

Weekly Wrap: Butts, Breasts and Sports Cars

By [Unfair Observer](#)

September 10, 2015



This week, Russia invaded Syria to fight for Assad. Of course, it didn't really, but this is not the impression you get from the news. You've got photos of Russian troops in the city of Tartus, an audio intercept in Russian from a battle in the country, Assad troops using Russian APCs, and even unnamed sources in the Pentagon saying things to the effect of, "Well, maybe ... we're not sure, but something might be up."

Of course, Russian military instructors have really been in Syria since Khrushchev, their presence officially confirmed again in 2012, because Russia quite openly sells arms to Syria and needs to train Syrian troops how to use them. Russian marines guarding arms shipments have been snapping selfies in Tartus for years, and as for that intercept, the quality is so poor that it could just as easily be the sound of two young leopards mating.

But nobody likes to let the facts get in the way of a good story — and this is indeed shaping into a sweet story of dictator bromance, a bro standing up for a bloodthirsty bro. Never mind the lack of solid evidence or the simple truth that after Russia's involvement in Afghanistan,

Russians would not take kindly to leaders sending troops to the Middle East. Of course Putin did it. He also crashed the yuan and tried to kill Sarah Connor.

In truth, the Russian authorities have their hands full with their subjects, as usual.

Medici for Governor

In the republic of Marii-El, a candidate for local governorship was so disappointed with the reception he received in a local village that he threatened to destroy the only road leading to it. "What, you don't believe that I'll do it?" he queried in his address. No one dared to call his bluff, but a local videotaped it, generating a media storm.

The candidate, Leonid Markelov, is really an incumbent running for another re-election. He later denied everything and complained the locals turned their backs on him — and of course, turning your butt to the governor is a flogging offense, the proposed infrastructure destruction would mean getting off easy.

Even when the governor is obsessed with the Medicis (not joking here), builds replicas of Italian palazzos amid Khrushchev-era run-down housing, has paintings of himself as a Venetian doge and generally runs his fiefdom with all the grace of a Renaissance tyrant (but none of the taste).

But still, try to imagine a candidate in any Western democracy ordering the voters to smile or he'll push them back into the Stone Age. Well, except for Donald Trump, but he is special. So the next time anyone asks you if Russia is a democracy, point them to Marii-El. And if they ask why the locals won't vote him out, ask them to imagine themselves in a Marii-El village with no roads for 100 kilometers.

The Other Kind of Brush

If some Russians only have their butts to show to their rulers, others enter a much more intimate relationship with the powers that be. Consider Irina Romanovskaya, who painted pictures of President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev using her breasts.

The saddest thing is that the poor woman really wants to present the pictures to her two characters, but does not dare to do so — what if they don't like them?

To this, your uncle Unfair Observer says: Girl, you're trapped in a web of Kremlin propaganda and believe our rulers are people from a higher plane than you, who don't care about the little things in life. I've never shared a dirty joke with Putin, and yet I can guarantee he is a human, and as such, would appreciate a breast portrait. It might be trickier with Medvedev, whose wife Svetlana is a tough character, but hey, you have good intentions.

There is one problem with this, and it was spelled out by lawmaker Vitaly Milonov, the jester at the court of the Russian subconscious. Milonov, miraculously, endorsed the artist, saying all creativity must flourish, but also spoke against painting with "male intimate parts."

Nobody really brought penises into this conversation, but Vitaly said what we were all thinking. The idea is there, and if a trend takes off, the next portraits of the great leaders may be done with other body parts and carry other messages. Guess which part they'll be using

in Marii-El to paint their governor.

One Jaguar Please

As governors faced butts and Milonov ruminated on penis art, Moscow celebrated City Day. There were some nice things on the fringes of the bacchanalia, but the centerpiece included a massive rally of frocked priests, the Moscow mayor hacking cabbages to pieces with a saber (just because he could), and enthusiasts staging historically correct floggings for traitorous liberals and anyone in the crowd who wanted to pose with the cat o' nine tails over their hind parts.

And meanwhile in Magnitogorsk, two 5-year-olds pulled a "Shawshank Redemption" and tunneled out of prison — I mean, kindergarten. Then they headed to a car dealership to get themselves a Jaguar. They didn't have the money, but didn't let that phase them; sadly, they were intercepted by worried locals and returned to their parents.

So destroy roads, shake your swords, pose as historical despots and destroy roads all you want; you can't suppress the industrious spirit of this nation. It'll dig itself out and get that Jaguar.

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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