

SPONTANEOUS ACTION WILL SAVE MOSCOW



SERGEY MINAEV is a Russian businessman, publicist, radio- and TV host, and producer of the TV program 'Honest Monday' (NTV Channel). He has also written several novels, including 'Spiritless. A story about an unreal man' (2006)
Exclusively for RJ

I actually liked the address of public activist Marat Gelman and his co-presenters at the Public Chamber meeting concerning the General Plan for the Reconstruction of Moscow. It is indeed a rare occasion when a number of people have really sounded off on their resentment and allowed themselves to tell Moscow's Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov 'No, we do not want things to happen in this way'. This could even develop into a real opposition in the case that a large number of people were to join him, if the Internet were to be used to this end, and if a range of civil protests were to be organised including a letter writing campaign to the Russian President. It is important to make it clear that 'We Muscovites do not want to live in a city like this'. Just maybe, this approach may have some effect.

Here, I am not referring to marginal organisations either; I am talking about ordinary citizens. **I am Sergey Minayev, a fourth-generation Muscovite.** I have no idea to which generation of Muscovites Yuriy Luzhkov belongs. There is a constant impression that Moscow bureaucrats and inhabitants somehow seem to live in different cities. This process has developed against the background of silent non-resistance on the part of the citizenry. On the one hand, this can be

explained by the fact that the majority of the inhabitants of the country's capital do not actually care much about how Moscow is going to look in the next decade. This is mainly due to the fact that they have come here from other cities and to the reality that nothing solid connects them to Moscow, other than the apartments that they rent and their respective jobs. On the other hand, those who would like to change something, are limited to helpless gestures as they simply have no chance of forcing their way through the 'dragon's teeth' posed by bureaucrats and businessmen.

The only way that it may be possible to mount a struggle is through spontaneous action. At the same time, such actions cannot keep up for a very long time. These actions work according to the principle of 'we came and we conquered' and, even then, such instances only occur from time to time. In this context, I could go on and on about the problems that Moscow now faces. These issues start with the problem of illegal and uncontrolled migration which has been laid at the feet of businessmen (for some reason, nobody tends to lay blame on city authorities) and extends to problems regarding the city's traffic congestion (and beyond). Everybody has had quite enough of it. ■

THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION HAS COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN ABOUT LAW AND MORALS



DMITRY BYKOV is a Russian writer, journalist, poet, film critic and author. He has written a prize-winning biography of Boris Pasternak and a number of novels dedicated to Russian history and modern times, including ZhD (published in 2006, this novel won the Strugatsky International Literature Prize in 2007), a novel about mysterious natives of Russia that do not fight against their two main invaders but instead allow them to invade perpetually and therefore destroy each other
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I think that the citizens of Russian metropolitan cities such as Moscow or St Petersburg cannot play a role in the governance of their cities since there is no mechanism for legal feedback. It is possible that this situation may change in the future; it depends only on the extent of the citizens' determination.

In the case of the predominance of bureaucracy, when business and bureaucracy get out of control and threaten the interests and well-being of the citizens, either highly motivated people (who are really interested in solving the problem) or the town madmen become the vanguard of urban resistance. It is very difficult to tell them from one another, and besides, these two groups often overlap. Unfortunately, there is no way to be able to pick out 'passionaries' (super-activists) and it is this group only that solves the issues.

Experience shows that the representatives of the intellectual class are mostly egocentric and concerned only with either their personal security or reputation, and shrink away in the face of the first signs of difficulties. There are very few exceptions; otherwise, as Solzhenitsyn said, 'the

history of Russia would have been different.'

Is it possible that the intellectual class could form a political platform on a corporate basis? I do not think it is. I do not even understand what the intellectual class looks like today and what this notion means. Nominally, myself and any of my opponents from the Russian nationalists or military imperialists belong to the same intellectual class, but in fact we do not greet each other. I am afraid that the class approach will not work here, and we have no common corporate interests.

As for securing a historical legacy, will the Moscow general redevelopment plan, club system (lacking in most Russian cities and towns), or maintaining of historical buildings really interest and engage the population of a country that has completely forgotten the very idea of law, morals, the past and the future? Will preserving historical buildings really be able to change this situation anyway? ■