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The World This Week According to Russian State TV

By The Moscow Times

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Dmitry Kiselyov in his "Vesti Nedeli" news show. **YouTube**

We begin weekly analysis of the main talking points of Russian TV's Sunday news review programs. The three flagship shows — Voskresnoye Vremya [The Times on Sunday], Vesti Nedeli [Weekly News] and Sunday Evening With Vladimir Solovyev — are together watched by tens of millions every week.

The themes of Russian state television's news weekly reviews on Sunday evening were all too familiar: a hostile West, a friendly East, support for Donald Trump.

Heroes and Villains

The chief villain for Channel One's Voskresenoye Vremya (The Times on Sunday) was British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, who last week called on people to protest outside the Russian Embassy in London in response to the bombing of Aleppo.

Presenter Valery Fadeyev described Johnson as "looking like a character out of a comic book."

In the event, just one person answered the foreign secretary's call, the viewers were told. This compared to the anti-war protests in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which brought tens of thousands onto British streets.

Not for the first time, U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump also made an appearance, following a turbulent week that saw Trump facing sexual assault allegations back home.

The Russian presenter described the recording of Trump's lewd conversation about women as *kompromat*, a Russian term meaning compromising material used to blackmail effect.

After pointing out that the recording had been made over a decade ago, Fadeyev asked rhetorically who made the recording, before dismissing his own question and moving on. None of these details are particularly secret, but further investigation was not warranted. Instead, Fadeyev reminded viewers that Bill Clinton had also nearly been impeached over the Monica Lewinsky scandal.

"Monica had an important artifact," he told viewers. "A dress with traces of the president's — excuse me — sperm."

His message was clear: Trump was set up, and Hillary's husband was a sex fiend no better than the Donald.

Whataboutism Masters

The flagship Vesti Nedeli ("Weekly News") news show, hosted by lead Kremlin propagandist Dmitry Kiselyov, continued the whataboutism theme in typical style.

Bill Clinton had assaulted a woman, Kiselyov said. And there were further, "unexpected revelations" that Clinton also fathered a "black-skinned son" by a prostitute.

Staying in the U.S., Kiselyov accused U.S. Vice President Joe Biden of making a "direct threat to Putin" when he hinted his country would retaliate against alleged hacking by Russia during an interview with NBC.

"Joe, what is this, war or just bad manners?" asked Kiselyov. "Just picture it: a cyber war, the collapse of transport, blackouts and even more serious catastrophes in the energy sector. What are you starting? And where will it stop?" Kiselyov asked the camera, a hint of threat in his voice.

Syrian Breakdown

Kiselyov's main slot focused with the collapse of relations between the U.S. and Russia and allegations of Russian complicity in Syrian war crimes.

The "Western bacchanalia" over Russia's actions in Aleppo led Kiselyov into his next segment: a recap of the origins of the term "war crime." Kiselyov took his audience from the post-World War II Nuremberg trials through to the Unites States' controversial war in

Vietnam, and ending with the NATO raids on the former Yugoslavia. The famous photograph of naked children running away from a napalm attack served as as a visual backdrop throughout.

"Judging from Vietnam, the U.S. and NATO have decided that they are allowed to commit war crimes, just like a James Bond collective," Kiselyov concluded. "They are the 007 countries with a 'license to kill'."

An interview with Serbian nationalist leader Vojislav Seselj, who himself was tried at the Yugoslavia crimes tribunal in The Hague, ridiculed the notion of Russia ever being tried for war crimes in Aleppo. "It's more likely that Putin will take Western leaders to court," said Seselj.

Kiselyov accused the West of using fake news reports from Syria, including photographs of injured children, to manipulate public opinion. "Why do they not give a damn about the real victims, which include children?" he asked.

French President Francois Hollande, who last week canceled a planned visit by Putin to Paris over the Aleppo allegations, was depicted as weak and trying to curry favor with the U.S.

"Syria doesn't worry Hollande too much, but he likes pronouncing the word 'Syria' to show off, because it's so sensual," Kiselyov said, in a voice dripping with irony.

"And when he uses it in combination with the word Putin, he can also seem brutal. For Hollande, that's just really cool."

Friends Real and Imagined

It wasn't all grim viewing for Russians on Sunday evening. As well as foes, the country also has friends, state TV told them.

Relations with Turkey, which not so long ago seemed to be on the brink of war, are well on the way to being completely mended. Putin was shown alongside Turkish President Recep Erdogan during a recent visit to Ankara.

The Vesti Nedeli program also opened with footage from this weekend's BRICS summit in Goa, from which India and China have emerged as Russia's favorite allies.

"The leader of China said that the stable development of Russia is a force for good in the world and for China. Clearly, those words are not just a diplomatic favor but a signal," the program said.

"Moving to the East, Putin turned his back on the West, at least for a couple of days," said Kiselyov, ending the segment. "I can only imagine what a relief that must have been for him."

Russia's hopes that ties with other nations might rescue it from international isolation continued throughout the Sunday Night with Vladimir Solovyov talk show.

"Can the political alliance of the two great powers [China and Russia] bring about the end of U.S. hegemony?" asked presenter Solovyov at the beginning of his show. "Might it make the

international order more just and rational?"

There were careful hints by the evening's most moderate speaker, political analyst Viktor Kuvaldin, that an alliance with China would not solve the world's problems. "China and Russia against the West is not the best option, we have to find another solution," he said.

But the show's presenter quickly rebuffed that suggestion. "It is them doing this to us," he said. "The Americans are behaving as if international law no longer exists."

The tone of the night was perhaps best captured by Vyacheslav Nikonov, a State Duma member and the grandson of Stalin's protégé, Vyacheslav Molotov: "A hunt has been declared on the bear, so the bear is not going follow a policy of foreign policy minimalism," he said.

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