



Two respected Americans meet with rising-star Russian diplomat in D.C.

Parties discuss the use of non-political, cross-cultural initiatives to reduce tensions.



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The greatest victories sometimes come in the darkest moments according to three professionally accomplished men--two American, one Russian--from different career disciplines, at a first-of-its-kind meeting at the Russian Cultural Centre in Washington D.C.

“It’s pretty simple, yet immensely complex. We believe the world could be an better place for all, if the two former allies, now at odds, used their assets collectively and positively,” said recently retired General Peter Zwack; best-selling author and cultural activist, M.G. Crisci; and First Secretary Oleg Zhiganov, recently appointed Director of the Russian Cultural Centre in Washington D.C., and one of the Russian Federation’s bright new diplomatic faces.

The three men talked of their self-styled mission: to identify, create and implement world-class apolitical cultural initiatives with the help and support of citizens, companies, and organizations from both America and Russia. Activities which they believe that can act as a catalyst towards getting two former allies, now out of step with each other, to begin the long road back to mutual trust and understanding. “We are united in the belief that we need to separate the benefits of improved cultural understanding from baggage-laden political rhetoric,” said Crisci. “We hope that continued expansion of some or all of our current initiatives, will act as a working model for like-minded individuals willing to take the longer view.”

During their round table discussion, which also included, nationally-recognized businessman, James Martin, the group reviewed the status of a diverse group of cultural assets (including books, speeches, museum exhibitions, photographic exhibits, and social media activities) created with the help of accomplished Russian and American counterparts, and funded by Mr. Crisci and his team. Their goal: generate strategies to expand awareness and exposure of these initiatives as proof of concept that Russians and Americans can establish an environment of mutual trust.

The group also was introduced to a first-ever Russian-American cinematic joint venture, a screenplay, entitled, *The White Lily*, inspired by his best-selling historical fiction, *Call Sign, White Lily*. The screenplay, in development for over a year, was co-written by



(l-r) General Peter Zwack (Retired, Defense U.S. Attaché, Moscow); M.G. Crisci, Best-Selling American Author & Cultural Activist; Oleg Zhiganov, First Secretary, Russian Embassy, Washington D.C.

Crisci and one of Russia’s most respected, award-winning, writer-director-producers, Vladimir Alenikov. During his 30+ year career, Mr. Alenikov has written, produced and/or directed films which have gathered over 60 international cinematic awards.

“The movie is the bittersweet tale of great female flying hero from Moscow, Lilia Litvyak, who died tragically over the Eastern Ukraine at only 21 after completing 268 missions and recording 15 solo kills, records which still stand today,” said Alenikov from his Moscow offices. “Our goal was to create a melodrama of epic proportions. I believed we accomplished goal. But, perhaps more importantly, working together in both California and Moscow we came to understand and trust each other. As we begin the process of seeking film financing, I can say proudly Mr. Crisci is now *мой друг* (my friend).”

“At the moment,” said General Zwack, “Mr. Putin’s truculence is not making things easy, politically, culturally or militarily.” But, according to Zhiganov, “the Crisci initiatives, provide an initial group of innovative assets that have the potential to inform, educate and entertain generations of people around the world. In fact, the Federation has formally endorsed Mr. Crisci’s passion and commitment to bring both countries culturally closer.”