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Weekly Wrap: The Day Russia Banned Love

By Unfair Observer

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While the world watches Russia's actions in the Syrian meat grinder, strange things are happening at home, where the entire leadership of the northern republic of Komi was busted and accused of being a mafia ring in disguise.

Of course, this can be said of every Russian governor, or so the Russian public thinks. But millions of heads were furiously scratched to explain why this guy in particular was targeted, because as far as regional princes go, Vyacheslav Gaizer is definitely on the polite, intelligent and unobtrusive side. As for possible embezzlement — well, it comes with the job (again, it's not me, that's what the nation is saying).

This is so inexplicable that it transcends into the realm of the mystical. Russia is banking on the Syrian expedition, but a lot needs to happen in Washington to save Moscow from the fate of that guy who stretches out his hand and no one shakes it.

So perhaps a sacrifice to the gods was considered, and the wizened Komi shamans (there

really are some) advised the Kremlin on what to do. Poor Gaizer did not do anything wrong, his career just went up in smoke to appease the fickle deities of geopolitical influence.

We will indignantly dismiss the other explanation, which is that Gaizer fell to distract the public from the alleged misdeeds of another governor, Pskov region's well-connected Andrei Turchak, accused of masterminding the brutal beating of a journalist. We all know Turchak is not guilty. He said so himself.

Salmon That Spied on Me

If you think the shaman thing is far-fetched, think again, because Leonardo DiCaprio was just labeled a foreign agent in Russia. While he doesn't get to wear the bureaucratic equivalent of a yellow star himself, an environmental charity that he donated money to was formally recognized as a foreign agent on account of Leo's dough. Now the group is sending back the $150,000 that Mr. No-Oscar gave it to save endangered salmon in far eastern rivers.

DiCaprio is of course a foreign agent just by virtue of his American passport. We all know the damage this agent of the Zionist Occupation Government wreaked on Russia's demography — think of all those crushes Russian girls had after watching "Titanic." They could have gone out with real Russian boys and hopefully gotten pregnant by the age of 16; instead, Russia faces a demographic slump that is entirely DiCaprio's fault.

But it is still interesting to understand how saving salmon can disrupt the work of the Russian state, which is what foreign agents are supposed to do.

Perhaps gorging on tasty fish would distract officials from matters of state. Or perhaps the lack of domestic salmon will drive officials to pursue reconciliation with the West, finally ending this Cold War 2.0 and bringing back the Norwegian imports.

And to think it all could have been undone by one cunning heartthrob who doesn't even have an Oscar.

Save it, Leo. Russia is on to your fishy plans.

Big Brother's Struggles

Meanwhile in Crimea, an attempt to bring the region back into the 21st century by launching a second telecoms provider there was foiled by evil foreigners — in this case, the Swedes (do they export salmon or something?).

The problem is, all Russian telecoms are obliged by law to install SORM surveillance systems so secret services can spy on the nation at their leisure. But the equipment in question is made by Sweden's Ericsson, which is not shipping to Russia anymore because this stuff falls under Western sanctions. So, no SORM, no 3G networks. Dust up your landlines.

It's like the West does not want Russia to spy on people. Ridiculous, right? But there is a discrepancy there — DiCaprio's money is not good enough when it comes to saving salmon, but Swedish surveillance stuff is OK if it's to monitor what you're saying to your auntie on her 85th birthday? Leo, you should have donated to the FSB.

Sex, But No Love

And finally, the old battle cry — "there's no sex in the Soviet Union" — is back with a vengeance, because on Sept. 17, 2015, Russia officially banned love.

Well, the love in question is "Love," an intense 3-D exploration of amorous addiction by Argentinian-French filmmaking legend Gaspar Noe. The ultrarealistic film indeed features a bunch of racy scenes, but it was good enough for Cannes, and if you think back on your own past infatuations, you probably wouldn't cast any stones.

However, it looks like Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky did not have any reciprocated crushes to think back on, because he denied the flick a screening permit, dubbing it pornography.

Medinsky is, of course, the man who placed Soviet literary classic Sergei Dovlatov in the 19th century at a Dovlatov festival, but he is far from alone. St. Petersburg lawmaker Vitaly Milonov — yes, the guy who banned gay propaganda in Russia — compared the film to Hitler's "Mein Kampf," though he freely admitted he hasn't seen "Love."

It is really hard to say what isn't banned in Russia anymore. President Vladimir Putin, perhaps. You can still feel love toward him — chaste, burning, patriotic love. It is not forbidden. I hope.

But remember the date: On Sept. 17, 2015, Russia banned love.

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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