Western presence.

All of this implies that The Moscow Times won't be around for long — we write in English, so we must be spies. But as long as we're still around, I have only one question to ask. How come no spy-hunter has gone for, you know, Apple? This is definitely a cult, a Western one, and much more widespread in Russia than yoga or foreign scientists.

Shouldn't the nation give up those evil foreign contraptions? In Soviet times, they denounced cybernetics as the "whore of imperialism" — that's got to be true now we're rebuilding the Soviet Union.

I am sure the State Duma and regional legislatures will soon stage burnings of their own hard-earned but subversive iPhones and iPads in the town squares. I lay no copyright claim to the idea.

The Specter of Election

There was also a festival of creative law interpretation this week. The Constitutional Court agreed that moving the Duma elections is OK if it's just once; the Kremlin, prosecutors and the Justice Ministry all said Russia need not abide by all rulings of the European Court of Human Rights as it pledged to, but cherry-pick; and a lot of people made a fuss because the EU did not waive travel sanctions against Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin so he could attend an OSCE session in Finland — just this once. Come on man, is that so hard?

The irony is, Russian corridors of power are stuffed with lawyers — essentially, everyone who is not a KGB alumnus is one, from Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev down. So if these people don't understand that the whole point of law is that you can't cherry-pick it, it means the country is run by bad students.

But let me tell you a secret: everything that happens in Russia now is about elections. After the shocking discovery during the 2011–13 protests that some people may disagree with the powers that be, said powers are doing all they can to eliminate any potential risk at the ballots.

So the opposition had to go, and the NGOs and good foreign relations. Now the law, yoga, music, jokes, economy, education and so much else is also thrown under the bus. This will end in a sterile country with zero GDP full of naked, silent people (with iPhones) — but with all the right answers. So it's all right. Just this once.

Unfair Observer is the pen name of a Russian journalist that The Moscow Times has invited to observe the most brain-dead weekly developments in Russia.

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