

“New Russian” Humor

NIKOLAI ZLOBIN

Well known among Russians, Vovochka is the traditional character of Russian jokes—indecent or bordering on indecency. A middle school pupil, and not a very good one at that, Vovochka is a troublemaker. But he can also be very shrewd, perplexing others with his provocative remarks. Until now, the only political hero to appear in Vovochka anecdotes was Vladimir Lenin. Maybe now, Vovochka will have a new protagonist. At least, we offer one of the first references to the new Vovochka—“After March 26, all jokes about Vovochka are considered political”—and we anxiously await to see where Vovochkiana will go from here.

We have published Russian political jokes in *Demokratizatsiya* in the past, to the delight of our readers. Now we offer new material, but the purpose is not to amuse you, although we hope these jokes will make you smile. Rather, political humor is a way to illuminate the mindset of the modern Russian. We can tell much by what makes him laugh, even if it is bitter laughter.

The target of Russian humor in the early 1980s was “advanced socialism,” the seriously ill Brezhnev, and the lack of rights or freedom in the USSR. That was followed by the lighter side of dying secretaries general, security officer Andropov, and a range of national and economic problems. The characters who populated those jokes were members of the Political Bureau, Communists, national minorities, and everyday Russians. Gradually, it became clear that the apparatus of repression in Russia was powerless to suppress the jokes. The harsh realities of life made humor a necessity, and the number of jokes grew exponentially. Telling political jokes was against the law, but to enforce it Russian police would have to arrest the entire population.

The late 1980s and early 1990s were spent poking fun at the politics of perestroika and acceleration; Gorbachev’s indecision and his unsuccessful efforts to stop Yeltsin’s democratic reforms; the failure of economic reforms; the poor quality of life; and, of course, the anti-alcohol campaign. At the center of those jokes, besides Mikhail Sergeivich himself, were his wife and his inner circle: Ligachev, Rishkov, local leaders, and young democrats. Then the reign of Boris Yeltsin

Nikolai Zlobin is an executive editor of *Demokratizatsiya*.

began. Over ten years he evolved from the adored, brave opponent of communism to our physically and intellectually inept leader—a “second edition of Brezhnev.” New characters populated our humor: Guydar, Chubais, Burbulis, Stankevich, Popov, Korshakov, Sobchak, and Chernomyrdin. None of Yeltsin’s prime ministers was spared by Russian humor. Although the quantity of political jokes declined significantly when restrictions against free expression were lifted, people still actively responded to the ups and downs of Russian life under Boris Nikolaievich, from devaluation of the ruble to war in Chechnya, from the sexual scandal of the general prosecutor to efforts to impeach the Russian president. The 1990s introduced a new source of humor in the character of the “New Russians,” a phenomenon that undoubtedly deserves closer examination.

The new millennium will bring political jokes that reflect the current realities of Russia and that are populated by new personages. Our goal is not only to introduce this new humor to our Western readers but to preserve the jokes of the past. Because they are a part of Russian history and Russian culture, they are valuable. They illuminate political opinion and therefore occupy a position in the scholarship about what was, is, and will be in this fascinating country.

A New Russian is waiting in the maternity ward. He sees the doctor and rushes to him. “So?” he asks.

“Congratulations,” says the doctor, “you have a son. Seven even.”

“No problem,” says the New Russian. He takes out his wallet and hands the doctor seven thousand dollars.

Three New Russians find a genie in a bottle, who agrees to grant them each three wishes. “But we have everything,” they say, “we don’t need anything more.”

Then the first one reconsiders. He says, “I just bought a new house in Madagascar and we’re having a terrible problem with ants. Nobody can fix it.”

The genie says, “I’ll give you a little ant; he will eat all of the big ants and then he’ll die. Everything will be fine in no time.”

Then the second one decides to make his wish. “I just bought a house in Tuscany,” he says, “and we’re having a terrible cockroach problem.”

The genie says, “I’ll give you a little cockroach and he’ll eat all the big ones. Then he’ll die, and everything will be fine.”

The third New Russian scratches his head, then says, “Genie, can you give me a little tax collector?”

A New Russian bought a set of Legos. Later he told his friend, “You know, I found out I’m a genius. I bought these Legos and it says on the label from two to four years. It only took me a month.”

Question: “How did the trial between Chubais and Berezovsky end up?”

Answer: “The prosecutor got fifteen years in prison.”

A Russian company is hauled to court because they haven’t paid taxes for some time. The judge shakes his disapproving finger at the young female bookkeeper who represents the company. “Do you know what you can get for not paying taxes?”

The girl replies, "My boss told me about \$3,000."

A New Russian is a defendant in court. The judge asks him, "Do you have any last words?"

"Ten thousand," the New Russian says. The jury is sent out to deliberate his fate.

The next day, another New Russian faces the same judge. "Do you have any last words?"

This defendant answers, "Fifteen thousand." The judge sends the jury out to deliberate his fate.

The next day, the judge asks another New Russian, "Any last words?"

This one answers, "Fifty thousand."

The judge turns to the jury. "You can deliberate right here."

A jury is in deliberation and asks the judge for instructions. "How will we deal with these New Russians? The defendant gave us \$7,000 and the plaintiff gave us \$5,000. What should we do?"

After ten minutes of thinking, the judge says, "Well, I have an idea. Let's return \$2,000 to the defendant and then we'll decide according to the law."

After endless efforts to record his New Year address to Russian citizens, President Yeltsin had to resign.

A very poor social group in Russia today is schoolteachers. They decide to go to the Kremlin and complain to Yeltsin. "What do you want?" he asks.

The teachers say, "Well you see, Boris Nikolaich, we don't have any money."

Yeltsin thinks for a moment. "Well, uh, let's see, well, okay, go ahead and come in. I won't charge you."

A train must stop suddenly because there is no more track ahead of it.

Lenin asks all the passengers to come out and to work very hard to build a new track.

Stalin shoots the passengers of the first coach and threatens to shoot another coach every two hours until the new track is built.

Kruschev orders all the tracks from the back to move forward.

Brezhnev closes all the windows and rocks the train back and forth to simulate movement.

Gorbachev does nothing but allows everyone to go out and yell, "We have no track. And we have nothing to eat in the dining car."

Yeltsin orders a speedy attack on the Russian parliament in the hope that after that, everybody will forget about the railroad incident.

On Yeltsin's official visit to America, President Bill Clinton and Hillary are there, flanked by bodyguards, and the national anthem is playing. Yeltsin walks off his plane, looking straight ahead. He doesn't react to anything around, walks to the end of the runway, and takes a little bit of dirt in his hand. He goes back onto the airplane and flies away. Everyone is shocked. The next morning, the White House receives a telegram from Russia saying it was a technical mistake. It seems the president was programmed as Moon Car 1.

Clinton, Yeltsin, and Lukashenko went to the church and asked Jesus, "What is our happiness?"

Jesus says to Clinton, "Your happiness is that you have the best country in the world, and people live rich and secure lives there." He says to Yeltsin, "Your happiness is that your country has all the resources and raw materials the earth has to offer." Then he turns to Lukashenko. "Your happiness is that both my hands are nailed down."

Clinton calls Yeltsin and says, "Boris, we have a big disaster. All of our factories that produce condoms have been destroyed by terrorists. It's a catastrophe for Americans. Can you help us?"

Yeltsin says, "Yes, of course."

"But can you do me a favor?" Clinton asks. "Can you make all the condoms two feet long, six inches wide, with a blue stripe?"

Yeltsin thinks, "My god, what penises they have in America!" He calls his prime minister and says, "We have to produce one million condoms for Americans. They have to be two feet long, six inches wide with a blue stripe."

"Right away," says the prime minister.

"Oh, and one more thing," Yeltsin says. "Be sure each condom says 'made in Russia' and 'size medium.'"

Yeltsin finds a genie in a bottle, who says to him, "Release me, Boris Nikolaich, and I'll grant you your biggest wish."

Yelstin says, "But I have everything. Well, wait a minute. I don't want to be president. I want to be a real czar—like Romanov."

The genie grants his wish and Yeltsin releases him. That night, there is a knock on his door. "Citizen Yeltsin, get up, we have to go to the basement to take a picture."

President Yeltsin's New Year's greeting to Russia: "Dear, understand, Russians. The coming year brings a new election. If you will elect me, understand, you will have a new president. If you won't elect me, understand, you will have the old president."

Zuganov and Guydar are talking about campaign strategies.

Guydar: "Every time I take a taxi cab, I give the driver a big tip and say, 'Don't vote for Communists, my friend.'"

Zuganov: "And when I take a taxi cab, I pay exactly the kopeks on the meter and say, 'My friend, don't forget to vote for democrats.'"

A commercial for the Russian government: "We already have deceived you many times. You defunded us in fall 1991, but we shot you down in fall 1993. We destroyed your country in 1990, we took your money in 1992. We deceived you with two Volgas in 1993. We met with MMM in 1994. We took all of your money, and we sent your kids to be killed in Chechnya in 1995, in 1996, then again in

1999. We took your last money in August 1998. But now we're running out of money again. So please pay your taxes."

On 26 March 2000, Vishnyakov says to Putin: "Comrade Acting President, I have two pieces of news for you, one bad, one good. Which do you want first?"

Putin: "Give me the bad first."

Vishnyakov: "Zuganov got 75 percent of votes."

Putin: "Damn. And what good news can come from this?"

Vishnyakov: "What do you mean? You got 77 percent!"

In summer 1999, the Communists come to Yeltsin. Zuganov says, "It's not 1917, we won't start any revolutions, but we want to start the impeachment process."

Yeltsin unzips his fly and says, "Okay, get started."

Zuganov sputters, "What are you doing?"

Yeltsin says, "What? You don't know how they start the impeachment process in a civilized country?"

Berezovsky is in the sauna with his friends. Suddenly one says, "Listen, Boris, you either have to take off the cross from your chest or wear underwear."

There is a funeral for an oligarch. Family and friends are gathered near the coffin. Gusinsky approaches the coffin, takes a thousand dollars, and places it on top. He turns and walks away sadly. Next, Chubais comes, takes another thousand dollars, places it on the coffin, and walks away sadly. Then Potanin puts his thousand dollars on the coffin and walks away. Next is Berezovsky. He writes a check for four thousand dollars, takes the cash, and walks away.

Damn you, Christopher Columbus! Why should the Serbs suffer because of your curiosity?!

Resigning president Yeltsin decides to make a grand gesture and leave half of his residence to kids. The other half goes to his grandkids.

Newsline: "Today in Moscow, there will be a meeting between the general prosecutor of Russia, Yuri Skuratov, and the general prosecutor of Switzerland, Carlo L. Ponti. Photo and video recordings are categorically prohibited."

General: "And to end my speech, I want to repeat that our president appeals to the nation to teach our kids to solve problems with words, not guns. Is that clear? Now get in your planes and let's show those stinking Serbs!"

Linda Tripp calls Monica Lewinsky and asks, "Did you watch television? Yours truly is hammering Yugoslavia right now. Are you jealous?"

A New Russian is talking on the phone to his partner. Then he calls to his secretary, "Irina, tell me, how many zeros are in a million?"

"Six," she answers.

The New Russian says to his partner, "You see, I was right. In a million there are six zeros. So in two it's twelve."

One New Russian tells another, “Yesterday a friend of mine showed me a very interesting thing. They call it ‘Internet.’ Pictures, music, video, everything you can download. Very cool. I’d like to buy my boy this thing.”

The other says, “Too late. Yesterday Nikolai bought this for his two sons. Can you imagine how expensive it was?”

The first New Russian says, “Is it really so expensive?”

The second says, “Of course. One Microsoft cost him five billion dollars.”

A New Russian is having dinner at a restaurant. He finishes his salad. The waiter brings him soup. The New Russian scrutinizes him and asks, “Have we met before?”

Waiter: “No, I don’t think so.”

New Russian: “Were you on the Canary Islands last winter?”

Waiter: “No.”

New Russian: “Were you in Bermuda last month?”

Waiter: “No.”

New Russian: “Do you also work with the tax police?”

Waiter: “No.”

New Russian: “Now I remember. You brought me the salad.”

A New Russian is making strange noises and clutching his chest. He tells his aide, “Peter, as soon as possible, buy a good hospital. I think I’m having a heart attack.”

Two New Russians are seated in the theater listening to the orchestra. One New Russian points toward the conductor on stage and asks, “Beethoven?”

The second New Russian answers, “I can’t tell from the back.”

New Russian: “I need a rest. I’d like to go somewhere relaxing.”

Travel agent: “How about the Bahamas?”

New Russian: “No, that’s for losers.”

Travel agent: “Oh, I understand. Then maybe you’d like to go to the Alps?”

New Russian: “No, that’s for losers too. I’ve been there several times.”

Travel agent: “I know just what you need. How about a safari? You’ll drive a jeep and shoot a gun.”

New Russian: “That sounds like work all over again.”

A New Russian runs into an old classmate. “Oh hello, it’s good to see you. Are you doing all right?”

His classmate says, “Yes, I’m now a street vendor.”

“That’s great,” answers the New Russian. “How much are streets going for these days?”

A New Russian meets his classmate and asks how he is doing.

Classmate: “I’m an engineer, trying to make a living.”

New Russian: “So how is it going?”

Classmate: "Well, I haven't eaten in two days."

New Russian: "I know, I know. I have the same problem. But you know, it's very unhealthy; sometimes we just have to push ourselves."

A New Russian is talking on the phone. "Hello? Of course I recognize you. How are you doing? What? More money? You know it will affect your previous loan. How much do you want this time? No problem. I'll send my secretary right away with a credit agreement you have to sign. No, we can't do it without an agreement. You know business is business. So what about interest? Twenty-nine? Can you make it thirty-three? Okay, thirty-one and we'll call it even. I'll send it right away. Take care. Bye-bye, Mama."

The news anchor on television says, "Dear viewers, as you know, today elections were held in both Russia and the United States. We'll start our report from Russia, because if Zuganov won there, it doesn't really matter who won in the United States."

The New Russian goes into a bookstore. "Can you give me that book about dystrophics?"

Clerk: "What book do you mean? I can't think of any books we have on dystrophics."

The New Russian takes a piece of paper from his pocket. "My daughter wrote down the title for me. Here it is. It's called *Gone with the Wind*."

The New Russian comes to the apartment of his friend, who has just completed all the repairs. Everything looks exquisite. He goes into the bathroom, then asks, "Listen, brother, why are your tiles so small? You didn't have enough money left over for big, nice tiles?"

His friend answers, "Ha, look carefully and read what each tile says, and then you'll see how much money I spent on this apartment renovation." The first looks closer and sees that each tile reads, "Pentium Pro."

A group of New Russians are seated together in a restaurant. They are dressed elegantly, and the service staff fusses over them. In the middle of the table is a pile of cellular phones. One rings, and a New Russian picks it up.

New Russian: "Umm-hmm?"

Caller: "Honey, it's me."

New Russian: "Umm-hmm."

Caller: "Honey, I'm here in this little store and there is such a nice purse, just \$500. Can I buy it?"

New Russian: "Umm-hmm."

Caller: "And there's also a very nice evening dress, just \$7,000. Can I buy that too, please? It's so nice."

New Russian: "Umm-hmm."

Caller: "And by the way, on the way over, I saw such a nice car. You know my

old one, I’m tired of it already, and this is such a nice car. Just \$75,000. Can I buy it, please?”

New Russian: “Umm-hmm.”

He puts the cellular phone back into the middle of the table, then asks, “Brothers, whose phone was that, anyway?”

A New Russian is going on a trip and begins to fill out the necessary paperwork. In the space asking about sex, he writes, “Seven times a week.”

A New Russian considers buying a Rembrandt painting and asks the gallery owner, “Is this a real Rembrandt?”

Gallery owner: “Yes, of course.”

New Russian: “Any guarantee?”

Gallery owner: “Yes, thirty-six months.”

A New Russian walks into a computer shop. “Guys, I just bought a new computer here a couple of days ago. What the hell did you sell me?” The technicians ask what the problem is. “I’ve only used it for a few days and already the cup holder is broken.”

“What cup holder?” they ask.

“You know, the little tray that slides in and out.”

“Sir, that’s no cup holder, that’s your CD-ROM drive.”

Two New Russians are sitting in the restroom in juxtaposed stalls, talking to each other on their cell phones. One says, “Listen, brother, what do you think about what we’re doing now? Is it physical or intellectual work?”

The second New Russian thinks for a minute, then says, “I think it’s intellectual. Otherwise, we would hire somebody.”

A New Russian places an ad in the classified section of the paper. “To rent: eight bedroom apartment. Order, cleanliness, and quiet neighborhood guaranteed.”

A New Russian runs into a bar yelling, “Where the #*&\$ is the restroom?” The customers are shocked. “What the hell? I’m asking where your %***#& restroom is!”

Finally, the bartender says, “Go straight, turn right. The second door on your left will have a sign that says ‘gentlemen.’ But don’t mind that, just go right in.”

In Moscow, a church was built in the place of a swimming pool. Why aren’t New Russians attending services in this church? Because there is no swimming pool.

A New Russian comes home from a business trip, kicks in his front door, and steps into the apartment armed with a Kalashnikov. His wife jumps out of the way as he shoots at all of the closet doors, curtains, and cabinets. He fires under the bed and the couch. He stops to listen, looks around, and sees nobody. Then he turns to his wife. “You’re getting older, darling.”

A New Russian gives two sheets of paper to his secretary. "This is the original," he says, "and this is the photocopy. Compare them, please."

A New Russian tells his brother, "I just bought a new BMW, handmade, special order. The body is made from platinum, the bumper is from gold, the tires are silver. The wheel is encrusted with diamonds and rubies. The exterior is adorned with pearls. Such fun."

His friend asks, "So, how often do you drive it?"

"Never," he says. "It takes too much gasoline."

A New Russian is talking to his friends at their kids' high school.

"Why does everyone have normal kids and mine are so strange?"

"What do you mean?" ask the other parents.

"Well, 1 September, everybody had to write an essay about how they spent their summer. Your kids wrote about being in Bermuda, the Caribbean, Spain, Fiji, and so on. My kid wrote that he spent his summer at the dacha. Now I have to explain to each teacher that it was Yeltsin's dacha."

The daughter of a New Russian is writing an essay for class. "Once upon a time, there was a very poor family. The father and mother were very poor. Their daughter was very, very poor. Their driver was very, very poor. Their maids were very, very poor. And even their security guards were very, very poor."

Two New Russians walk into a restaurant. One asks the maître'd, "Did I have dinner here last night?"

"Yes," says the maître'd.

"Did I spent \$70,000?"

"Yes," the maître'd answers.

"Oh, what a relief. I was afraid I lost it."

A New Russian goes to see his friend, another New Russian, in his office, but he is not there.

Secretary: "Leave your phone and he'll call you."

New Russian: "You stupid girl. This phone costs \$3,000. Why would I leave it?"

A New Russian buys an apartment and asks the realtor, "Is this a quiet place?"

The realtor says, "Yes, very quiet. The previous owner was shot and nobody heard a thing."

A New Russian goes to the bank to open a Swiss account.

New Russian: "I'd like to open an account."

Clerk: "How much money do you want to deposit?"

New Russian, whispering: "One million dollars."

Clerk: "You can speak up. It's not a shame to be poor in our country."

A New Russian is walking in the countryside with his daughter and sees a painter working with an easel. They stop behind him and watch for a while. Finally the New Russian says, “See, honey, how this guy is suffering without a Polaroid?”

A New Russian is standing on the street in his burgundy jacket, with rings on every finger, three golden chains around his neck, three pagers attached to his belt, and two cellular phones.

Little boy: “Sir, why do you have so many things?”

New Russian: “Well, first of all, it’s pretty.”

Boy: “Daddy, am I Chechen?”

Father: “Yes.”

Boy: “Are you Chechen?”

Father: “Yes.”

Boy: “Is my mom Chechen?”

Father: “Yes.”

Boy: “And my brother, Aslan, who lives in Moscow. Is he Chechen?”

Father: “No, he is New Russian.”

A New Russian walks out of a bank, gets in his Mercedes, starts the engine, and suddenly it explodes. A crowd gathers and finds the New Russian sitting on the sidewalk among the pieces of his car in flames. “My new Mercedes,” he yells. “I’ll show those sons of bitches!”

Somebody from the crowd yells, “Don’t worry about your car. Look, you’ve lost your left arm.”

The New Russian yells, “Hey! My new gold Rolex!”

A New Russian stops his car, opens the door, jumps into the street and starts to drink from a puddle. Another New Russian pulls up next to him. “Shame on you. You have such a fine Mercedes, my brother. A cellular phone, too. And you’re drinking this dirty water from the puddle.”

The first New Russian lifts his head and says, “Image is nothing. Thirst is everything.”

A New Russian’s Mercedes 600 is stalled and he can’t seem to restart the engine. He gets out, opens and closes his trunk three times, but nothing happens. He opens and closes all his doors twice, but the car still won’t start. He kicks each tire, and still the car won’t start. Another New Russian pulls up in his Mercedes and offers help. “I can’t start my car,” the first says.

The second New Russian asks, “Did you open and close your trunk?”

“Yes, twice, but no effect,” the first says.

“Did you open and close your doors?”

“Yes, but it didn’t do any good,” says the first.

“Did you kick each of your tires?”

“Yes, but my car still won’t start.”

“Sorry then, brother, I can’t help you.”

A New Russian comes back from the United States and his friends ask about his trip. “It’s a great country,” he says. “But you know, brothers, what surprised me most? Their dollars look exactly like our bucks.”

Two New Russians visit an auto dealer to choose their new Mercedes. The first one chooses a red car, the second chooses a yellow one. The first says, “Listen brother, let me pay for both.”

The second is surprised and asks why.

“Remember? You bought me coffee this morning.”

A New Russian decides to become a democrat and take a public trolley. But his Mercedes didn’t fit.

A highway trooper stops a jeep full of New Russians and spies a Kalashnikov in the backseat. “What is that?” he asks. A New Russian tells him it’s a calculator. The officer reaches into his pocket and takes out a handheld calculator and says, “No, this is a calculator.”

The New Russian says, “Yes, but yours is for preliminary figuring, mine is for final.”

A New Russian who spent ten years in elementary school is talking to his classmate, who graduated first in the class but is barely making a living now. “So let me tell you, for instance—cigarettes. I’m buying a pack for one dollar and selling it for three dollars, and this 2 percent is my profit.”

Son: “Dad, I know you travel abroad very often. Have you been in Germany?”

New Russian: “Yes, son.”

Son: “Can you name me a German river?”

New Russian: “Which one?”

On 1 January 2000, it’s early morning and very cold outside. In front of the Kremlin gates, Yeltsin is jumping up and down, trying to get warm. “I have to drink less, I have to drink less.”

Sociologists taking a poll ask people on the street who they are going to vote for.

Woman: “I’m a teacher. I’ll vote for Zughanov.”

Man: “I’m a businessman. I’ll vote for Putin.”

Young man: “I’m a computer programmer, and hopefully I’ll vote for Gore.”

His press secretary says President Yeltsin just left for his vacation in Barveha residence. It’s his seventh vacation this year, but he still has some days off from August 1991.

Duma candidate: “We democrats want everybody to be rich.”

Citizen: “What are you going to do with the poor?”

Duma candidate: “Eventually they will die.”

“Once upon a time,” said Zhirinovsky, “I was very cute and smart. But a nurse in the maternity ward made a mistake and replaced me with somebody else.”

Do you know that Zhirinovsky promised to wash Russian soldiers’ hands in the Mediterranean Sea? Do you know that he promised to wash Russian soldiers’ boots in the Indian Ocean? Can you imagine now what he’s going to wash in the Persian Gulf?

At a meeting of Ukrainian Rada, the chairman asks, “Are there any Russians in this room?” Satisfied there are no Russians, he says, “Okay, then let’s speak Russian.”

An announcement on the beach: “Because the Ukrainian language has been adopted as the official language of our independent country, yelling for help in other languages will not be considered.”

Boris Moyesaev was asked, “Do you love Yelstin?”
He answered, “I don’t know, but then again, why not?”

The president of France, Jacques Chirac, came to see Yeltsin on an official visit. Suddenly, Yeltsin starts to unbutton his shirt. “What are you doing?” Chirac asks.
Yeltsin responds, “Are you not Dr. DeBakey?”

Microsoft built a supercomputer able to predict the future. Clinton comes to see it and is allowed to ask two questions.

Clinton: “When will World War III start?”
Computer: “The year 2007.”
Clinton: “How much will a Coca-Cola cost after World War III?”
Computer: “Five rubles.”

Putin visits Israel and stands with Barach in front of the Wailing Wall.
Putin: “Can I ask your God to help me with my campaign?”
Barach: “Yes, but remember you are talking to God.”
Putin: “Can I ask God to help me build good relations with the United States?”
Barach: “Yes, but remember you are talking to God.”
Putin: “Can I ask God to make the Russian media stop making fun of me?”
Barach: “Yes, but remember you are talking to a wall.”

At the Big Eight meeting, the leaders of big countries are sitting around the table. Suddenly Yeltsin takes a bottle from the table and hits Clinton on the head. “Boris, what’s going on?” Clinton asks.

“Well, Bill, I’m just such an unpredictable politician.

Clinton: “Well, Boris, I know it’s a difficult time for you.”
Yeltsin: “That’s true, Bill, but I’m used to it. Look at yourself; you just had such trouble over there.”
Clinton: “But at least I had some fun before that.”

Why did Clinton come to Moscow in 1999?

Because his remote control wasn't working.

At the traditional, informal meeting between Yeltsin and Clinton, no ties. Last time Madeline Albright attended; no bra.

TV journalist: "How have you managed to have such a long life?"

175-year-old man: "When Yeltsin came to power . . ."

TV journalist: "Yes, we know all that, just tell us how you managed to have such a long life."

175-year-old man: "When Yeltsin came to power . . ."

TV journalist: "I'm not asking that. Tell me how you managed to have such a long life."

175-year-old man: "Let me finish. When Yeltsin came to power, there was such disorder that somebody added a hundred years to my documents."

A new immigrant in Israel from Russia says that he prefers to read Russian newspapers, not Israeli. "When you read Israeli newspapers," he explained, "they write about inflation, corruption, and demoralization, and tell you that Israel is on the brink of collapse. In Russian newspapers, it's a different thing. When you read them, you see that Israel is a huge country, which already took over half the world and is about to take over the other half."

On the eve of the election, an old lady is walking home with bags full of butter, milk, pasta, and bread.

Stranger: "Why do you need so many groceries?"

Old lady: "I'm afraid the Communists will come to power again and there will be nothing in the stores."

Stranger: "So, how are you going to vote?"

Old lady: "For them, of course, stupid."

General prosecutor of Russia Skuratov comes home in the early morning. He has lipstick stains on his collar and women's underwear in his pocket. His wife asks where he has been all night. He tells her, "Don't even ask. All night I was a toy in the hands of dark powers."

Former minister of law Kovolev is sitting at home reading the newspaper. His wife is watching television. Suddenly, RTR shows documentary footage of Skuratov having sex with two girls in a sauna. "Such a shame," Kovolev's wife says. "Why are they showing to all the world this disgusting thing? And on national TV!"

Kovolev puts the paper down and looks at the screen. "What's wrong? There is Sveta, Tanya, and some guy. Why is that disgusting?"

In Kosovo, three peacekeepers are smoking on the shoulder of the road. Suddenly, several tanks with Russians pass by at high speed.

American: "I wonder where they're going so fast."

British (smiling): “Well, I don’t think it’s to Britain; there is the English Channel.”

German: “Do you have a cellular phone? I need to make a call.”

An American pilot is shot down over Belgrade. He is taken captive and put into prison. When he finally talks with his captors, he asks, “Can you show me the guy who hit me?” They present a soldier in Yugoslavian military uniform. “No, no,” says the American. “Show me the one who was shooting at me and yelling, ‘Hello from Zhirik!’”

NATO: North American Terrorist Organization.

A New Russian comes from the provinces to Moscow and goes into a fancy restaurant. Sitting like a king, he calls to the waiter, “Give me something for five thousand dollars.” The waiter sneers, “We don’t serve halves.”

A New Russian goes back to the hardware store to return an electric saw.

New Russian: “I bought it a few days ago and you said it will saw fifteen square feet of lumber a day. Two of my bodyguards worked all day yesterday and they barely sawed three. What’s wrong?”

Salesperson: “Let me see.”

He turns the saw on.

New Russian: “Why is it making this noise?”

How Serbs like Madeline Albright: like Coca-Cola, cold and on the table.

Two Serbs are sitting in the house when they hear rumbling outside. One asks, “What’s going on?”

The second says, “Oh, just the Americans bombing us again.”

The first says, “Oh good, I thought it was a thunderstorm.”

A New Russian comes to Paris and asks the guide, “I’m here for the ninth time and I don’t understand what’s going on.”

The guide asks, “What are you talking about?”

The New Russian points to the Eiffel Tower. “Did you find oil yet or not?”

A New Russian visits the dentist. He is seated in the chair with his mouth wide open. All his teeth are gold with diamond fillings and platinum crowns. The dentist says his teeth are fine. The New Russian asks, “Can you install an alarm system?”

A New Russian slows down abruptly at the intersection. A ZAZ runs into him. The New Russian gets out and asks the driver of the ZAZ, “Do you at least have an apartment?”

“Yes,” the driver answers.

“Then I guess you’re a lucky one.”

A New Russian goes to the police and says, “I’m being blackmailed. Some racketeers are demanding money. Here, they wrote a letter.” He hands a piece of paper to the officer.

“Did you read this letter through to the end?” the officer asks.

The New Russian shakes his head. “Why?”

The police hands him back the letter. “Because at the end it says tax collector Ivanov.”

A New Russian bought property in Great Britain.

Realtor: “This is your new house—first half of the eighteenth century.”

New Russian: “Where’s the other half?”

A Russian nationalist is addressing a crowd: “In foreign media, you find out that the law of gravity was discovered by Newton, but that’s not true. I know for sure that the gravity law worked in Russia way before Newton.”

British: “Our archaeological expedition has found a piece of cord which will prove that two hundred years ago, we already had the cord telegraph.”

Russian: “Our archaeological expedition did not find any cords, which proves that two hundred years ago, we already had the cordless telegraph.”

In the office of a Russian nationalist party head hang two portraits. One is academician Petrov, who invented the engine, diesel, aircraft, telephone, and computer. The other portrait is comrade Sibarov, who invented academician Petrov.

Russia has the highest security level in the entire world. By comparison, in France, one factory doesn’t know what people of the very same company make in another factory. In Great Britain, people in one laboratory don’t know what their colleagues are working on in the next laboratory. In the United States, a person doesn’t know what his officemate is doing. In Russia, people don’t know what they themselves are doing.

A lawyer, surgeon, construction worker, and Communist are discussing who has the older profession.

Lawyer: “When God created Adam and Eve and kicked them out of the Garden of Eden, it was a legal act.”

Surgeon: “But before he did that, he created Eve from the rib of Adam. That was a surgical operation, so mine is the oldest profession.”

Construction worker: “I’m sorry, but before that God built the world. That makes my profession the oldest.”

Communist: “Wrong. Before God built the world, there was endless chaos. And who created chaos? Of course, we did.”

Russian technology has invented a new material for the embassy building: micro-concrete. It contains 10 percent concrete, 90 percent microphones.

A Ukrainian caught a rabbit and brought it home. He asks his wife to cook it in butter for him.

Wife: “But we don’t have butter.”

Husband: “Can you cook it for me with sour cream?”

Wife: “We don’t have sour cream.”

Husband: “Can you cook it at all?”

Wife: “No, we don’t have any gas.”

So the man throws the rabbit out the window.

Rabbit: “Long live independent Ukraine!”

A Russian man is walking along the road in Estonia. “How far is Tallin?” he asks a local who passes by in a horse and buggy.

“Not far,” says the local.

“Can you give me a ride?” the Russian asks.

“Take a seat,” says the local. They go one hour, then another, and soon three hours have passed. “How far is Tallin?” the Russian finally asks.

“Now it’s far enough,” says the local.

Igor: “Let’s have a shot of vodka.”

Sergei: “No, I can’t.”

Igor: “Why not?”

Sergei: “Three reasons. First of all, I quit drinking. Second, I’m driving. Third, I’ve already had three shots.”

After March 26, all jokes about Vovochka are considered political.

A poll is taken among the customs officers in a newly independent state. The question is: “How long will it take you to buy a BMW?”

Ukrainian officer: “Well, at least three months.”

Belarusian officer: “Five or six months.”

Russian officer: “At least five years. After all, it’s a big company.”

The new official Russian flag has been approved. It will be rectangular in shape, with three color stripes of white, blue, and red. In the lower left corner is the sponsor’s logo—a small American flag.

After Bill Clinton visited Russia, Western politics abandoned its plan to bring the Russian economy to its knees. So she is still lying flat.

First man: “It’s him.”

Second man: “It’s not.”

First man: “It’s him, I’m telling you.”

Second man: “Let’s ask him. Sir, what is your name, please?”

Third man: “Primakov.”

Second man: “You see, I told you it’s not him. And you were saying, ‘Mao, Mao!’”

Teenage boy: "I like you and I want to have you."

Teenage girl: "Who starts like this? First of all, you have to feed me. Then you have to dress me. Then you have to give me some money. Then you can have me."

Teenage boy: "You're talking just like Russia in its negotiations with the IMF."

A New Russian, the president of a big corporation, addresses his new deputy.

New Russian: "Only six months ago, you came to work with us as a simple engineer. After just two months, you were promoted to senior engineer. Two months later, you became our financial manager. Now I have appointed you my new deputy. What do you say?"

Deputy: "Thanks, Papa!"

Remember that when you forget to turn off the lights, you're giving your money to Chubais.

In a solemn procedure at the Kremlin, Yeltsin gave Putin his nuclear suitcase. Then he confided in him the biggest state secret: the button doesn't work.

How did the war in Yugoslavia start? In Rambouillet, during the negotiation with Milosevic, Madeline Albright asked him, "Do you want to make love or war?"

Yeltsin was reminded of an old joke. "In 1986, the Challenger exploded. The French sent condolences in thirty minutes. British condolences arrived within the hour. The Soviet Union sent theirs two hours before. The American President said, 'Screw these Russians; let's see what they have that starts with 'Ch.''"

Yeltsin laughed at the joke and said, "That's great. What do I have that starts with 'Ch'?"

In Chechnya, at the headquarters of the Russian division, an officer is completing a report after the latest "cleansing" operation. He says aloud, "Today we eliminated five hundred terrorists."

The general standing next to him says, "Write 'a thousand.' Don't feel sorry for the bastards."

A New Russian is gazing at his new, very attractive secretary. His deputy leans over and whispers in his ear, "Four kids."

The New Russian is shocked. "It can't be! She is so young."

The deputy answers, "Not her—you have four kids."

Boss: "Do you like warm beer and sweaty women?"

Employee: "No."

Boss: "Then you'll get your vacation in the winter."

General: "If I can't find the guilty ones, I will appoint them."

An American schoolteacher tells her students that whoever answers her questions correctly can go home early.

Teacher: “Okay, kids, I’m going to read famous quotes and you tell me who said them. First, who said, ‘Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country’?”

A boy raises his hand, but the teacher calls on a girl.

Girl: “Kennedy.”

Teacher: “Very good, you can go home. Next, who said, ‘Better to light one candle than to curse the darkness’?”

Again, the boy raises his hand, but the teacher calls on another girl.

Girl: “Roosevelt.”

Teacher: “Great, you can go home.”

Boy: “When will these bitches shut up?”

Teacher: “Who said that?”

Boy: “President Clinton. Can I go home now?”

Announcer on radio news: “Prostitutes of Donetsk joined a picket line today. Their slogan was, ‘Pay our miners their wages.’”

At midnight, 31 December 1999, a “Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin” Y2K glitch occurred.

At a Duma meeting, Zhirinovskiy ate an apple in front of Yavlinsky and said, “In two hours I’ll show you who you are.”

A New Russian driving in his car turns the radio on. The announcer says, “You’re listening to Radio Europe Plus.”

The New Russian scratches his head. “Damn! How did they know that?”

In Baltic states, pessimists are learning Chinese. Optimists are learning English. Realists are learning Kalashnikov.

Private: “Comrade officer, can I go to the barracks to watch TV?”

Officer: “Of course, but please don’t turn it on.”

A New Russian at the mechanic’s says, “Change my oil, filter, antifreeze, and the bitches inside.”

On New Year’s Eve, a very drunk highway trooper stops a truck.

Trooper: “I’m stopping you for the seventh time and I’m asking you for the seventh time, what are you spilling from the back of your truck?”

Driver: “I’m telling you for the seventh time: Winter. Icy. Salt.”

A New Russian calls his pager service and tells the operator, “Listen, miss, I’m not getting my messages.”

She answers, “Well, then read them one more time.”

Trooper: “You were driving eighty miles an hour.”

New Russian: "An hour? I've only been driving for fifteen minutes."

President Yeltsin went to Koma republic on an official visit. The Western media carried the story the next day under the headline, "Yeltsin in Koma again."

Putin calls the prime minister of Estonia.

Putin: "Is it true that you can kick out all Russians from Estonia in forty-eight hours?"

Prime Minister: "Yes, it is."

Putin: "I don't believe it. Let's make a bet."

Prime Minister: "Okay, call me in forty-eight hours."

Putin calls in forty-eight hours. "Did you kick out all the Russians?"

Prime Minister: "Absolutely."

Putin: "Hold on just a minute." Putin picks up the other phone. "Everything is ready, Comrade Sergeev. You can begin."

Chubais has become very bold. He says he can no longer take the same car as his driver.

At the White House in Washington, D.C., a dinner is being held in honor of Gorbachev. Raisa pushes a spoon across the table to her husband.

Gorbachev: "We can't take that. There are people watching."

Raisa: "But I want it."

Gorbachev: "Well, all right."

Gorbachev (to Shevardnadze): "Edik, can you do me a favor? Can you privatize one spoon?"

Shevardnadze: "No, I can't. I already privatized one."

Gorbachev: "All right, then."

Gorbachev turns to the crowd and says, "Ladies and gentlemen. I would like to show you a magic trick. See how I'm taking this nice spoon and putting it in my wife's purse? Now, watch it reappear in Shevardnadze's pocket."

President Vladimir Putin finally chose a model for Russian economic development—the Korean model. In a few months, he has promised to clarify which Korea, North or South.

A highway trooper stops a New Russian in his Mercedes and tries to find something to charge him with. But he is not drunk, he was not speeding, and the car is in fine condition. There's even a medical kit and fire extinguisher there.

Officer: "Well, let's have a drink then."

New Russian: "But how can I, officer? I'm driving."

Officer: "I say you will drink."

New Russian: "No, I don't think so."

Officer: "Then it's your call. Choose yourself: for driving drunk there is a \$5,000 penalty. For disobedience to a police officer, there is a \$7,000 penalty."

Gorbachev to crowd: “Comrades, next year we’ll have much less meat. Any proposals?”

Citizen: “We’ll work ten hours a day.”

Gorbachev: “Next year we’ll have much less milk. Any proposals?”

Citizen: “We’ll work twelve hours a day.”

Gorbachev: “Next year, we’ll have much less bread in the country. Any proposals?”

Citizen: “We’ll work sixteen hours a day.”

Gorbachev: “Thank you for your support, comrade. Where are you working, comrade?”

Citizen: “In the crematorium, comrade Gorbachev.”

On 21 December 1995, the Moscow Duma increased by 150 percent the price of a ticket in the Moscow metro. Since that time, at each metro station, the announcement has changed to: “Dear Moscow deputies, don’t stand too close to the end of the platform near the train.”

First New Russian: “Do you remember Petya?”

Second New Russian: “Yes, of course; how is he doing?”

First New Russian: “You didn’t know he was shot in the head a few days ago? Seven bullets.”

Second New Russian: “So is he dead?”

First New Russian: “No, the doctor said the brain suffered no damage.”

Two Czechs are watching television news from Yugoslavia.

First: “We are so lucky.”

Second: “Why? Because we are members of NATO now?”

First: “No. Because the Soviet Union was a totalitarian, bureaucratic, Communist state. Otherwise, we could be in Yugoslavia’s place.”

NATO pilot: “There I was, flying, and suddenly I see the bridge. So I’m firing my guns, and then I see the train coming from the corner. It was headed straight into my line of fire. It happened three times.”

A crow is sitting on the tree with a piece of cheese in her beak. A fox running nearby sees the crow and says, “Listen, crow, will you vote for Putin?” The crow is silent. The fox asks again, “Crow, will you vote for Putin?” Still, the crow is silent. The fox asks once more, “Will you vote for Putin?”

Finally, the crow says, “Yes.” The cheese falls and the fox catches it and runs away. The crow says, “If I had said no, would it change anything?”