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# Moscow Demolition: A Primer in Russian Propaganda

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*Самострой: illegal construction*



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If you've been on a 36-hour flight or locked in a cabin in the woods, you might have missed the news that almost 100 buildings were destroyed in Moscow overnight. But it wasn't a war or terrorist attack. It was the Moscow government putting your tax rubles to work.

Because this was a special operation, the city government and media are using special terminology to describe it. To help you understand it, I've put together a little primer.

Снос: demolition, the orderly dismantling of a structure. The party line: В ночь на 9 февраля под снос пошло около сотни торговых точек (On the night of Feb. 9 about 100 shops were taken down). The real story: Hundreds of bulldozers appeared in the middle of the night and smashed to smithereens several million dollars' worth of real estate.

Киоски, палатки и павильоны: kiosks, stalls, and pavilions, i.e. small, flimsy trading booths. The party line: Минувший ночью начался демонтаж павильонов, без разрешения возведенных рядом со станциями метро (Last night work began to demolish stalls that had been put up next to metro stations without permission.) The real story: Solid, stone one-, two- and three-story buildings, hooked up to utilities, with licenses, deeds, and court orders certifying their legal status were destroyed.

Самовольная постройка: unauthorized structure, also called самострой (shanty), незаконная постройка (illegally built structure). The party line: Москва избавляется от опасного самостроя (Moscow is getting rid of its dangerous shanties). The real story: Perfectly safe, authorized, inspected buildings were destroyed for no clear reason.

Признанный: adjudicated, declared, determined, i.e., status granted as the result of a legal process. Party line: В разных районах начался снос торговых киосков, палаток и павильонов, признанных столичным правительством потенциально опасным самостроем (In various districts, demolition began of trading kiosks, stalls and pavilions that were determined by the city government to be potentially dangerous illegal construction.) The real story: After every court ruled in favor of the store owners, the city decreed they could tear down buildings without a court order.

Стихийный: primitive, cobbled together, i.e., something that appeared spontaneously. Party line: По словам специалистов, стихийные конструкции могут представлять угрозу для важных городских коммуникаций (Specialists say that these structures, which were quickly thrown up, might be a threat to key city utility lines.) The real story: Although all these solid buildings that have stood for up to 20 years are fully licensed and inspected, my brother-in-law and his buddy said that in a hurricane phone lines might be affected.

So if you read the official news reports, it sounds like a bunch of ugly, illegally constructed market stalls and shanties were torn down to protect citizens' health and safety.

But here's what the free press — well, Facebook — says about it:

It was called: Ночь длинных ковшей (Night of the long diggers); Ночь хрустальных ларьков (Night of the crystal stalls); or just: сегодняшний погром (today's pogrom). Someone wrote that is looked like "Москва подверглась варварской бомбардировке" (barbaric bombing raids hit Moscow).

What I say is: Свято место пусто не бывает (Nature abhors a vacuum).

Let's see how empty those lots are in six months.

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*The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.*

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