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# Журналист

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Moscow State University / Department of Journalism  
University of Washington, Tacoma

# The Ledger

## Be Young and Shut Up!

### French youth are rioting again

Burning cars, damaged shops and closed universities. Skirmishes with police, Molotov cocktails and water cannons. Thousands of young French people are involved in strikes all over the country. Paris has already experienced this—38 years ago. May 1968 became a chapter in the history books with its famous slogan: «Be young and shut up». They didn't want to keep silent then and today young French are fighting for their rights again.

But today, there are no leftist slogans, red banners or portraits of Mao that characterize the 1968 protests. Modern French have fears about their professional future. It's all about the First Employment Contract (CPE) which is a new measure proposed by Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin as an answer to the immigrant riots in November 2005. According to this contract, every French company that has more than 20 people on staff must hire a new (unqualified) worker under age 25 every year. However, employers are allowed to dismiss young workers during a two-year trial period without giving any explanation. That is the point of the struggle.

Officials treat it as a solution to the unemployment problem, but students are certain that employers will use it to fire them indiscriminately. So, now instead of the immigrants' riots in 2005, France must deal with French youth damaging cars and businesses.

On March 11, two days after the CPE was approved by the parliament, approximately 400,000 students across the country joined the revolt. Sorbonne University was seized by the students. They made barricades and decided to become a new symbol of justice, much like 38 years ago. But, police stormed Sorbonne with batons and



March 13, 2006

Students of College de France are holding positions inside their university while special forces begin an assault. After several hours of intense fighting with stones, bottles, tear gas and police batons, youth had to retreat.

tear gas and cleared the building in less than 10 minutes.

On March 13 College de France—one of the most prestigious French high schools was blockaded. Approximately 600 students clashed with police. Police used batons and tear gas and students answered by throwing paving stones and bottles. Peaceful marches also occurred in Paris, Rennes, Marseilles,

Grenoble and Nantes. The education ministry stated that not only students took part in the strike. Parents and several thousand teachers—between 7 and 15 percent of the country's education workers—also took part in the protests.

On March 18, between 500,000 and 1.5 million people, including students, workers, pensioners and families, marched

mostly peacefully through French towns and cities in protest of the CPE. However, in Paris the strike didn't come without violence; masked demonstrators hurled projectiles at police and set cars ablaze. The protestors declared March 18 as a Day of General Strike.

See FRANCE, page 3

**I**RAN'S atomic program is a curse for every journalist. Just try to pronounce «Iranian uranium» without breaking your tongue. But this topic always breaks the news and many wonder why. From the first sight it's as simple as checkers: Iran defends its right to peaceful nuclear activities, US accuses Iran of a lie. **NICK PRZYBYCIEL** and **ANDREY BARANOV** dug through headlines and conspiracy theories to find another side of the coin

The main battle is now in the United Nations Security Council. The United States, along with Great Britain and France, have taken a hard line against Iran: they are demanding a two weeks ultimatum for Iran to suspend its nuclear activities and lobbying for serious sanctions—eventually, it can lead to the use of force—in case of noncompliance. At the same time Russia and China have refused to back any resolution that threatens extreme consequences. On March 21 negotiations stalled among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Deadlock at the Security Council shows how great the challenge of keeping Iran's nuclear program in-check is to the United States. «The biggest irritation for U.S. politics is the unwillingness of Tehran to follow the will of the U.S., but diplomatic pressure on Iran leads to the opposite result. The positions of Islamic radi-

## Enriching Iranium

cals are becoming stronger», said Vladislav Zaytsev, a Middle East studies professor at Moscow State University.

Had Iran accepted an earlier proposal giving Russia control of the enrichment process, then Security Council deliberations would have been unnecessary.

### Recycling bombs

The Russians proposed that Iran be allowed to engage in a joint venture to convert uranium ore into the gas which is then spun to produce the enriched uranium needed for nuclear fuel. However, the enrichment would be done in Russia. Iran would save face—look, we can convert uranium—but the mystery of enrichment will remain unclear for the clerical state. For everyone involved it should have looked like a fair deal. The Iranian delegation even came to Moscow for talks but after a couple of rounds Russian proposal was rejected. It allowed Tehran to win some time while its nuclear activities went on.

«It's not logical for a country to put the fate of its nation at the disposal of another country, even if it is a friend», said Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani after the talks in Moscow ended. «You can meet part of your fuel needs from abroad. But is there a guar-

antee that nuclear fuel producers won't play with you over price or other things?»

Russia's enrichment program has been endorsed by the United States recently. In his 2006 State of the Union address, President George Bush unveiled his plan for a Global Nuclear Energy Partnership where partner nations will work together to recycle nuclear waste. Russia's reprocessing industry would fall under this plan. The GNEP would allow partner countries to sell the materials to developing countries. This would give countries like Iran the opportunity to develop nuclear power but not nuclear weapons, since the GNEP will only provide low-yield plutonium that cannot be used in weapons production.

There is concern that the GNEP is a smoke screen that will allow Washington the opportunity to further develop their own nuclear arsenal. If the United States is allowed to reprocess nuclear waste, then they will have control over an exceptional amount of plutonium that can be used to develop weapons.

«Reprocessing just the spent fuel rods produced by US reactors in one year would result in some 20 metric tons of plutonium—enough to build over 3,000 nuclear weapons», the Union of Concerned Scientists stated.

Bush's administration is currently developing plans to design a new arsenal of refurbished or replacement warheads for an aging nuclear fleet. A new generations of weapons, such as the 'bunker-buster', has already been designed. The GNEP would give Washington the capability to implement these plans.

### We need a war?

The GNEP, although developed partly as a solution to end the Iranian nuclear stand-off, is indicative of the United States' so-called Broad Middle East policy, according to Zaytsev.

«The total aim of the U.S. is not only about Iran but the whole region of the Persian Gulf», he said. «The aim is to put the Middle East under total political, economic and military control. It's about the concept of so-called 'broad Middle East' recently proposed by Washington».

By not allowing Iran the capability to produce a nuclear weapon, while simultaneously modernizing their own fleet, the U.S. will help secure its interests in the region. The Iranian rhetoric towards Israel, a key U.S. ally in the region, has become increasingly barbed as the Iranian enrichment program has grown.

See IRAN, page 3

■ news

## Three years of war

March 24 is the third anniversary of the US-led invasion into Iraq. U.S. President George W. Bush was quoted on the BBC website as saying, «We are implementing a strategy that will lead to victory in Iraq. And a victory in Iraq will make this country more secure and will help lay the foundation of peace for generations to come». Yet, in fact, three years after the launch of the war that ousted Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein the situation in the country remains complicated and some critics claim that occupation isn't much better than dictatorship.

A press conference in RIA «Novosti» on March 24 was devoted to the situation in Iraq. The leader of the professor league of the Iraqi university, Isam Kyazim AR-RAVI, described his views based on personal lived experience.

According to AR-RAVI, a lot of problems are unsolved. The government isn't attentive to people's necessities. Iraqi people can't feel safe because the hostage-taking, explosions, and vandalism have become common in the country. The Iraqi people still do not have the rights or liberties they were promised three years ago.

AR-RAVI is concerned with the fact that many cultural centers, churches, universities, and libraries have been damaged or completely destroyed. Human rights have been forgotten. The best doctors, professors, writers have been killed during the war, and may people remain in prison without clear accusations.

The United Nations didn't approve invasion, yet the U.S. decided to invade anyway. The third anniversary of the war drew millions of protesters shouting chants «stop the war» all over the world. Despite these calls for peace, seven people were killed in a bomb attack on the anniversary date.

Anna Chukseeva

## ETA terrorists take off weapon

According to the BBC, the militant Basque separatist group ETA, which has killed more than 800 people and terrorized Spanish society for nearly 40 years, on Wednesday announced a permanent cease-fire. Three ETA members later appeared on Basque public television, their heads covered with white veils and black berets, to read the statement to the public. «The objective of our decision is to advance the democratic process», the statements said. «Overcoming the conflict is possible, here and now. That is the desire and the will of ETA».

The president of the Basque region, Juan Jose Ibarretxe, welcomed Eta's declaration as an «enormous relief to all of the Basque society», according to the item from The New York Times. «It opens a window of hope that nobody should close», he said. A spokesman for Batasuna, the banned political wing of Eta, called on the governments of Spain and France to help his party join in the political process. Spain Prime Minister Jose Zapatero has said previously that a permanent end to hostilities by Eta is a condition for any talks. «Now I trust we will be joined in hope», he added. ETA's statement included a call for all of its members to abandon violence, but Spanish government officials said they could not rule out the possibility that splinter groups might ignore the cease-fire. At the same time opposition leader Mariano Rajoy said the ceasefire was a pause and it did not amount to a renunciation of criminal activity.

Artyom Galustyan

## ■ editorial

People  
at struggle

The struggle to live in a free and open society is erupting all over the world presently. From democratic elections in Byelorussia to student protests in France, citizens everywhere are voicing their desires to live life without oppression.

Freedom can be a nebulous word. What one considers liberty, another may consider tyranny. So, what exactly does it mean to be free?

We always hear that knowledge equals freedom, and there is a certain grain of truth to this statement. But at a time when governments around the world are becoming more secretive and less transparent, the hunt for the truth has become increasingly difficult. If the wrong «truth» is presented to the public, than tyranny, instead of freedom, results.

It is the journalist's responsibility to ensure this does not happen. Opening up the avenues of communications between journalists on different continents is imperative to guarantee that the real truth is found and presented to the public. Without trust and cooperation in the communications industry it is impossible for the public to receive an accurate depiction of world events.

From March 17 to March 26, journalism students from Moscow State University hosted students from the University of Washington, Tacoma. Working together, we collaborated to make this newspaper.

People from both Russia and the United States are concerned about the same. Despite of living on different continents and speaking different languages, we face the same problems and can't be indifferent to world events.

One of the most important things nowadays is struggling for freedom. What I mean is freedom as a possibility to make one's own choices and to live in a harmony with oneself without being in contradiction with other people's interests. This may seem to be impossible but, in my firm conviction, we all should strive for it.

In our issue we tried to show our points of view on the present world situation.

In France, students are struggling for their right to get a good job, for the idea of a society with equal rights where students will have the same social guaranties as adults over the age of 26. And, the French Government is making attempts to fight unemployment caused by a surplus working force.

We can't be indifferent to this problem because we are still young specialists and this may affect us too.

Iran is struggling for its right to conduct nuclear research and to be respected in the world political society. Many countries such as the USA, France and Great Britain don't appreciate Iran's initiative because they are afraid of the political instability in the world.

The clash of Western ideals and conservative Muslim perceptions is the main problem in Iraq today. Each side of the conflict wants to spread its own identity to other countries.

Byelorussian opposition is struggling for president's reelection.

These are not the only points of struggle in the world but we felt that at this particular moment in time they were the most significant.

You judge how we accomplished our task.

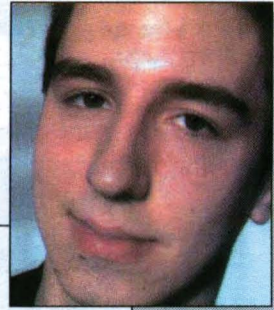
Tatiana Fedorova  
Nick Przybyciel

## ■ huskey voices

Would You Protest  
if you were a French student?

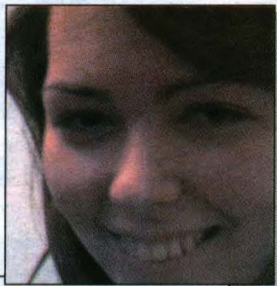
Angela Borikova  
MSU Journalism

«I would never protest at this law, because I feel vainness of the demonstration. In my opinion, a crowd can't really change anything. I think, a french youth will fail to revise government's stand and can't influence amending a bill. It's not 1968 now, everything has changed»



Aleksey Zimin  
MSU Journalism

«I fully appreciate French students, but all same I support a French government. I think, people should take new laws as a matter of course»



Kudinova Ann  
MSU Journalism

«I'm not sure, that I would go to the demonstration, if it were possible. Even if I decided to make a protest at this labor law, I would have fear of the unknown and my safety»



Sergey Avakyan-Rjevsky  
MSU Journalism

«A demonstration is always struggle of ideas. I would protest, because there are intrigue and excitement in it»



Chloe Valette  
MSU Journalism

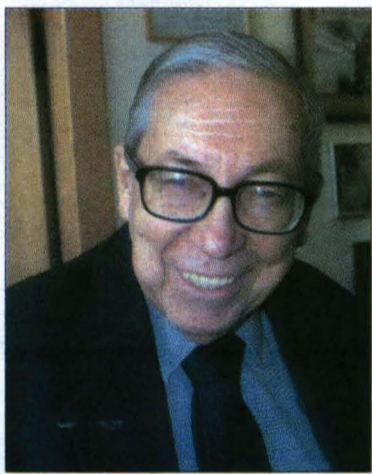
«I would. I'm French and I know not from rumors, French students fear for their future. Therefore they can't be passive to this problem. They must struggle for justice to the end, they must struggle to make ourself heard»



Sergey Nacharov  
MSU Journalism

«Who will assert my rights in my country when people, (I mean politicians) who must do, do not? I have to do it myself. That's why I support French students. If I were one of them, I would doubtless go out. The more especially as students are the very layer of society that's unadapted socially»

## ■ opinions



Yassen Zassoursky, Dean,  
Department of Journalism, MSU

«Assessing contemporary situation in France, I'd like to give a remark about the events that took place 40 years ago. I was in Paris in May 1968, so I remember a lot. Paris today differs from Paris of 1968, at that time there were other ideas, other demands. The protests of youth were not only against the bad educational system, but also against the consumption society, against the superiority of the material values over the spiritual. Now the situation differs: they struggle against the law that may damage all the social system in the country. Of course, there is a reason for protest, but to my mind the lesson is that French government should find new ways of solving the huge problem concerning the challenges of information society that brings unemployment for young people. Would I go in for stikes if I were a French student? I think, I would. It would be really important for me to show that I'm on the side of the people who struggle for their rights. But note: I am against violence.»



Andre Chekh  
Coordinator of the French-Russian  
Center of Journalism

«I absolutely don't support French demonstrators. The previous labor law is not better than the new one. Whatever the government proposes the youth will never be satisfied. Students should solve this problem in cooperation with state authorities and offer their ideas. Instead of this they destroy everything on their way. And I think violence is not justified at all. Personally I studied in France and I know what difficulties young people face. You know it's always difficult to start your career and find your place in society when you're young.

When I was a student, I participated in protests several times. And I did it only in case of really important issues—Iraqi war or nuclear weapon testing. I consider this problem not to be as big as the previous ones. France has always been a country with a developed sense of freedom. Demonstrations have always been hold there. And this meeting is just one in the list.»

## ■ letters

«I want to repeat  
the 1968 revolution»

We have received a letter from our colleague Eanna de Chelepretre. A girl from France has sent her impressions of the situation. She participated in student demonstration just two days ago

«Let it be me, who will report it to you. This way the information will be accurate.

To protest—it was the only possible thing to gather all of us together. Students want to attend their classes, to get their diplomas. But not the way the government proposes.

The press and the power just uses this conflict against us. They claim that those who demonstrate are anti-democratic. They persuade some students to attend their classes to reassure their future. Our parents support us and that is the most important fact. 68 universities out of 80 are protesting. At the beginning, we protested against the CPE, but now we want to repeat the May of 1968. We want the revolution. Nothing else. Myself, I

don't believe in any big reforms or changes in the situation. But in fact we are protesting. That means that we are fed up with manipulation of the government. If the university is the vase and the students are the water, I can say now: Water comes out of the vase. It springs out. And, it could deform the government vase.

Some students are arrested. Some are manifesting in front of the police offices. The professors propose the students to work—the salaries don't matter for them.

Anyway the protests are a solution to a problem which can not be prolonged. The left against the right. Actually, I don't find any democracy in France».

Up Against the Wall - DuGénéral! Up Against the Wall - DuGénéral! Up Against the Wall - DuGénéral!

## Show Solidarity with the French Revolution - 1968!!

Millions of French workers, peasants and students have led the French workers and peasants' movement that the country they're in and have to build over many generations by rights belongs to them - a NUT to the small class of millionaire parasites who claim to own it. The struggle against the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie is the French struggle, which the workers and the lower middle class who lived under slavery were forced to fight during the 19th century, struck and seized the factories where they produced the wealth of society.

We want to show our solidarity with the 1968 French Revolution against the French Imperialist ruling class in order to continue to further develop and expose the US Imperialist ruling class which is today sending our veterans to die for their profits in Vietnam. And bring closer the day of the American Revolution against the small clique of capitalists who monopolize our economy and rob the wealth of our society and seek to monopolize it for their own ends.

DEMONSTRATION - Sat. June 1, 12 noon at the  
**French Consulate** 934 21th Ave. - 75th St.

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State Action Against the War  
City East Anti-Imperialist League  
Department of Communications to End the War in Vietnam

### Support the French Workers and Students

Sponsored by: COLUMBIA STUDENT STRIKE COORDINATING COMMITTEE



## Iran

continued from front page

Comments made by the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad calling Israel a «disgraceful blot» that should be «wiped off the map» and further proposals to move Israel from the Middle East to Western Europe have reiterated to many nations how imperative it is to prohibit Tehran from possessing nuclear capabilities. Ahmadinejad's teasing of world superpowers sounds like a man playing with fire, but it is not at all an act of reckless abandon, said Zaytsev: «Iranians are doing everything to distract attention from its nuclear program and make negotiations last as long as possible. Iran is willing to become the only power on the Middle East and a nuclear potential is a key to success».

Of course, Ahmadinejad is not the only person good at rhetoric. George Bush in the State of the Union address proposed peace to Iranian people and told that they are «taken hostage by the small group of clerics», but it will be over when democracy comes. It seems like a big propaganda campaign has begun and its aim is to prepare American and international society for the possible operation against Iran. Deterrent rule of ayatollahs, games with a nuclear bomb and enslaved people dreaming of democratic standards—this picture feels like a *deja vu*. Dictatorship and weapons—for America it's an ultimate justification for invasion and Iraq is a best example.

Any increase of troops in the Middle East further demonstrates Washington's imperialist intentions, Zaytsev said. Since Iran has staunchly asserted its right as a sovereign nation to control all stages of the nuclear production process and diplomacy remains stalled, the threat of military action is a realistic possibility, he said.

## The anniversary of Iraq war



Three years after the invasion of US forces in Iraq this war remains one of the main issues of the political agenda. Reports on car bombings, insurgency and deaths on both sides constantly appear on the news pages. The desperate efforts to maintain stability in Iraq appear to be in vain. This year the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the conflict provided a lot of analysis and comments in the world press. Each newspaper found its own angle of approach, but on the whole, all the newspapers showed pessimism on the problem.

The *Guardian* issued a story concerning the anti-war marches that took place all over the world during the anniversary days. According to the item, more than 80.000 people joined the protest march in London despite the cold weather. The protestors signed a petition calling for the creation of an international tribunal into Iraq war. The newspaper also mentioned the protests held in New York, Tokyo and Iraq.

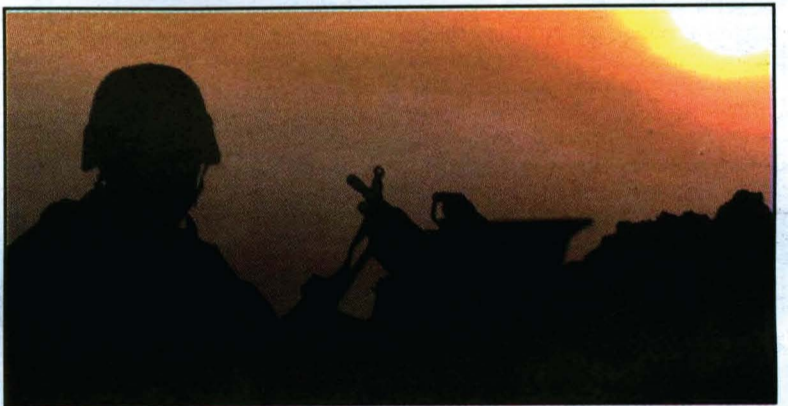
The *Times* featured an article that looks at the books devoted to the Iraqi conflict. The paper emphasized that none of the books issued during the war had anything to do with proper history. According to the author, only George Packer's *The Assassins' Gate* can be considered as valuable, because it tries to reflect the lead-up to the war. Packer researched the way in which different influential groups in America «became persuaded by the case for regime change in Iraq».

The *Nezavisimaya gazeta* marked the anniversary of the war with an article summing up the consequences of the war. The author of the item considers the overthrow of Saddam's regime has become a cause of a prolonged crisis for the US government. The journalist also says that even president Bush was «compelled to admit that there are increasing signs that Iraq is sliding into a quagmire of civil war».

The *New York Times* issued an article concerning the President Bush's speech in Cleveland (Ohio) in which he spoke of the achievements in the Iraq campaign. The paper said that Bush mentioned the northern Iraqi city Tal Afar as an example of success. In 2004 US troops couldn't manage to maintain stability there, but in 2005 the American forces regained control of the city. However, the president acknowledged some failures too: «I wish I could tell you that the progress in Tal Afar was the same in every single part of the country, it's not».

*Liberation* published a news item in which it pointed out that the 3 years long war hasn't brought stability to the country and it is now «on the brink of a Civil war». The newspaper accused US forces of this prolonged crisis and lashed out on the US policy in Iraq. However, the *Liberation* admits that the endless struggle between Muslim Arabs and other Muslim groups is one of the reasons of the instability too.

Diana Koultschitskaya



## France

continued from front page

On March 20, the Prime Minister met with unemployed youths and urged them stop the riots. Conservative President Jacques Chirac called on protesters to begin talks with the government. However, despite these meetings, the CPE remains in tact and the rioting continues. Unions have given the government a Monday evening deadline to withdraw the law, but de Villepin said he would not back down.

Demonstrations started again on March 21 and March 24. More than 400 people were arrested all over the country, approximately 60 were injured. French unions and students have decided to step up their campaign against the CPE by holding a day of strikes and protests on March 28 similar to those held on March 18.

French students believe they can press the government to overturn the controversial jobs plan. However, some people think students are demonstrating simply because France is France: there was no age in this country without revolutions or demonstra-

tions. In addition, not all students are against the CPE. This week more than 200 anti-strike students demonstrated near the historic Sorbonne in central Paris, denouncing the anti-CPE protests and demanding that the campus be re-opened.

«I can understand that some people reject the CPE because they think it is the end of the world in the great liberal conspiracy, but personally I think that an insecure job is better than no job», said Clemence, 21, in the ICQ on the internet.

At the same time, students worry not only about relations with employers but also about life without guarantees. This fear may be realized in April when the law goes into effect. In France, youth who do not have a contract can't get credit, can't rent lodging and can hardly

make a career. Given these circumstances, students could find themselves jobless and homeless. So, they decided to make the first step by walking out into the streets.

Not only is this current situation not good for France right now, but it could have far-reaching ramifications, including effecting the elections next year. France is destabilized again and it could erupt into widespread violence. Heated debates loom in the run-up to French presidential and legislative elections that will take place in 2007. Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin is expected to take a hard line to appear strong for next year's elections. But, it isn't clear if CPE is able to cure France's economic and social ills. So, now de Villepin is just looking for maneuvers and cabals. On the other hand, the opposition Socialists have vowed to revoke the measure if they return to power.

If we remember 1968, after the strikes, the cabinet resigned and Charles de Gaulle sent in his resignation. But now we are living in 2006, in the times of dialogue and cooperation, and nobody knows what will be written in the history books about the CPE.

Anna Sokolova  
Anna Chukseeva



## May 1968

In May 1968 a general insurrection broke out across France. It quickly began to reach near-revolutionary proportions before being discouraged by the Stalinist oriented French Communist Party, and finally suppressed by the government, which accused the Communists of plotting against the Republic. Some philosophers and historians have argued that the rebellion was the single most important revolutionary event of the 20th century because it wasn't participated in by a lone demographic, such as workers or racial minorities, but was rather a purely popular uprising, superseding ethnic, cultural, age and class boundaries.

It began as a series of student strikes that broke out at a number of universities and high schools in Paris, following confrontations with university administrators and the police. The de Gaulle administration's attempts to quash those strikes by further police action only inflamed the situation further, leading to street battles with the



police in the Latin Quarter, followed by a general strike by students and strikes throughout France by ten million French workers, roughly two-thirds of the French workforce. The protests reached the point that de Gaulle created a military operations headquarters to deal with the unrest, dissolved the National Assembly and called for new parliamentary elections for 23 June 1968.

### Slogans of May '68

Lisez moins, vivez plus  
*Read less, live more*

Soyez realistes, demandez l'impossible  
*Be realistic, ask for the impossible*

Il est interdit d'interdire  
*It is forbidden to forbid*

La revolution est incroyable parce que vraie  
*The revolution is incredible because it's real*

Je suis venu. J'ai vu. J'ai cru  
*I came. I saw. I believed*

Cours, camarade, le vieux monde est derriere toi!  
*Run, comrade, the old world is behind you!*

Le bonheur est une idee neuve  
*Happiness is a new idea*

La poesie est dans la rue  
*Poetry is in the street*

L'alcool tue. Prenez du L.S.D.  
*Alcohol kills. Take LSD*

SEXE : C'est bien, a dit Mao, mais pas trop souvent  
*SEX: It's good, says Mao, but not too often*

Je t'aime! Oh! dites-le avec des pavés!  
*I love you! Oh, say it with cobblestones!*

Travailleurs de tous les pays, amusez-vous!  
*Workers of the world, have fun!*

Pouvoir a l'Imagination  
*Power to imagination*

Dans une societe qui a aboli toute aventure, la seule aventure qui reste est celle d'abolir la societe  
*In a society that has abolished all adventures, the only adventure left is to abolish society*

## world affairs

# A question of standards

## Byelorussia's controversial poll

Lighted candles, music playing from loudspeakers and chanting people. That's how the main square in Minsk looked the last few days. But now it's empty and almost nothing resembles of the protests that took place here. On early Friday morning the riot police dispersed the demonstration and many of the protestors were detained.

After the presidential elections held on March 19 in which incumbent Alexander Lukashenko won a third term this place turned into a tent camp where people came to protest the results of the vote. The protests started on Sunday right after the polls. Nearly 10,000 protestors gathered on the October Square in Minsk. Although their number decreased, 5 days after the start of the demonstrations there were still people determined to stay there despite the cold weather.

On the third day of the rallies the main opposition leader Alexander Milinkovich appealed to the protestors. When he spoke, the lighting on the October Square was shut off and his face was lit only by the TV cameras. Milinkovich declared that he had nothing to do with the organization of the demonstrations and had come only to cheer on his supporters.

However, even at that time there were signs of division in the opposition camp. The question causing the greatest disagreement was: should the protestors continue holding the square. One of the leaders of the Byelorussian opposition Alexander Kozulin proposed the advocates to disperse, while Milinkovich said that he was going to stay with his supporters until the end.

The rallies held in Minsk were not legally sanctioned by the authorities and some people have been arrested during the protest days. For example one of the leaders of the protests, Anatoly Lebedko, received a sentence of 15 days for having organized an unsanctioned protest. The two sons of Milinkovich were among the detainees too, but police released them very fast.

Lukashenko and his team refused to accept the criticism of the elections. He insists, the vote was transparent and fair. In an official appearance on TV, he concluded, the desperate efforts to incite a revolution were in vain. «Despite the unashamed foreign attempts to dictate to us and colossal external pressure, they have failed to break us», said Lukashenko.

The election that aroused so much controversy ended in a landslide victory of the current president. The incumbent received 82 percent of the votes and this fact made some monitoring bodies question the results of the



poll. For example, the OSCE, a main election monitoring organization in Europe, considered the elections to be fraudulent and undemocratic.

The White House condemned the poll as flawed and declared that the run-up to the elections was unfair to the other candidates because Lukashenko received the majority of media coverage. However, Russian observers recognized the elections to be fair and President Vladimir Putin was the first to congratulate Lukashenko on his victory.

In fact, some analysts assume that vote-rigging may not have taken place because the current president is widely supported in different areas of the country, especially by elderly people. On this point, the world press has provided various comments in favor and against this theory.

The opposition forces, however, are still trying to attract attention to their activities and have created several internet sites providing eyewitness reports from the spots where the protest take place. One of these sites called Character 97 has put a photo of the October Square on its front-page with a banner saying: «We want a new one» connected with the elections. On Monday the site covered the things happening on the square, but the number of internet users in Byelorussia is not large.

At the time of publication, it remains unclear whether the great protest planned by the opposition on the 25th of March will take place, but the demonstrators hope to resume the rallies.

Diana Koultschitskaya

## Opinion

**By any measure, Byelorussia's is not a difficult regime to deal with. It doesn't hurl insults around the neighborhood. It doesn't build far-flying missiles. It doesn't threaten its own people. I know this because I grew up there**

But in the modern world it is a habit to criticize Belorussia and its leader—Alexander Lukashenko. They criticize everything that he does from the way he walks and talks to his political agenda. His harshest critics refer to him as a tyrant.

What tyranny do we have to deal with, though, if more than 80% of the electorate voted for him on the elections on the 19th of March? What tyranny do we have to deal with when Russian President Vladimir Putin eagerly adopts Lukashenko's methods in establishing his social programs? How much tyranny do we have when our yearly agricultural harvests are more bountiful than even Russia's harvests?

Yet, at a press-conference the day after the elections, Pavel Borodin, who now represents the allied power of Russia and Byelorussia, claimed the same. So, even if you feel my position cannot be objective because of my ties to Byelorussia, Borodin also supports my position when he makes comments such as:

—Lukashenko has a range of social programs very similar to the prosperous Swiss

socialism. And, what is more important, those programs work.

—He really develops the agriculture.  
—Students' grants, as well as the average level of pension and wages, are higher than in Russia and other post-Soviet countries.  
—Cities and towns are clean and safe.  
And so on.

Let me mark, that Borodin's arguments are based on real facts.

When journalists asked him about the legitimacy of Lukashenko's power and the possibility of the falsification of the elections, Borodin made these statements:

—It is not possible to force the nation to vote. The attendance was perfect. If the nation didn't want Lukashenko re-elected, then they would have voted against him. And all the more, the people will ignore the elections.

—Nobody filled ballot boxes with faked ballot papers.

Is this not enough?

I suppose that Borodin's point of view is not dictated by the fact of allotting financial help to Byelorussia's economics. And, I'm sure that the preponderance of those who participated in the disturbances were students,

unshaped mentally and politically, as well as those who were paid to participate.

It was a fresh election. Lukashenko now can emerge as more of a reformer.

The most serious question is that the image of the country, as well as of its leader, has been systematically discredited in the world's mass media.

For me it seems someone's goal to plunge the country into chaos. Even an artificially created chaos. There are examples of this in the Ukraine and other former Soviet republics.

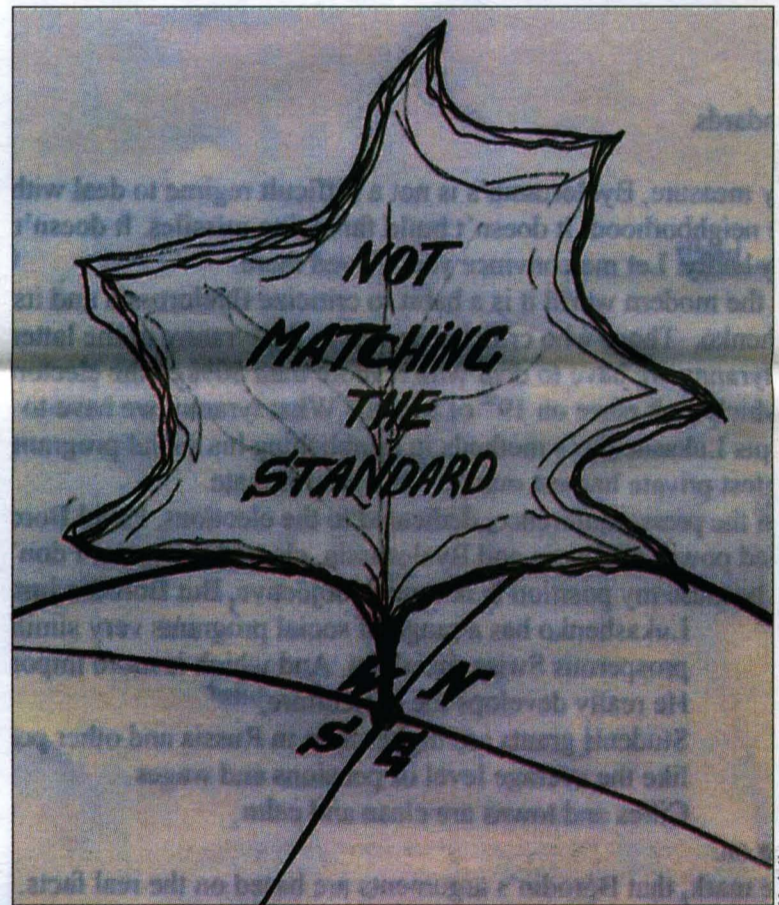
Lukashenko is resisting and suffering as a result. He is not matching the standard.

By nature he prefers small methodical steps to giant leaps and bold radicalism. In foreign policy he also tries to improve his country's standing and weight in the world.

He has started off strong, but his biggest tests are still to come. Perhaps once he has accomplished those bigger tests, his critics will change their minds.

On the 24th of March, the country officials decided to stop the protests. It took policemen 15 minutes to disperse the 150 protestors.

Maria Krupnova

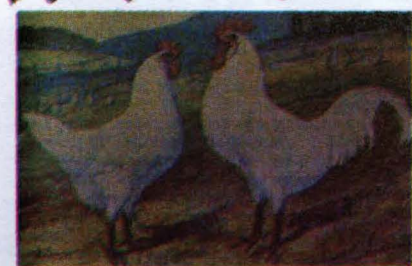
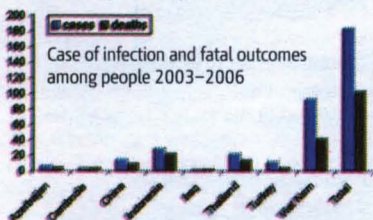


## Development of disease in a bird

Pavel Tomkovich, MSU professor: «There are two migration ways the virus can be transferred by: from western Europe and Africa to Greenland and Northern Canada and a similar way from Asia to North America.

**H5N1** So the chance of transferring the virus of bird influenza is really big»

House birds are highly receptive to the activator of an infection. Typical symptoms of easy respiratory disease are risen plumage and decrease egg-laying qualities. Highly pathogenic cultures of the virus cause basically the heavy form of disease in birds

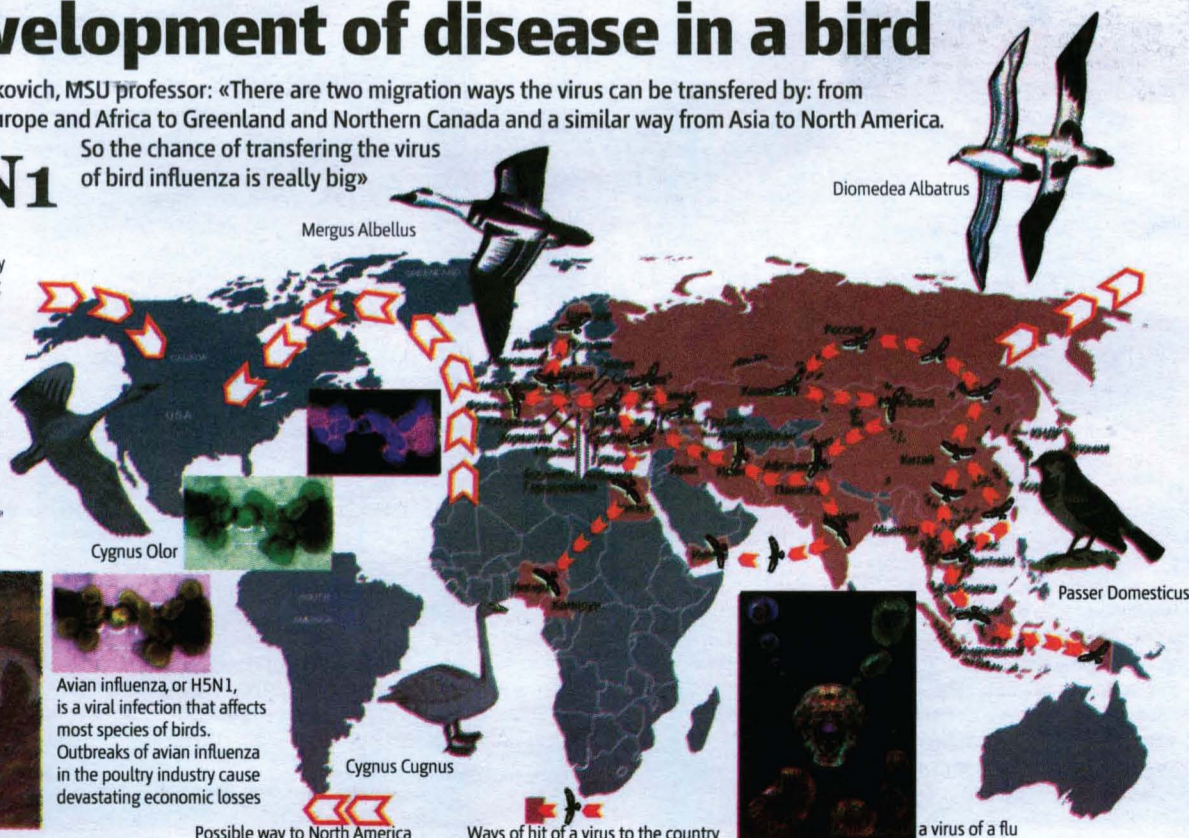


Avian influenza, or H5N1, is a viral infection that affects most species of birds. Outbreaks of avian influenza in the poultry industry cause devastating economic losses

Possible way to North America

Ways of hit a virus to the country

a virus of a flu

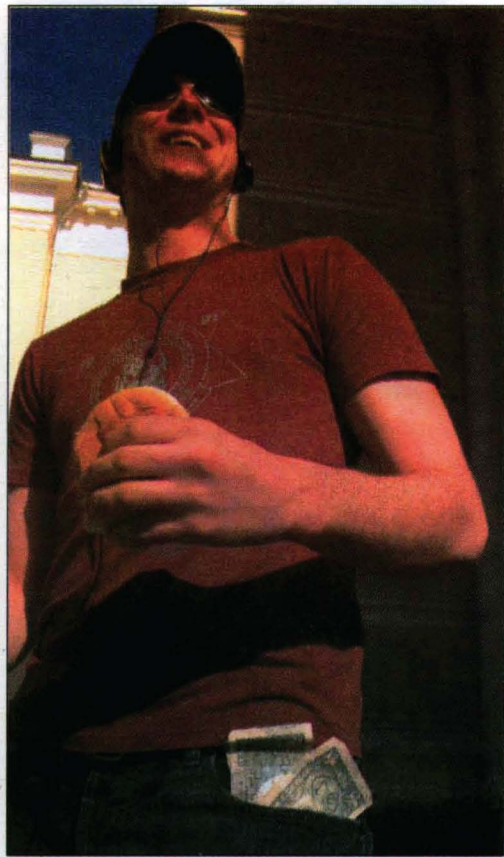


The outbreak of the H5N1 virus, better known as avian influenza, has covered already 37 countries on three continents. The reason is still unknown, but in case of pandemic, the worst UN and World Bank forecasts promise millions of victims and 800 billions dollars loss. What to believe?

The present outbreak started in 2003 in Southeast Asia. In 2005 the virus exceeded its original area, routing Russia, Kazakhstan and some European countries. The first cases of human infection were registered in Hong-Kong in 1997 when half of 18 diseased died. Since that time 193 cases of human infection have been registered, 98 ended with fatal outcome. Most scientists and epidemiologists think that the main infection spreaders are wild migrant birds and, during spring migration, the avian influenza virus will extend to North America. According to chief ornithologist of MSU zoological museum Pavel Tomkovich, «There are quite many species of infected birds from Europe, Asia and Africa, which can fly to America and there infect birds». 37 countries are already infected. Who is next?

Vasily Polynov  
Infographics: Sviatoslav Nekliaev

# Debunking stereotypes



## Americans

### Coca-Cola

Russians believe that Coca-Cola is the most popular drink in America. But in truth, coffee is the drink of choice. Perhaps beer would be the number one option, but you're not allowed to drink beer on the streets (even if you are an adult). So, your choice is a aromatic coffee in a paper cup with choices ranging from Cappuccinos to Americanos to Lattes. Caffeine, trigonellin (a chemical component of coffee), and mineral salt—that's about it! Americans drink coffee on the road to work, at airports, parks, stadiums etc. A boy courting a girl gives her a coffee that she likes. You can find Starbucks everywhere. Other popular coffee places around the University of Washington, Tacoma include The Metro and Cutter's Point. A typical student, for example, drinks 4 to 5 cups per day for an average cost of \$3 for each: so, basic calculations—\$12 per day, \$84 per week, \$336 per month. How do you like it?

### Hamburgers

Yeah, there is no doubt, Americans eat hamburgers, but pizza is much more popular. Why? Well, mainly because it can be eaten cold the next day and can be shared with friends. Try to divide a hamburger! The most frequently ordered pizza is pepperoni. A large pizza costs approximately \$10, making it

We are all inevitably under the power of stereotypes. Americans, for example, think that Russians are voracious creatures, swilling vodka, wearing lots of fur and walking arm-in-arm with white bears. Russians, on the other hand, believe that Americans eat hamburgers at every meal and drink coca-cola all day long (and spend the rest of their time attempting to rule the world). Journalist Ilya Ilyukhin decided to determine the truth about Russians and Americans. Enjoy

not so expensive. If you are a party organizer—order it! Everybody will gorge your pizza, even vegetarians (just be sure to order a pizza without meat). The most common delivery places are Pizza Hut, Papa Jones and Dominos. Besides pizza, people often eat sandwiches, especially at lunch. They make food at home or buy it at Subway or a deli.

### Clothes (baseball caps, jeans, sneakers, T-shirts)

Actually, very many people dress like that (let's not consider it run-of-the-mill). Men usually wear such clothes, while women try to follow the latest fashion trends. And, we must confess that indeed—women have more choices!

### Cellular phones

Almost everyone has a mobile phone. The situation is the same in Russia. Hands-free is especially convenient when driving.

### Player and headphones

Ipod is the most popular mp3-player brand in America. Unfortunately, not so many people in Russia can afford such a wee technical masterpiece. Destiny of the elite, you know.

### Pocket-money

It depends on the student. Many college students live on their own and so don't have a lot of extra spending money. Some students are lucky enough to live at home and get their cash from mom and dad.

### American smile

Not all Americans smile. Though George Sand wrote, that «laughter is a splendid medicine», only imbecile can smile from dusk till dawn. This is just a symbol of benevolent attitude and is reckoned a standard conduct in a society.

### Sunglasses

When sun shines or heat blinds, almost all Americans wear sunglasses—it protects your precious eyes from sun beams. Many people in Russia wear sunglasses, too, but it looks obscure in the metro. As for me, I never noticed the sun underground. Maybe you, huh?

## Russians

### Vodka

In fact, vodka isn't as popular as it may seem. Russians prefer beer, particularly students. It's cheaper, tastier and you won't get drunk too fast. Nevertheless, tastes differ.

### Cap with ear-flaps

The younger generation, women, old people and successful men don't wear caps with ear-flaps. Only odd men of shady appearance do. This is a remnant of Soviet times. Such caps are uncomfortable and you can't put it in your pocket indoors—you got to carry it in hands. It'd be curious to mention, that famous designers like Dior and Cavalli used these caps in their winter collections — huge and exaggerated.

### Valenki (a type of felt boots)

Valenki were designed by Russian peasants about 300 years ago. Soviet soldiers wore valenki in the severe sharp frost during World War Two. Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev respected that footwear, which is made of sheep wool. Now valenki has become fashionable again. The New York Times says that valenki with removable rubber foot galoshes are the last fashion renovation. «If you don't like the height, simply customize them with a matte knife at whim».

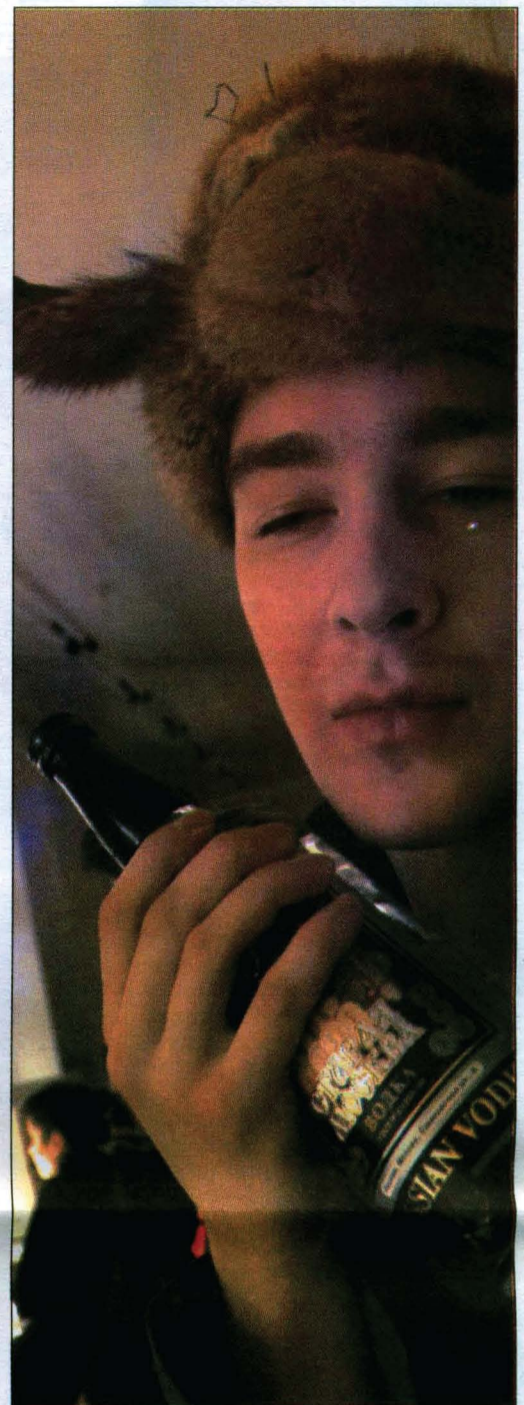
### Old non-fashion clothes

No! No! No! Nobody wears torn shirts and abominable rotten sweaters. Boundaries do erase—nowadays Russians and Americans dress practically the same. Russian girls are ready-made fashion models for catwalks.

### White bears on streets

There are no white bears on streets.

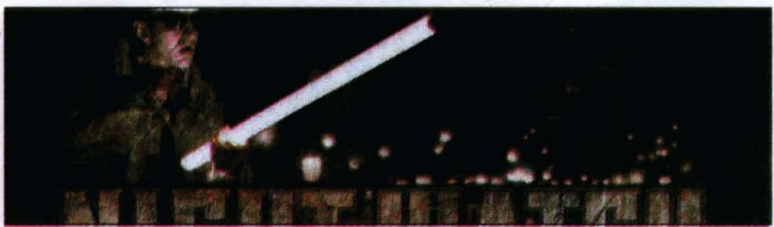
Ilya Ilyukhin



## cinema

### Night Watch: vodka and vampires

«A popcorn movie with a Vodka chaser... A very large Vodka chaser.» This is the description for the Russian film Night Watch that was released in movie theaters across America in February of this year



Night Watch is the first part of a science fiction trilogy based on a book series from Sergei Lukyanenko. Night Watch is a thrilling vampire epic many critics and viewers have compared to The Matrix. Night Watch begins by explaining that eons ago a battle ensued between the dark side and the light side. The leaders in the battle realized that if they continued to fight, all of them would perish. So, a truce was formed. Each side promised not to interfere with a person choice to become light or dark. The light Others patrol at night and the dark Others patrol during the day to keep the truce. The movie then fast forwards to the future. The truce is broken during the Night Watch when a dark Other is found trying to lure a child into a cave. A new war is started over this child who, according to prophecy, will change the entire world.

The movie is mostly computer generated and contains a great deal of special effects. These effects serve to draw the viewer into the scenes. Some critics claim that these graphics do not live up to Hollywood standards. For example, Tom Lang from Detroit News wrote: «Unfortunately, by Hollywood standards, Night Watch is about three Wookies and two Neos short of convincing.

All the gobbledegook is in place, but the special effects are minimal and somewhat frustrating».

In America the reviews for the movie were conflicted. While some critics criticized the movie for weak visual effects and a convoluted plot. On the other hand, some critics really liked the movie and praised the Russian cast and crew for producing one of the best movies ever. Urban Cinefile critiqued Night Watch by saying, «The filmmaking is highly seductive, from the stylish visual flourishes right down to the creative graphic treatment of the subtitles.»

Timur Bekmambetov directed the movie on a \$4 million budget but most reviews state the movie looks much more expensive. Flimcritic.com boasted «Considering that Night Watch is a Russian film shot for reportedly about \$5 million, it looks absolutely fantastic».

The second trilogy Day Watch is expected to release in America sometime during 2006; it was already released in Russia. The third trilogy Dusk Watch has no tentative release date at this time.

Melinda Andrews

### Brokeback Mountain: breaking the myths

It has been called «the most revolutionary movie of the year» and «unmissable and unforgettable». Brokeback Mountain directed by Ang Lee has become a sensation in the cinema world. On March, 16 the premiere of Brokeback Mountain took place in Russia. Now the Russian audience has a chance to appreciate the film. In Russia, Brokeback Mountain has been written and talked about in the press and on the street. A lot of myths about the film now exist in our country

#### Myth #1: Brokeback Mountain is a western

In fact, it's not! If you want to find traditional elements of a western (a lot of shooting, drunk cowboys who fight in saloons, etc.), you'll be disappointed. In reality, Brokeback Mountain presents itself more like a traditional melodrama with a surprise. Instead of a man and woman in a relationship, the movie presents the romantic relationship between two men.

The plot is simple. In 1963, Ennis and Jack meet on a ranch in Wyoming where they work as shepherds. They spend a summer on Brokeback Mountain and, thus, the mountain becomes the symbol of their love and the place where they continue to meet for the next 20 years. The first and the last meetings of the main characters happens on Brokeback Mountain.

The film is really touching. It illustrates that no matter if people are of the same or the opposite sex, they love and suffer in the same ways.

Several points make Brokeback Mountain a film really worth seeing. First of all, the film is full of wonderful, breathtaking landscapes. The movie was filmed in Alberta in the Canadian Rockies. You won't be able to take your eyes off the wide-open spaces and sky on the screen.

Another point is the excellent cast. Heath Ledger (Ennis Del Mar) and Jake Gyllenhaal (Jack Twist) play with passion and make us believe in what we see on the screen.

According to a reviewer from The New York Times, «Heath Ledger disappears beneath the skin of his character.» This statement is true. A famous Spanish writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez said: «You can miss a man who is near you only if you know that you'll never be able to be together.»

#### Myth #2: In Russia Brokeback Mountain can only be shown at night

That is not true. The movie is showing in almost every cinema hall in Moscow. You can watch it anytime and anywhere you like. The make up audience is very different. You can't imagine how surprised I was when I met two old women sitting next to me in the cinema hall.

The fact is that such a movie would never be filmed in Russia. That is why it seems quite strange and unusual to our audience. We have never paid attention to the problem of homosexual relationships. People's attitude toward such relationships is very different in Russia than in the U.S. Many Russian people have a negative attitude toward homosexual couples and find their relationships abnormal. A lot of Russians just can't get used to the fact that homosexual relationships have

become a part of the society. So, in our country homosexual relationships are hidden and people try to pretend that these relationship do not exist here.

In the U.S., people's attitude toward the issue is much more open. So, it is quite obvious why Brokeback Mountain was produced in the U.S. but not in Russia. What's most interesting, though, is that the film is being shown here and is attracting an audience.

**Myth #3: Brokeback Mountain didn't get Oscar for Best Picture because it had received too many other awards. So, the Academy simply didn't want everyone's expectations to come true**

The director of the film, Ang Lee, decided to play a postmodern game by mixing two different categories: manly cowboys and gay men. So, the topic of homosexuality presented in a cowboy genre might have been too controversial for some.

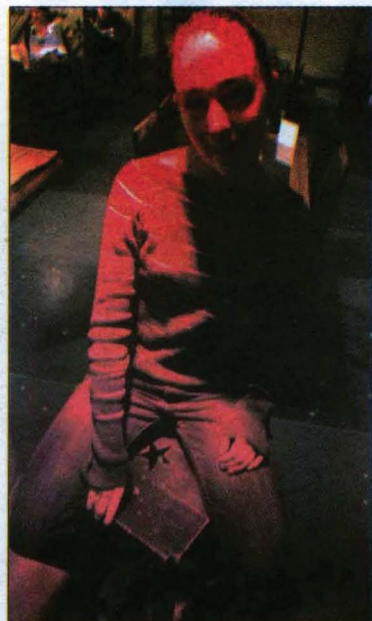
When the members of Academy didn't announce Brokeback Mountain as Best Picture, many Americans people weren't surprised, although most Europeans thought the movie would definitely win. However, the movie should be seen not as a gay cowboy film but as story about loneliness and pain, similar to movies such as «Pride & Prejudice», «Casablanca», and «The English Patient»

Ang Lee once again, after his «Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon», reveals to us is that the world is full of human suffering and natural beauty.

Irina Filatova  
Alexander Zubkoff

## lifestyle

# What the FAQ



Olga Kuracheva

On page five of this special issue, the Russian and American editors discuss stereotypes they hold about each other's culture. It's interesting to know how the Americans imagine a typical Russian student and how the Russians imagine a typical American one. But, what about the lifestyle outside of the university? In what ways do the students spend their free time? The Russian students treated the Americans to several exciting days and nights out on the town in Moscow. Let's go to a few of those clubs that the Russian students like the best and find out what they do there.

These clubs are kinds of places where people can not only eat tasty food, but also read good books, listen to pleasant music and communicate with interesting people. Everybody must like a friendly atmosphere, nice waiters and waitresses and comfortable, laid back surroundings. And, the prices in these clubs are affordable for students. Of course, the low prices are very important for us. Each of these places are similar, but each one has its own features and interesting moments.

«Bilingua», for example, unlike other places in Moscow, is on the second floor. Usually such clubs are located in basements. But in «Bilingua» you have an opportunity to see daylight. Sometimes you can even imagine that you are flying through the sky. They also have built a balcony inside the club, intensifying the effect.

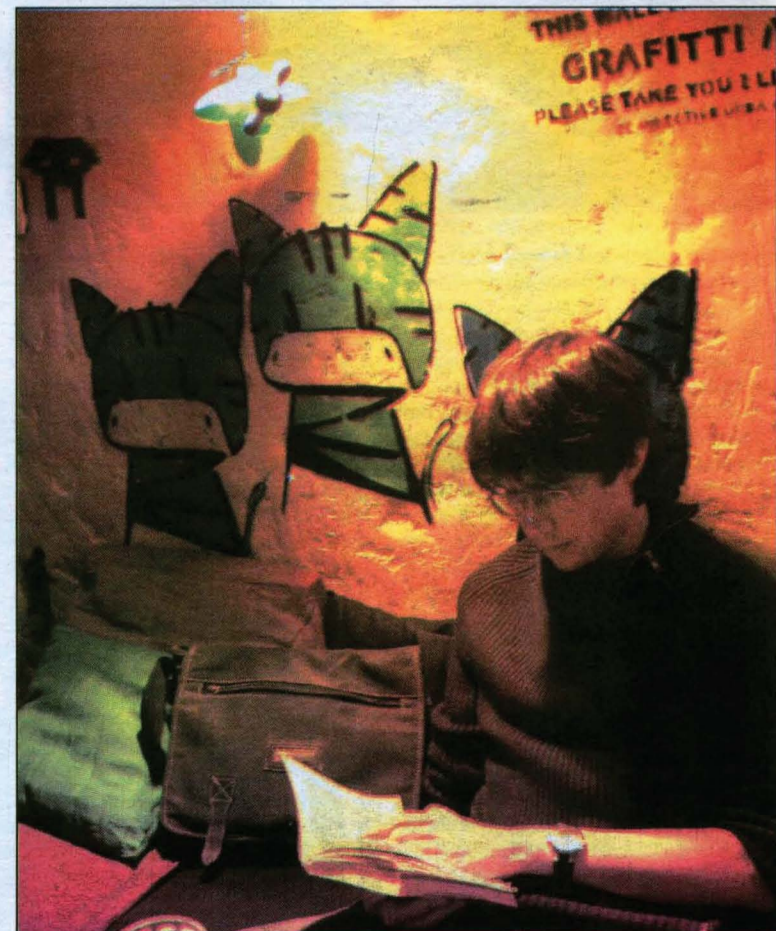
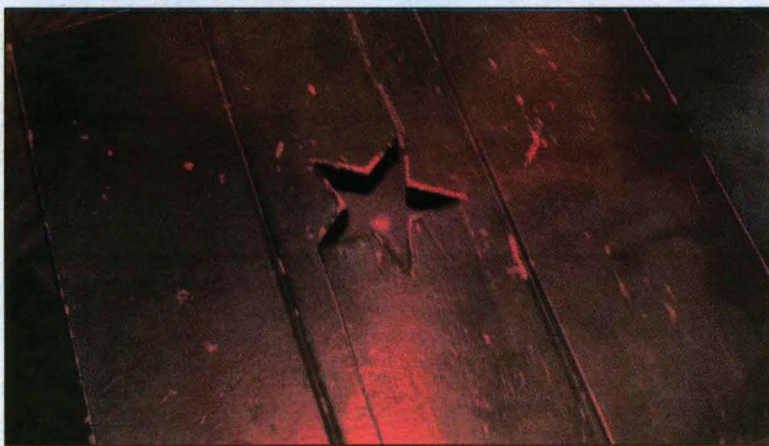
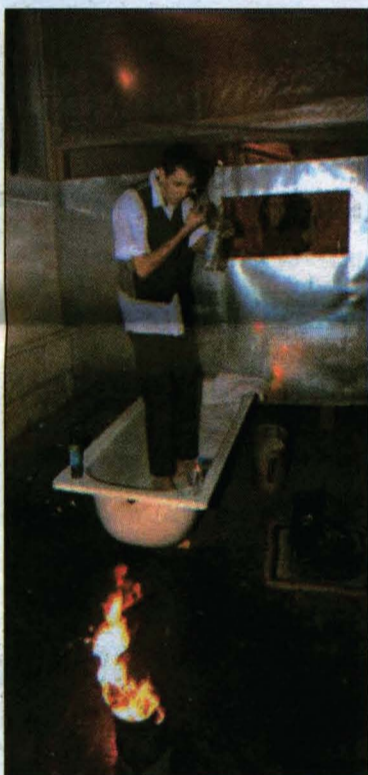
«FAQ-cafe» is not far from our department, so we often go there to have lunch after classes. To tell the truth, we usually call it not F-A-Q, but just «f\*ck-cafe». It's shorter. There are four «rooms» there: «a dining-room», «a bedroom», «a children's room» and «a study». Each of these rooms suits its name. For example, there is a real bed in the «bed-room».

In «Apshu» you can find not only a bed, but also a bath. Sometimes people call this place «the club with the bath». There is a system of keys there. If you are a member of club «Apshu», you can open the door just using your key. Such a way you can visit closed parties.

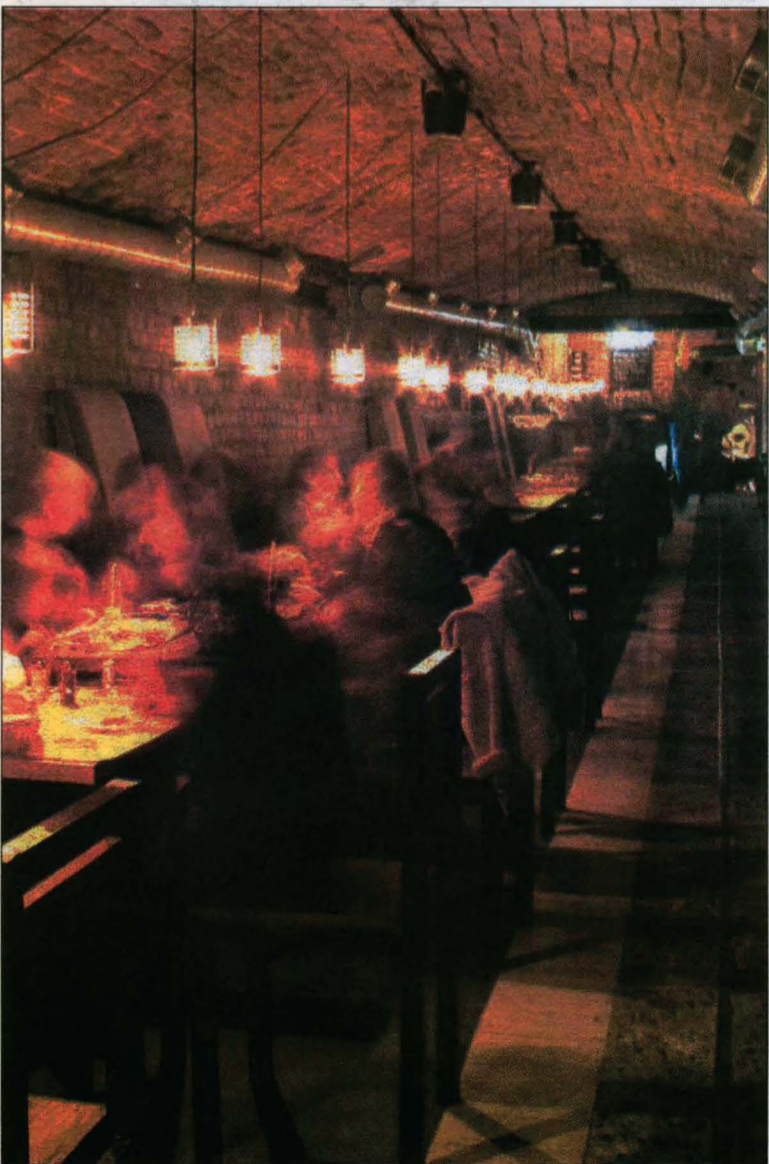
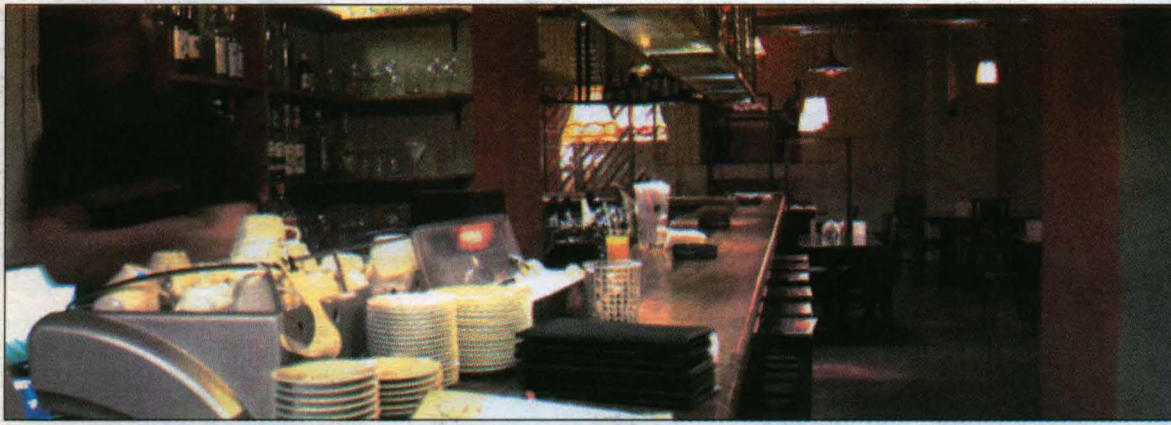
«Podmoskovye» is a new place. The word «Podmoskovye» means «the area around Moscow», but in this case it means that it is located in the basement under the city. There are three halls with the main hall design to look like Moscow's underground Metro system. The history of this cafe/club comes in two versions. The first version explains that it was the basement of the Russian Academy of the Theater Art GITIS. The other version claims that it was a cellar where people kept cabbage. Both of these versions are really interesting, aren't they?

The last place on our tour today is club «Zhest'». If we translate it into English, we'll get the word «tin». But nowadays, we say this word when we want to express our emotions. It usually means that we don't like the situation. For example, you can say: «I am to write fifteen articles by tomorrow. Zhest'». Young people like this word, and the club personifies the feelings of Russian youth. The furniture is unique and the prices are student friendly. «Zhest'» opened just some months ago and it's not that popular as «FAQ-cafe» or «Apshu» yet, but there is no doubt that time will change this.

Russian students like these clubs, and our American guests liked them, too. Thank you for your attention and good luck. See you there ;)



# to do in Moscow



[www.bilinguaclub.ru](http://www.bilinguaclub.ru)

[www.faqcafe.ru](http://www.faqcafe.ru)

[www.apshu.ru](http://www.apshu.ru)

[www.podclub.ru](http://www.podclub.ru)

[www.zhst.ru](http://www.zhst.ru)



# Our man in Torino

Yuri Dud is a student of the Moscow State University. At the same time, he is a qualified journalist who has been working in the industry for six years. Now Yuri is working for «Izvestia», a famous Russian newspaper. This February Yuri was sent to Torino to cover the Olympic Games. Now back in Moscow, Yuri talks with reporter Julia Klimova about his experiences at the Olympic Games



**Julia:** What task did the editorial staff give you?

**Yuri:** I had to live in the mountains and write about skiing, biathlon, luge and bobsleigh.

**J:** Who wrote about the competitions in other kinds of sports?

**Y:** I wasn't the only journalist of «Izvestia» sent to Torino. I went and lived there with my colleague—Vladimir Raush. His task was to write about competitions that took place in the city: ice hockey, figure skating and short-track.

**J:** Did you get the accreditation (approval to be a reporter at the Olympics) easily?

**Y:** Well, we handed in an application to the Olympic Committee of Russian Federation last year, in summer. Moreover, «Izvestia» is a respected newspaper. So, we didn't have many difficulties with getting accreditations for two journalists.

**J:** How often did you have to send your materials to the newspaper?

**Y:** I had to do it at least five times a week. Sometimes I had to send two articles a day!

**J:** How did you send them?

**Y:** Of course, I sent them by Internet (in my telephone and in lap-top).

**J:** Where did you live?

**Y:** I didn't live in the very city of Torino. I lived 100 kilometers from it in a small settlement called Klavier. The frontier of France was almost one km from the place where I lived.

**J:** Did you go to Torino? What did you see there, except the competitions?

**Y:** In general, I spent only 10 hours in Torino. I had been there two times. The first was when I watched the ice hockey semifinal between Russia and Finland and the second was when I went to the Milan airport to get on the plane. I didn't have an opportunity to do anything except work...

**J:** Did you like the places you visited?

**Y:** When it comes to the place... I can't say that I liked Klavier very much. It is very small, only 200 people live there. The mountains were extremely boring and I started counting the days that I had to spend there, quite early. It's said that Torino was boring, too. I believed this after I had spent some time there. And, I'd like to say something about food: it wasn't good enough. I was really fed up with soups, pizzas, pastas and lasagnas. I can say, I wanted some more meat!

**J:** Do you speak Italian? If not, how could you communicate with people?

**Y:** In Italian, I know only two phrases—«buon giorno» («hello») and «va bene» («everything is OK»). Gesticulation helped me. However, I speak Spanish and English. In Italy at least one in ten people understand Spanish and one in twenty speak English.

**J:** Did you meet Russian spectators at the Olympic Games?

**Y:** Oh, there were crowds of Russians. They were silent when sober. Although on the whole, people were quite serious. Only the rich could afford going to the Olympic Games.

**J:** Did you get/buy souvenirs?

**Y:** I got the backpack with small presents: they were given to all journalists. Souvenirs were the biggest disappointment of the trip. With three days of the Olympic Games left, I went to Torino to buy a couple of «Cheburashkas»—plush eared creatures—but there were not any for sale.

**J:** ... and what was the most astonishing impression?

**Y:** Well, the most striking impression I got was when I saw carabinieri (Italian policemen) throwing snowballs after one of the skiing competitions. And, in conclusion I'd like to say that if in Italy even policemen can have fun in such simple ways, our country has something to learn from it.

Julia Klimova

## Beyond all limits



After last month's Olympic Games, the Italian city of Turin hosted the 2006 Paralympics, which ended March 19. These were the first Paralympic Winter Games to be held in Italy. 486 athletes from 39 countries participated in the competitions, 385 male and 101 female.

The Paralympic mascot's name is Aster: it has the shape, color, structure and lightness of a snowflake, and is the symbol of the Paralympic Winter Games of Turin 2006, representing its spirit by exalting the participants' athletic results rather than their disabilities. Looking happy and cute, Aster is considered to be loved by children all over the world.

On March 10th the IX Paralympic Winter Games were opened with an unforgettable ceremony that involved 25,000 spectators in the stadium and millions of television viewers all over the world. «Overcoming all barriers and limits» was the guiding concept of the show. It presented the Paralympic athletes—people who are constantly trying to improve themselves and to eliminate prejudices—as real heroes. The evening's most powerful symbol might have been Silvia Battaglio, an 11-year-old blind girl who lit the Games' flame.

Tiziana Nasi, president of the Paralympic Organizing Committee, said the spirit of the Paralympics must extend past the Games. «Together we must strive to ensure that the Paralympics are not simply a once in a while event», she said. «Attention to sport and athletes with a disability, consideration for people with a disability, must be kept alive 365 days a year».

The Russian national team won both the final rank and the unofficial competition in total amount of medals: 13 gold, 13 silver and 7 bronze awards. All of these medals came in the biathlon and cross-country skiing.

In the final rank, Germany was second with 8 golds, and Ukraine was third, with a total of 7 gold medals. The USA took 5th place by getting 5 gold, 2 silver and 3 bronze medals.

Athletes with disabilities competed in 5 disciplines: alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, biathlon, ice sledge hockey and wheelchair curling. The last one is a new sport that has made its debut in Turin.

According to the official Turin Paralympic Games site, about 250,000 spectators were watching the competitions during those 10 days live and more than 350 million on TV.

The Paralympics ended on March 19 with a solemn ceremony. The baton was handed over to Vancouver 2010.

Olympic style games for athletes with a disability were organized for the first time in Rome in 1960. In Toronto in 1976, other disability groups were added and the idea of merging together different disability groups for international sport competitions was born. In the same year, the first Paralympic Winter Games took place in Sweden.

Today, the Paralympics are elite sporting events for athletes from six different disability groups.

Tatiana Fedorova

# Two worlds of card games

Emerging from the seedy underbelly of American society, a decades-old card game has grabbed mainstream America's attention in recent years. This game, which was once played exclusively by roughnecks in smoky back-alley card rooms, has been given a makeover by savvy television executives and is now a pop culture phenomenon.

Texas holdem, a type of poker that relies heavily on luck rather than skill, is reshaping American society—and not necessarily for the better.

ESPN, an American sports television channel, has been the main catalyst in Texas holdem's growth. Since they begun broadcasting The World Series of Poker, the popularity of the game raged across the United States and it is beginning to take hold overseas.

Normal Joe-type players have won both fame and multi-million dollar jackpots in the series. From slow talking dusty cowboys to fashionably chic Armenians with wry senses of humor, the players are accessible to nearly anyone watching the series. Television viewers across America find themselves mesmerized as the cards get flipped: one card can often determine whether their favorite player goes bust or moves on to the next round.

Capitalizing on the popularity of the game, the Internet has turned the already large online gambling community into a multi-billion dollar industry. Now anyone

who has his interest peaked by The World Series of Poker can simply go online and play in a virtual card room.

And it's not just internet entrepreneurs that are exploiting the popularity of Texas holdem. In states with relaxed gambling laws, card rooms are springing up everywhere. In Tacoma, Wash., casinos and card rooms advertising Texas holdem tournaments dominate the landscape. It may not be a stretch to say that it is easier to find a place to play poker in Tacoma than it is to find a place to eat.

With the combination of accessibility and popularity, Texas holdem presents an immense threat to American society. While ESPN illustrates the glamorous side of the game—the tournament finals are often held in posh casinos—they neglect to show the vast reality of gambling's effects. They don't show the man losing his family's food and rent money in order to make a quick dollar.

They don't show the abject poverty and squalor that results from having a gambling addiction.

They don't show the alcoholism and violence that is so prevalent in the gambling world.

What they do show is an illusion: and it is the pursuit of that illusion can often turn into a real-life nightmare for those who don't realize the consequences of gambling.

Nick Przybyciel



**D**URING Soviet times, all forms of gambling were prohibited. But people would gamble anyway, and they preferred to play card games. Preference and Whist were among the most popular. These traditional Russian games have been popular with the nobility since the end of the 18th century. These sophisticated games have complicated rules. In order to win, you had not only to remember the rules but also to be able to calculate proficiently and be lucky as well.

The rise of democracy in Russia has brought profound changes into every sphere of social life including gambling, which has been legalized. Today, numerous exclusive

clubs have sprung up where dedicated players combine rest and luxury with the excitement of their favorite card games. The card game Preference is popular mostly among those with an exceptional intellect. One game can last about 6 hours, so they will spend nights and days at the card tables. Tournaments are held regularly among professional players.

Most Russians enjoy playing cards for fun. There are over 60 easy games with simple rules and funny names such as «The Fool», «The Billy-Goat», and «The Drunkard». You win if you get of all your cards.

As for poker, although, it used to be played in the 19th century, it is now growing quickly in popularity. Numerous professional tournaments, which can be attributed to Western casinos, have mushroomed all over the country. The first all-Russian poker tournament was held in June 2005.

It's worth nothing that in the 1990s most casinos were frequented only by people with large amounts of money. But, as the living standards began to rise at the turn of the millennium, the situation with poker has dramatically changed. Casinos have become more accessible for common people.

The Internet also has increased access to poker clubs where one can bet by credit cards in the Russian section of the internet.

Gregory Ignatov

Publication supervisors:

Dr. Maria Lukina, MSU  
Dr. Chris Demaske, UWT

Information support:

ITAR-TASS photo, Reuters

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Produced by: Nelly Akhmetova (MSU), Melinda Andrews (UWT), Andrey Baranov (MSU), Anna Chukseeva (MSU), Tatiana Fedorova (editor-in-chief) (MSU), Ira Filatova (MSU), Artyom Galustyan (MSU), Grigory Ignatov (MSU), Ilya Ilyukhin (MSU), Julia Klimova (MSU), Maria Krupnova (MSU), Diana Kulchitskaya (MSU), Olga Kuracheva (MSU), Anna Sokolova (MSU), Nick Przybyciel (UWT), Sasha Zubkoff (MSU)

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