

# 7 DAYS IN RUSSIA

THE ADVENTURES OF ONE AMERICAN IN TODAY'S FEDERATION



WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY

M.G. Crisci



**HELLO**

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**"NO MAN IS AN ISLAND, ENTIRE OF HIMSELF."**

**"- JOHN DONNE, 1624**

Yury Zaitsev  
and Galina  
Komissarova  
at the Russian  
Cultural Centre in  
Washington D.C.



When one undertakes an ambitious project into uncharted waters, it is rarely successful, without the help of others. So it was with *Seven Days in Russia*. The companies and organizations listed below provided access, support, advice and consul.

There were also many individual citizens, mostly Russian, who wished you to know more about their contry with the hope of bringing a better understanding between our two countries. People like Yelena Sivlop, Valentin Supanov PhD., Vera Slovenia, Valentina Vaschenko, Genadii Kuzbetsov, Elena Lavinskaya, Boris Sapunov, PhD., Lyudmila Agafejva, Artem Zagorodnov, Irina Dunkova, Michael Zagoutov, Michael Novakhov, Lloyd Costly, Esq, Gregory Gregarin, Ekaterina Doubrovina, M.D., Fred B. Tarter, Olga Guitchounts, Anja Litvak, and most of all my dear friends and supporters, Yury Zaitsev, Director, Rossotrudnichestvo, and his wife, Galina Komissarova, PhD. I thank them all.



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(Russian Cultural Centre  
Worldwide)



Anomalia News Magazine



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## DEAR READER,

My name is Dr. Valentin Sapunov. I am a professor of Biology in St. Petersburg, Russia. Since part of my life has been devoted to studying the evolution of physiological genetics, I am naturally interested in human nature. Recently, I visited the United States where I became certain that Americans of all generations want to know the truth about Russia.

This spring, I visited the U.S. city of Memphis which housed a building called “The Pyramid.” Despite the name, it has nothing to do with Egypt. My informal research suggested the city founders were heavy readers of historical novels. They decided that the area of the Nile near the city of Ginza, Egypt, looked like Memphis, Tennessee, where the Mississippi River winds through the center of the city. Memphis, USA, is also associated with the name of the great musician and singer Elvis Presley, who made his first recordings in a tiny recording room, called Sun Studios, near the town’s main street.

Memphis has also gradually turned into an important cultural hub in the southern part of the United States. That is why I was proud to visit the Memphis Russian Cultural Center, a place that would simply never happen in Russia. There I met and made friends with an emigrant from the USSR, Beck Niyazov, the center’s director. I was able to develop particularly warm feelings with his mostly American entire team. Beck, an Uzbek, said proudly and honestly “I Soviet man.” He went on to say, during the Soviet era, which contained both good and bad, the people were



*Dr. Valentin  
lecturing on  
the evolution of  
physiological  
Genetics at  
Moscow  
State University  
on Sparrow Hill in  
Moscow.*

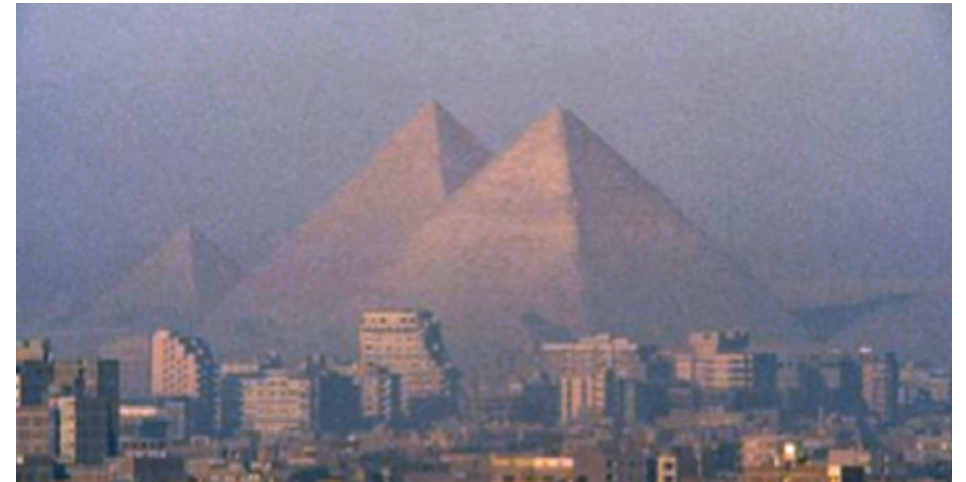
beginning to form a new historical community that would communicate the true history of the Russian culture. He hoped some of that work would be continued through the activities of the new Cultural Center.

I met through Beck, an American writer, M.G. Crisci. Being an American with no clear Russian roots, he became interested in the history of our country after being shocked to learn a truth of World War II that is little known to most Americans—the loss of almost 30 million Soviet lives defending the free world against the German Nazis. He was so moved

by our losses during the Great Patriotic War he decided to call attention to our terrible day in history in a very American way. He chose to write a historical biography of one of the many who died in the war, a unique young lady from Moscow, who accomplished remarkable feats as a female fighter pilot, which to this day have never been equaled. He titled the book, *Call Sign, White Lily*, a book I believe every American would find instructive and entertaining.



(left to right) Dr. Sapunov presents to readers a partially restored 17th Century wood orthodox church at Nevesky Lesopark, just north of St. Petersburg; 20th Century B.C. Pyramids of Giza (satellite of Cairo); and 21st Century A.C. Pyramid Center Sports Arena in the center of Memphis, Tennessee.



In the course of gathering material, he visited the Ukraine, Russia, and most recently stayed in St. Petersburg. There he visited my home, met my father, Boris V. Sapunov, Ph.D., a veteran of World War II, and a regular contributor to “Anomalia.” The result of the beginning of cooperation was an updated Russian translation of *Call Sign, White Lily*, which we hope younger generations of Russians will also read for it’s many lessons about life, love and patriotism. The translation was completed for accuracy under the editorship of B.V.Sapunova as a living witnesses of those terrible days. The literary treatment of the Russian version also involved the contribution of a former Anomalia employee, Vera Soloviev. We are all proud of the end result which is now for sale around the world in print and digital format.

Our next joint project, the one before you, is a brief abstract of M.G.s Russian memories, observations and photos, as an ordinary American traveler. It is called quite simply, *Seven Days in Russia*. Our collective hope is that this new book will provide some very human insights into our everyday way of life, our culture, our pride, and our strong desire to be friends with peace loving people everywhere, especially the United States.

With Warm Regards and Deep Affection,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Сapunov".

Valentin Sapunov, Ph.D.

*Just one example  
of the magnificent,  
gilded Russian  
Orthodox  
churches on the  
grounds of the  
Kremlin that  
communicate the  
grandeur and  
power of God the  
Almighty*

# **DAY 3**

# **THE EXPECTED AND THE UNEXPECTED**







# BEATING THE KREMLIN CROWDS, AND OTHER STOPS

Today's agenda: a morning tour of the Kremlin; followed by an afternoon with my friend Gennadii, a former school teacher, who lives about fifteen minutes by metro from Central Moscow; and dinner at the Café Pushkin, which I loved the first time through.

Sergei suggested we visit the Kremlin first to beat the crowds. I kind of knew what to expect from my prior visit: a trip to the historical museum where there are pictures of the opulent Tsar carriages and an endless display of dresses from the Federation's lineage of chubby, promiscuous queens. Unlike the minimum security at St. Basil's, the Kremlin police were in full force, so I decided not to push the "forbidden picture envelope."

After the museum tour, Sergei suggested a leisurely walk around the Kremlin grounds, which were dotted with various government buildings and Orthodox Churches...in other words, beautiful but standard tourist fare.

Fortunately for us, David's wife Joyce was an architectural aficionado, which stimulated Sergei to identify and discuss some of the unique East-meets-West architecture that pervades the grounds. (I've included a side by side comparison to give you a flavor.) We also chatted up a friendly priest (with Sergei translating) and discovered that the presence of God and the concept of prayer never disappeared during the Communist rule. Stalin realized the strength of the ordinary citizens' faith, so he picked his battles wisely.

When we reached the Kremlin, our group was near the front of the queue...initially. Suddenly, forty-five to fifty noisy, pushy

Chinese people, led by an even nosier, pushier tour guide, jumped right in front of us. Sergei went ballistic. He said something to the guide. She ignored him. He complained to the guard on duty, who also ignored him. Along came two English-speaking women with small children in strollers demanding preferential treatment. The guard nodded. As the women passed, one waved her arm in the air. Suddenly, fifteen more "yutes" (if the wordplay is unclear, please view the movie, *My Cousin Vinny*) pushed their way to the front. "No like this during the Communist days. There was order!" blurted a frustrated Sergei. "Today, everybody does what they want, when they want."



*(t to b) spectacular examples of European baroque architecture right in the heart of the Kremlin*







*(l to r) Foreboding Communist headquarters during the dreaded Khrushchev era; The entrance to the oldest Orthodox Church in Moscow, which is also considered one of the oldest in Russia.*

I thought to myself, *Sergei, welcome to the twenty-first century*, then shrugged my shoulders and laughed. “This is just like navigating around Manhattan!”





# A SPRING WALK

Sergei looked at his watch. “Time till lunch, nice spring day, want to meet local citizens?” And so it was that we walked around the park near the Kremlin and stopped at a lake where a man was fishing. I asked what he was casting for. He said, “Fish.”

We also talked to a man taking pictures of his wife while her mother smiled. “She quite beautiful, da.”

I smiled, “da.” We then stopped for an up-close-and-personal look at two pretty typical middle class apartment buildings. In other words, we spent a few hours beyond the stereotypes to touch and feel the everyday life that makes Moscow one of the world’s most vital cities.



*(clockwise) A couple takes a spring walk in a city park; a couple and their mother take pictures around a pond; a commonplace, middle class apartment building with sun rooms and air conditioners; a man spends his Sunday fishing in a Moskva River tributary. Unbeknownst to most Westerners, fishing has been one of the great Russian hobbies for centuries.*





(clockwise)  
 A humble wedding  
 limo; selling a  
 motorcycle the  
 low tech way, a  
 military pride  
 recruiting poster  
 near Sparrow Hill;  
 Entrance to  
 University of  
 Moscow

While we walked, I noticed a few other things that also made Moscow—so mysterious to so many Americans—appear like so many other big cities in the world. A couple was taking wedding pictures with the skyline as the background. Their wedding limo was modest: an old yellow car decked out with artificial flowers. Not far from the limo, an old-fashioned homemade strip ad was taped to an electrical pole offering a “fast” motor scooter at a “fast price.” Six strips had been removed, so I guessed the seller had takers. I also spotted a colorful recruiting poster for the military reserves and a simple park bench (they still use real wood) to sit upon and rest while I sipped on a Coca-Cola.

