

OBJECTIVE LENS OF HISTORY

THROUGH THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF VLADIMIR VELENGURIN,
A PHOTOJOURNALIST FOR KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA



MOSCOW 2025

UDC 084
LBC 85.167
V27

Velengurin, Vladimir
OBJECTIVE LENS OF HISTORY
through the photography of Vladimir Velengurin,
a photojournalist
for Komsomolskaya Pravda.

Moscow: Komsomolskaya Pravda Publishing House, 2025. 192 p.

ISBN 978-5-4470-0729-4

Editor-in-Chief of JSC Komsomolskaya Pravda Publishing House **Olesya Nosova**
Editor and compiler **Ramil Farzutdinov**
Design and layout **Galina Chernetsova**
Proofreader **Vladimir Slepko**
Processing and color correction by **Vitaly Plotnikov**
Photo editor **Maria Vornakova**

JSC Komsomolskaya Pravda Publishing House
127015, Russia, Moscow, Novodmitrovskaya str., 2B, 8th floor, room 800, www.kp.ru

© Velengurin V., photo, 2025
© Cover design, JSC Komsomolskaya Pravda Publishing House, 2025

Signed to print on 31.01.2025. Format 90×60/8
Offset printing. Con. pr. s. 24,00
Edition of 1000 copies. Order 0469/25

Printed by IPK Pareto-Print LLC in accordance with the provided materials
170546, Tver region, Industrial zone Borovlevo-1, complex No. 3A.
www.pareto-print.ru



DECADES OF NEWSPAPER WORK, LIKE A SINGLE CLICK OF A CAMERA

Over the years of my life, several eras have passed by. In the country — from stagnant socialism through wild capitalism to the present day, and in the profession — from black-and-white photos to the rioting colored pixels of digital photography. I started back in the USSR. After graduating from the Faculty of History of Kuban State University, I became not a historian, but a photojournalist. I worked in the regional Komsomolets Kubani and Sovetskaya Kuban newspapers. At the same time, I began actively cooperating with the TASS Photo Chronicle and getting published in the central newspapers.

When Perestroika began in the country, I wanted to be at the epicenter of change. At that time, there was no way to get to Moscow without a residence permit, but in 1989 Komsomolskaya Pravda announced an all-Union photo contest, the winner of which would be invited to work in Moscow. I won and, starting in 1990, got the opportunity to work at the forefront of the main events in the country, to photograph life in all its forms for the most widely circulated newspaper in the world (in 1990, Komsomolskaya Pravda had a record print run of 22 million 370 thousand copies!).

The numerous wars and conflicts in the post-Soviet space are a special topic in my line of work. It's scary to work in such conditions. But it is somehow addictive and it makes you crave more and more thrills, while rapidly turning your hair grey and making you view the world through different eyes. And, of course, working in hot spots is risky. I received a minor injury and a concussion during the terrorist attack in Grozny, in which Akhmat Kadyrov was killed.

My other work topic is working in the conditions of emergency situations: earthquakes, floods, fires, and other disasters. I have spent a total of about three years on work trips to wars and disaster sites.

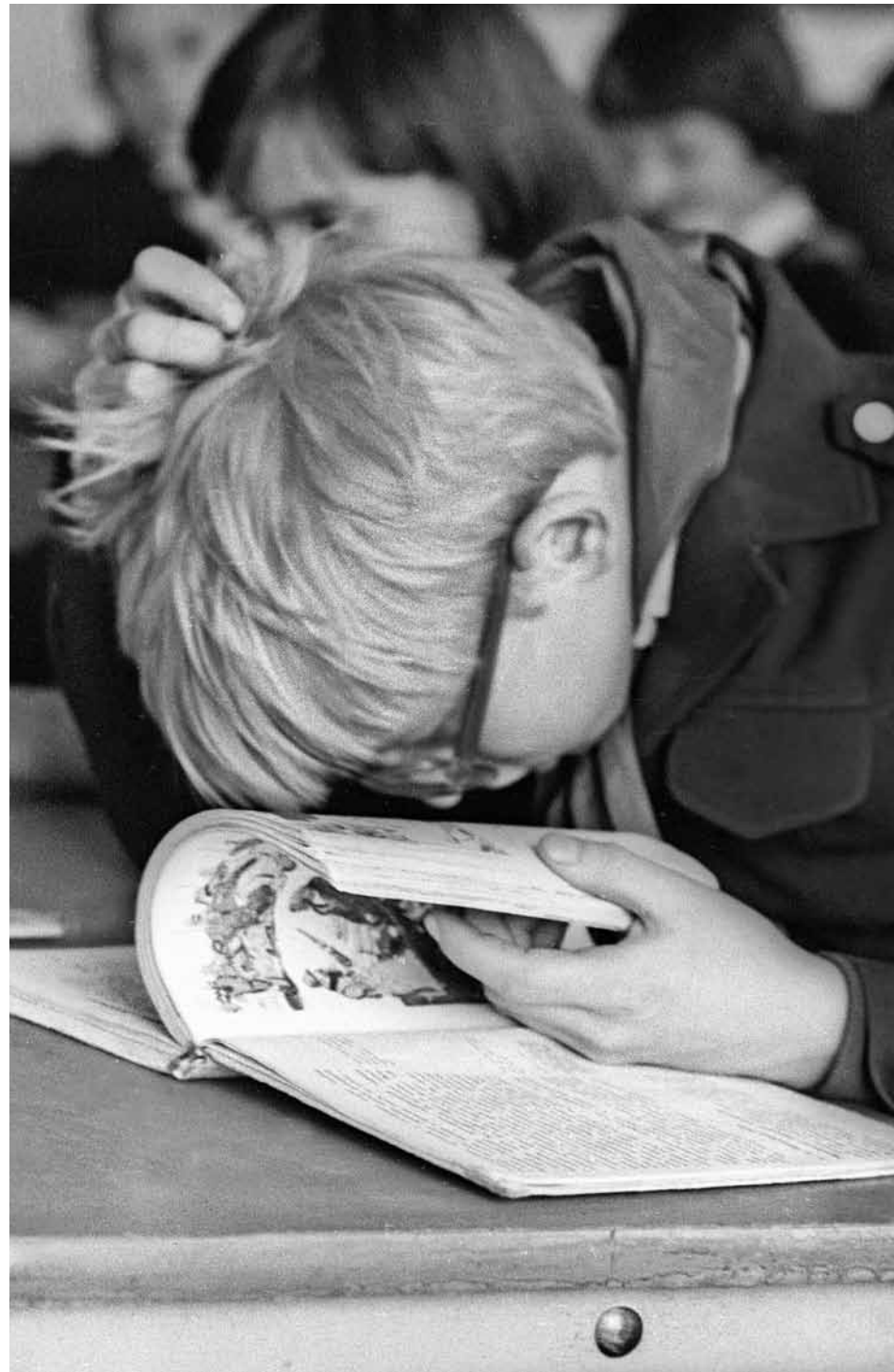
I have shot many major political events and their participants, domestic and international stars. I have worked at eight Olympic Games, at many European Championships and World Cups. And, of course, all these years I have been carrying out editorial assignments, shooting what the newspaper was interested in, reflecting the life of Russians, events and changes happening in the country. All this was captured by my camera.

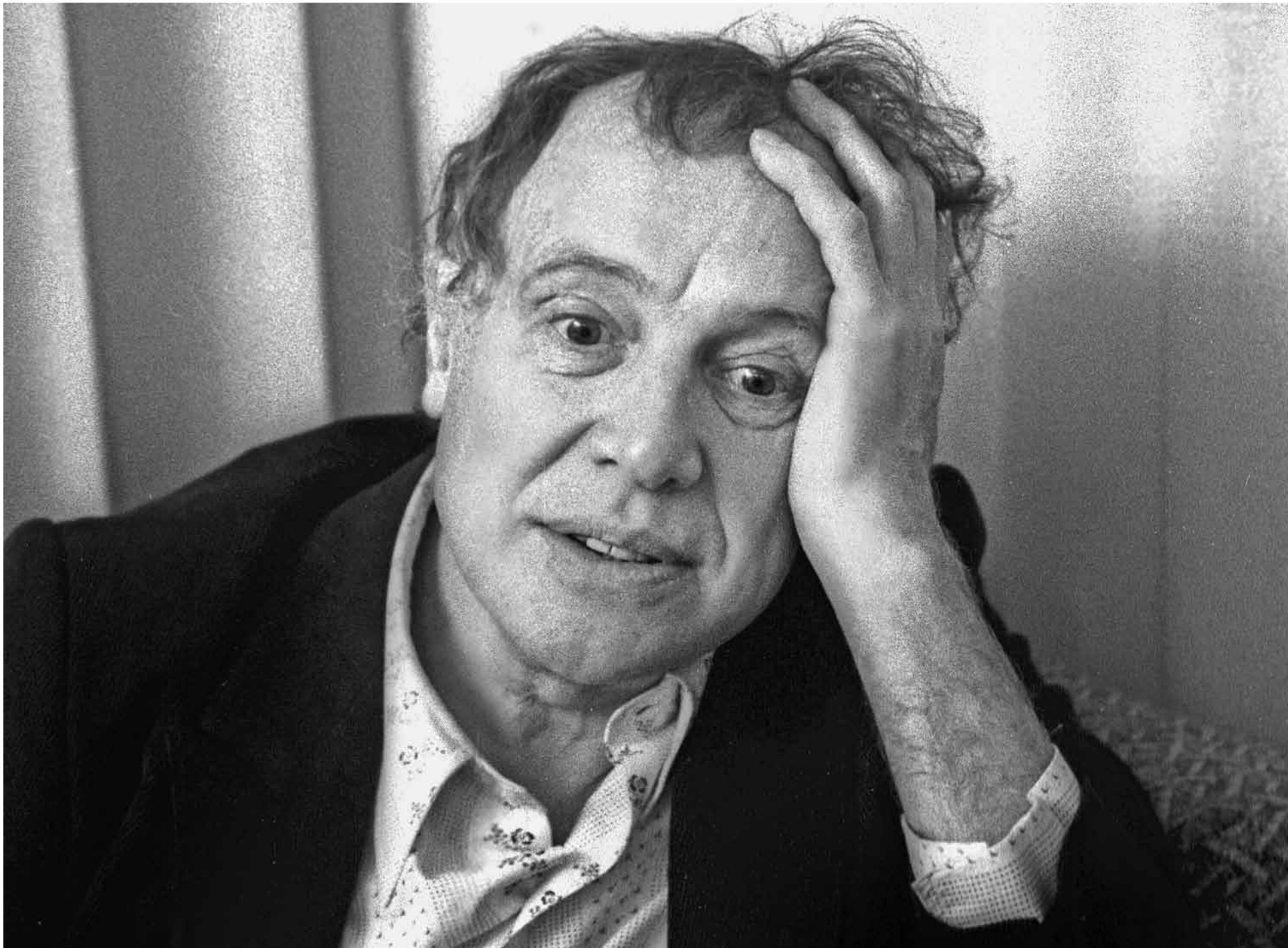
In this album you will see the pictures I took from the early 80s of the previous century to the last years of the current one. Of course, this is just a small extent of what I have done in the field of photojournalism in 40 years. Looking through my pictures, I realized that I had not left the profession I had received at the history faculty of Kuban University. My photo archive is a kind of a textbook on our contemporary history.

...35 years of work at Komsomolskaya Pravda have flown by in a single flash of a camera! Hundreds of work trips, most of them at the forefront of events — flashpoints, wars, disasters and cataclysms of the country and the world. In my photographs there is joy and sorrow, happiness and suffering — in other words, life. People and countries. The endless expanses of Russia and the trials it has gone through in recent decades. Its story is in the lens of my camera.

Your Vladimir Velengurin

FROM THE AUTHOR





Actor Innokenty Smoktunovsky

PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



Clown Oleg Popov

THE 1980s. THE STARS OF THE SOVIET ERA



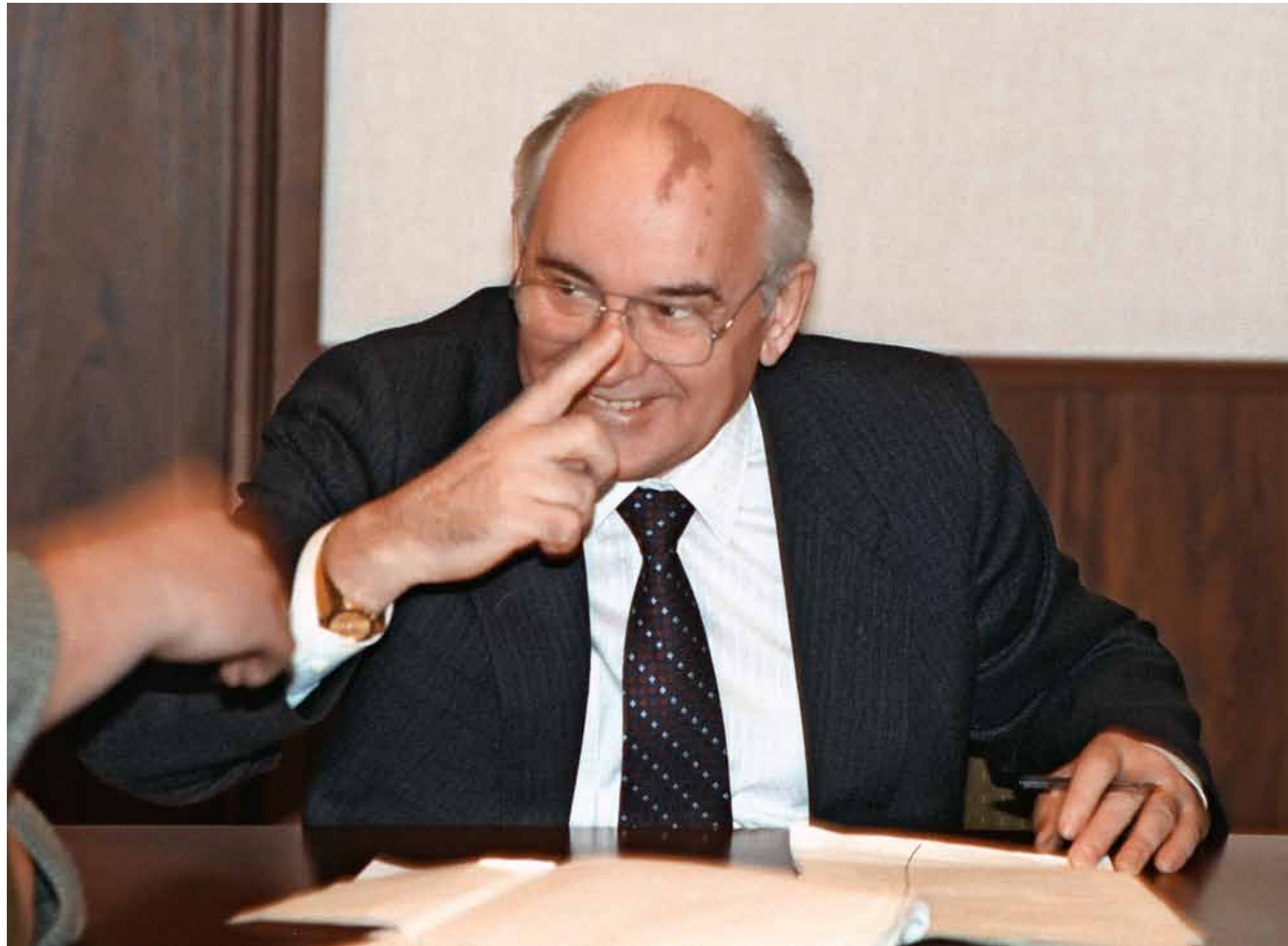
PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



THE 1980s. HEROES OF SOVIET NEWSPAPER STRIPS



Academician, "father" of the hydrogen bomb, dissident, deputy Andrei Sakharov



General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, President of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev





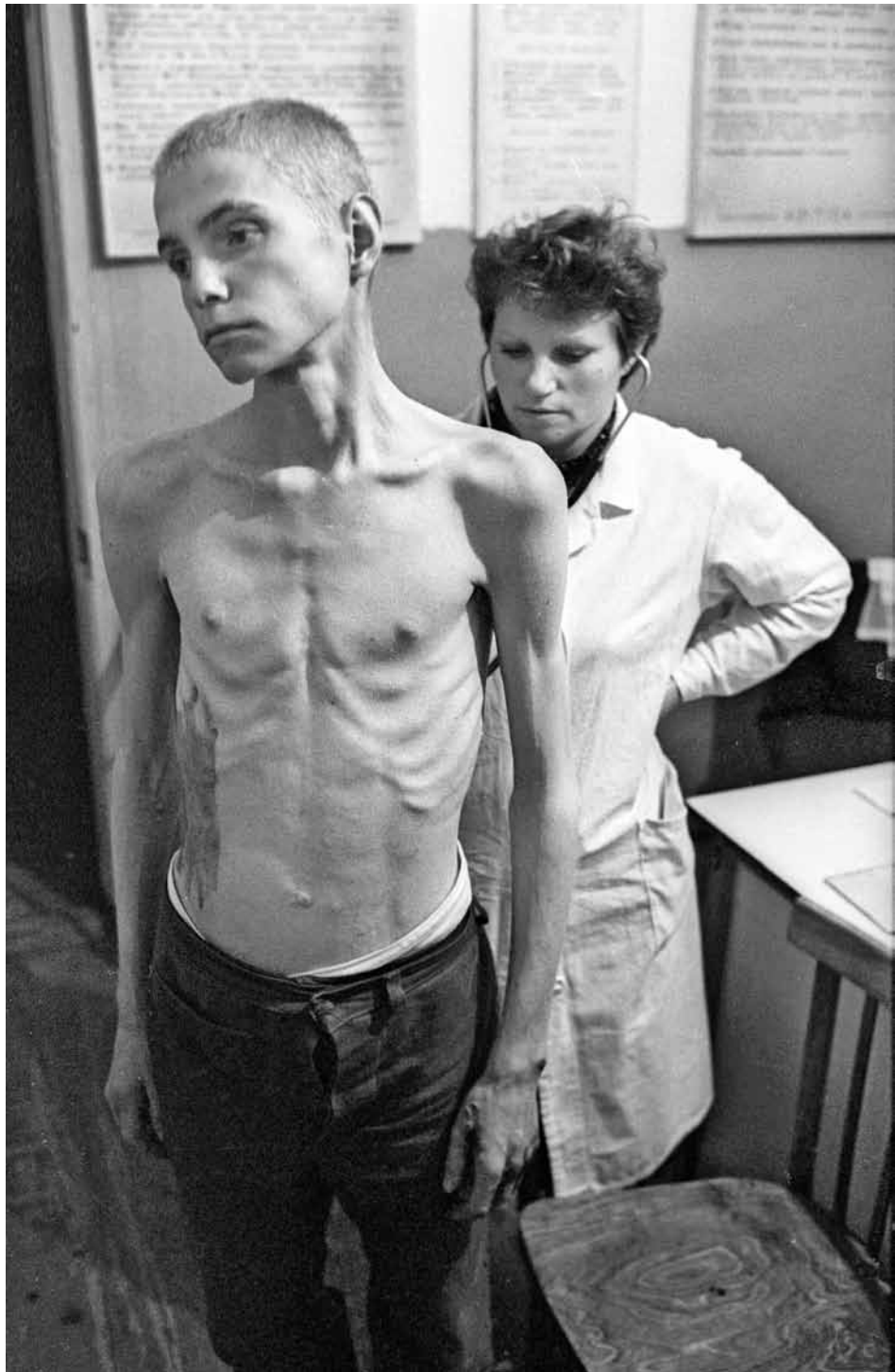
The Maikop juvenile hall was my first serious perestroika shoot. I worked there day and night for three days. This had never been published in newspapers, exhibited

at photo exhibitions, and, especially, had never been discussed in Krasnodar at the regional committee of the CPSU meetings.

PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



1987. MAIKOP JUVENILE HALL



15



When I was returning back from these shoots, the passengers immediately gave way to me and tried to keep a decent distance. Because I smelled like the Krasnodar landfill, where I photographed its inhabitants. You can't call them homeless, because everyone had their own place — a house made of garbage. For these people (dozens of people lived and worked here) there was no such thing as trash. They benefited from everything. Empty bottles were collected and sold, edible leftovers were used for food, discarded clothes were also used for their intended purpose. And, oddly enough, these people were quite happy...





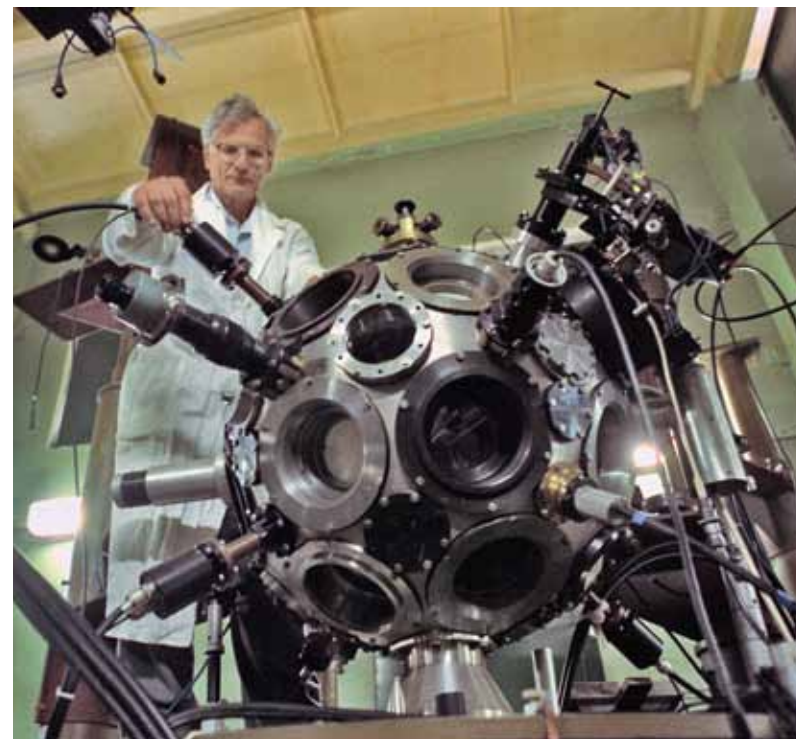
PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



Under the agreements with the United States, we have destroyed a huge number of weapons: tanks, planes, ammunition, missiles and nuclear warheads. The conversion of our military-industrial complex, begun during the perestroika years in the USSR and continued by the reformers of the Russian Federation in the 1990s, almost ended in the complete collapse of the defense industry, and was later condemned by experts.



1989, 1990. CONVERSION



We have got cities and test site from which outsiders are barred from entry and those who live there are only allowed in with special permits. These are, for example, the Arzamas-16 and Chelyabinsk-70 nuclear centers. Atomic weapons are being developed and manufactured here. Two small towns behind barbed wire, supporting the fragile nuclear balance in the world. The Arzamas

Museum displays the first Soviet atomic bomb, which is being taken a good care of to this day. By the way, in 1995 Arzamas-16 was renamed to the city of Sarov.

And at the Semipalatinsk test site, where similar bombs were tested, craters the size of a football field still remain from their explosions.



In 1990, I had to work hard to get permission to shoot the Far Eastern Voroshilov battery. This fortified fort controlled the sea approaches to Vladivostok for dozens of kilometers with 305mm weaponry. They were removed from a warship in the 1930s and installed on the Russky Island in

a heavily concreted fortified area with underground floors and 250-meter passages. Several years ago, I visited the battery again. Nowadays, a military museum has been opened there and everyone can visit and see that, which was a military secret 35 years ago.







In the early 90s, I photographed the life of the northern peoples — the Chukchi and the Ents. Few have heard of the latter. This tiny nation inhabits the mouth of the Yenisei, and therefore the Ents were called the Yenisei Samoyeds in the old days. Today, this endangered nationality numbers about two hundred people...



1990, 1993. PEOPLES OF THE NORTH

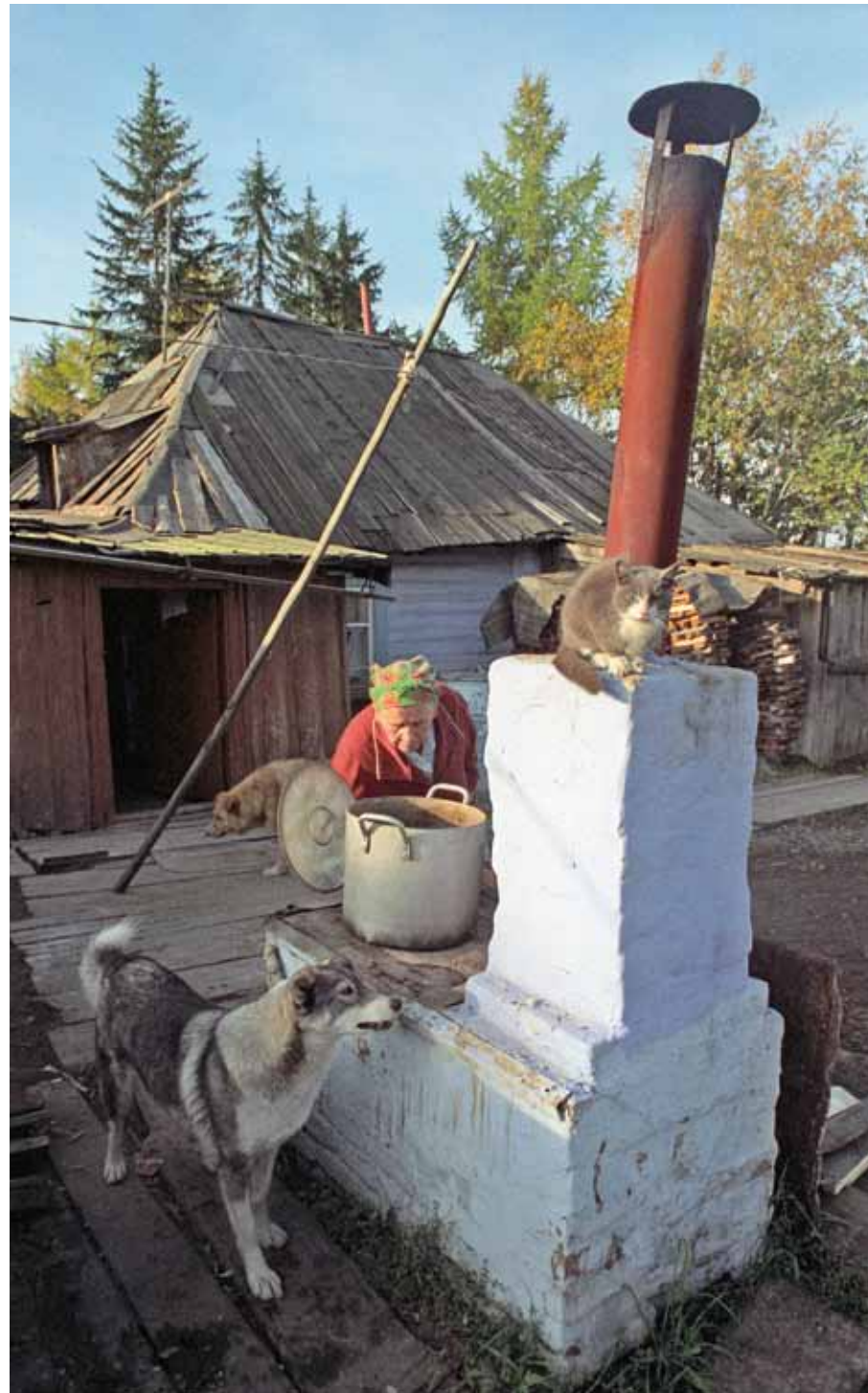


I first visited Norilsk in 1990, and I was immediately struck by the fact that many of the townspeople wore masks or respirators. Without a gas mask, you could just suffocate in the workshops where nickel was smelted. And the situation has not changed over the years...

PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



1990, 1996. RESIDENTS OF NORILSK





The founder of MMM (a pyramid scheme) Sergey Mavrodi and the crowd outside his office





The father of “shock therapy” Egor Gaidar



One of the “young reformers” Alexander Shokhin



The author of the privatization program Anatoly Chubais



Entrepreneur and politician Boris Berezovsky



1994. Visit of Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain



US President Bill Clinton at the Tsar Cannon



Russian President Boris Yeltsin

1993–1994. THE YELTSIN ERA

PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



1992, Serbian Krajina. Our peacekeepers not only ensured the ceasefire, but also carried out mine clearance



1993, Sarajevo. A group of Russian volunteers who fought on the side of the Serbs



1991, Tskhinval. The children of South Ossetia were under threat of Georgian shelling every minute



1991, South Ossetia. Georgian shelling of Tskhinvali



1992, Abkhazia. Georgians shot down a Russian humanitarian aid helicopter near the besieged city of Tkvarcheli



1999, Dagestan. A volunteer is preparing to fight back against Chechen militants who invaded his homeland



1991, South Ossetia. The militia used weapons taken from the museum against the Georgians



1994, Yugoslavia. Russian volunteers commander Alexander Shkrabov at the grave of a friend. He will be buried next to him in a month



1992, Abkhazia. The women of the besieged city of Tkvarcheli



1992, the Ossetian-Ingush conflict

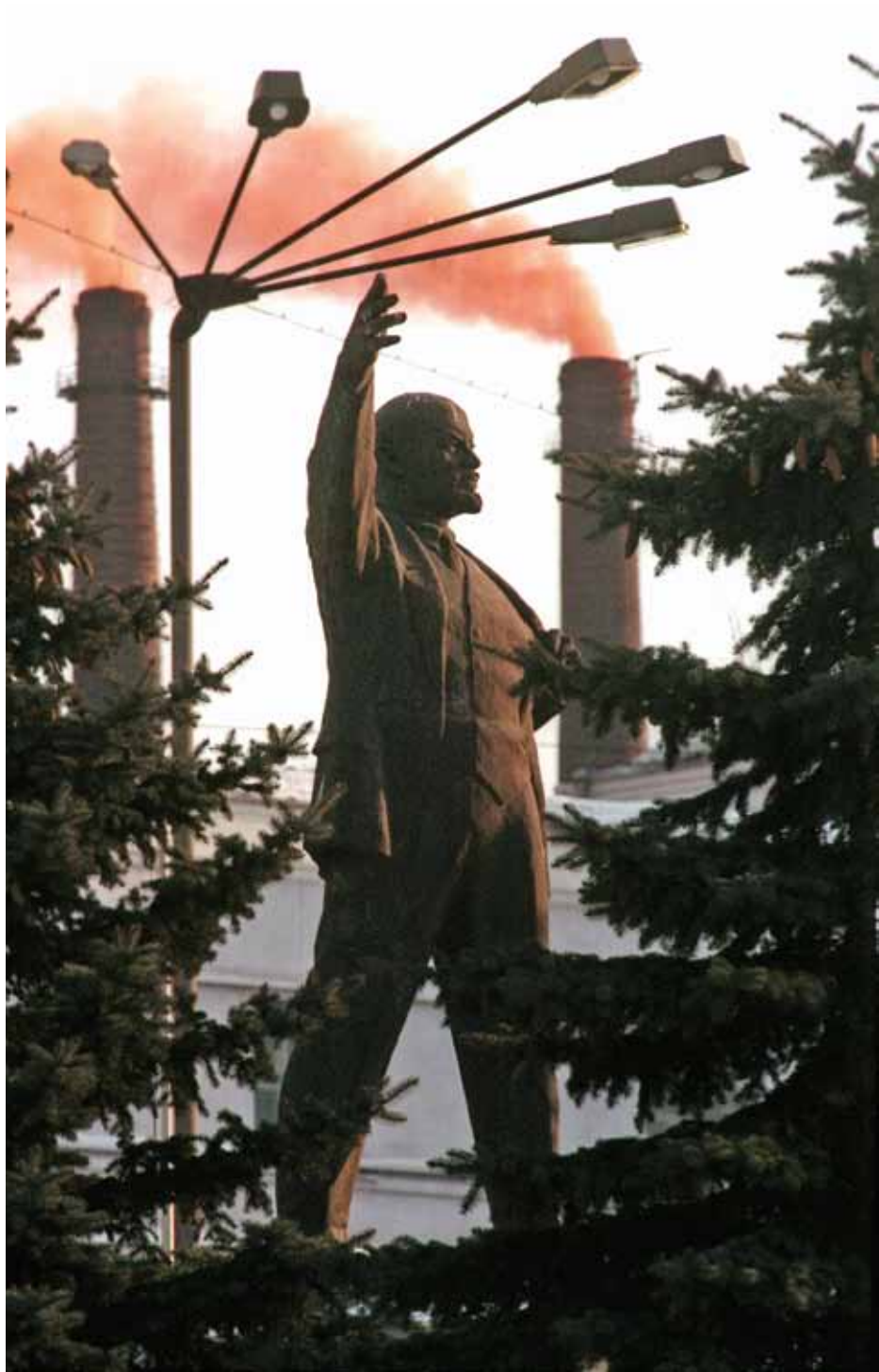


1999, Dagestan. Artillery shoots Chechen militants



There are many pictures of monuments to Vladimir Lenin in my archive, in a state that they have survived into the present day. From an iconic superhuman and an almost deity-like figure, he gradually assumes the role assigned to him by History. And the condition of his monuments seems to confirm this.

They are collapsing and disappearing into oblivion, but Lenin's failed dream of creating an equal and just society of the future has not disappeared. His ideas will definitely outlive his monuments.







In 1991, I found myself in another world. I was brought to the village of Burny in the Krasnoyarsk Krai, where the Old Believers live. In summer, you can only get here by river, and by a light plane that lands on the ice of the frozen river in winter. The village was founded by several Old Believer families who fled collectivization and persecution for their faith in the 1930s.

Since then, they have been living their lives here according to their own principles. They hunt animals, fish, and work the land in vegetable gardens. They keep thick church books inherited from their ancestors and employ old rituals such as cross themselves with two fingers. ...I visited here again in 2019. And after almost 30 years, little has changed.



On the night of September 1, 1983, an unknown aircraft violated Soviet airspace in the Far East. Military pilot Lieutenant Colonel Gennady Osipovich, who was on air defense duty on Sakhalin, raised his Su-15 TM on alert and tried to force the intruder aircraft to land. Osipovich fired a salvo of warning shots. There was no reaction and the Lieutenant Colonel, having received an order to destroy the target, shot two missiles, taking down the plane, which turned out to be a Korean Air Lines (KAL) Boeing-747 passenger liner. It was

travelling from New York City to Seoul via Anchorage, Alaska. All 269 people on board were killed. The tragedy caused an aggravation of the already difficult relations between the United States and the USSR. A year later, Gennady Osipovich was awarded the Order of the Red Star "for achievements in combat and political training"...

I took these pictures a decade after the tragedy, in 1993.







Morning, October 4, 1993, the first tank shot hit the White House. The shot, as legendary as the one fired by the Aurora Cruiser, that signalled the beginning of the socialist revolution. But this time it signified an opposite shift in social order — from socialism to capitalism.

...Yesterday, I photographed a huge crowd of protesters walk along the Garden Ring and sweep several rows of OMON riot police and internal troops cordoning off the street near the Crimean Bridge. Then, at the White House, General Makashov, with a assault rifle in his hands, called on the raging crowd of people to get on the buses to storm the television center in Ostankino.

The next morning, I went to the bridge near the White House. It was already full of onlookers. The first bursts were fired from infantry fighting vehicles at the building's facade, leaving black marks on it. Tanks drove onto the bridge. I trailed behind them, risking getting run over by their tracks. And then a nearby tank shot rang out. A cloud of dust rose from the central part of the building where the shell hit. I took a few frantic photos and rushed to the editorial office. There, on the already printed out picture, I saw the time of the shot — the clock on the White House showed 10:05 (see next page for the photo).







The hunt is only possible when there are no waves. That is because even behind the lightest waves, the walrus's small head is not visible, and the animal does not let you get close to it. First, the Chukchi hunters shoot a carbine next to the animal to scare it (if they kill it right away, the walrus's body will drown). The walrus gets scared and takes a dive, while exposing its powerful body. At that exact moment, the bullet is shot at the animal. After a few minutes, the walrus emerges back from the water. The hunters shoot

near his head again and injure it when it takes another dive. This is repeated several times until the exhausted animal lets the hunters get close enough from where it can be harpooned.

Walrus can be hunted from several boats at the same time, but the trophy goes to those who harpooned it first.



1993. WALRUS HUNT



PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



The city of Grozny, February 1995. After the bombing, the central bank of Grozny was left in ruins. And the previously useless old Soviet money still deposited in the bank has found a new use as fuel to keep the chilled soldiers warm.





PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



1994–1996. THE FIRST CHECHEN WAR



1996, Chechnya. After the signing of the Khasavyurt Accords, Muslim laws began to be introduced here. Women began to cover their faces. A Sharia court began to function. Drunkenness became punishable by law. The guilty are publicly beaten with sticks.

I decided to experience this punishment myself. I went and surrendered to the court, since I had drunk a bottle of beer that evening, which I confessed to sincerely (beer was sold everywhere in Grozny). I laid down on a bench and received two very strong blows with a stick on my back. I could not stand it any longer and jumped off the chopping block. Two bloody whip marks appeared on my back.

The next day, I shot the public flogging with understanding. There were no smiles on the faces of the convicts.

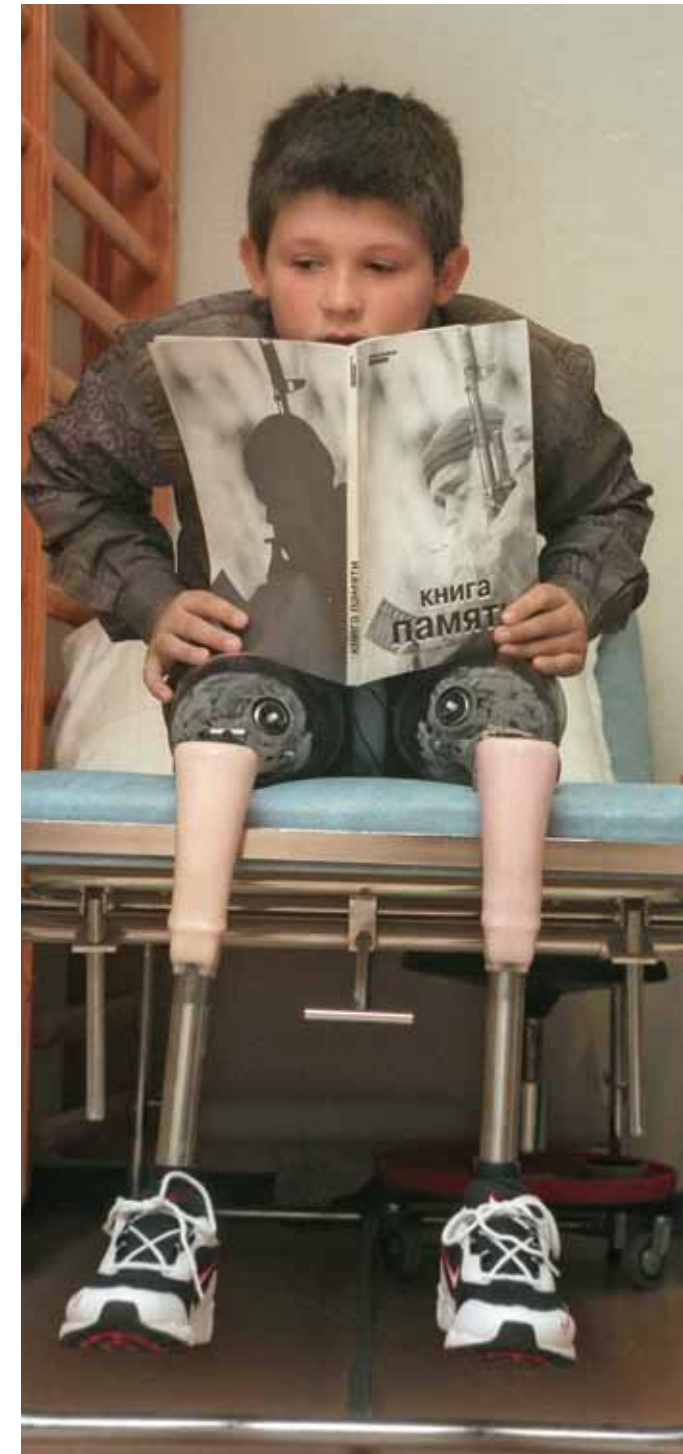


In January 1995, I accidentally photographed seven-year-old Misha Epifantsev in Grozny a few minutes after the mortar attack. The boy's legs were blown off by the explosion.

The next day, I photographed Misha in the hospital, where his mother was crying over the amputated boy. Then these shocking photos were published in Komsomolskaya Pravda on the first page. And that terrifying publication helped Misha and his family get out of the nightmare of war. They found out about him in Sweden and compassionate foreigners raised money for the treatment and prosthetics for the boy. These funds were also enough to buy an apartment in Tolyatti, where his family moved from the destroyed Grozny.

I continued to follow the fate of Misha and told the readers of the newspaper how his future fate developed. Today he still lives in Tolyatti and works as a programmer.

For me, the story of Misha Epifantsev is probably the most important thing I've done in photojournalism.





Gennady Bochkarev, a correspondent for Komsomolskaya Pravda, and I spent a long time persuading Mstislav Zapashny, an animal tamer, to take pictures of his elephants on a Sochi beach. But the most difficult part of this adventurous photo shoot was finding the right beach. That is because the elephants have rather delicate feet and they cannot just walk on any

kinds of stones. We examined the entire coast and it turned out that only the central beach of the city would suit the picky elephants. In order not to put beachgoers at risk, the shooting was organized at dawn, at 4 AM. As a reward, the tamer treated the elephants to beer. And it turns out that elephants like beer, too.





Combat divers are a classified elite unit in the Navy, which I managed to shoot twice. The troops are armed with unique weapons that can be fired even underwater.





In 1996, I was in Chernobyl for the second time (ten years after the tragedy). A press tour was organized for journalists along the Power Unit 4 — The Ghost Town of Pripyat route. I had already shot all this the previous time, and therefore I asked to be shown the nearest cemetery. After much persuasion, I was taken there, being warned that decontamination had not been properly carried out there and it was unknown what level of radiation there was. When choosing the right angle for a picture between the graves, I kept thinking about it. When I reached the spot from which the emergency power unit was visible through the graves and dry trees in the fog, an unusual thing happened: the camera shutter clicked once and... refused to shoot further! I pulled out a second camera — and with another click the camera refused to function once again. What kind of mysticism was that!? There was no time to figure out why the equipment was not working. I was already getting shouted at to get out of a dangerous place urgently. When I returned to the car, the cameras were working again...

In total, I took two pictures at the cemetery — you can see one of them.



Radioactive equipment in Chernobyl. Later, it disappeared from here. The Ukrainians either sold it, or disassembled it for spare parts, or melted it down. No comments...



The religious procession of thousands of pilgrims with the Velikoretsk Icon of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker takes place annually from 3 to 8 June. It spans across about one and a half hundred kilometers in the Kirov region. Pilgrims spend the night in the fields.



1998. VELIKORETSKY RELIGIOUS PROCESSION



These photos show diggers — people who explore the city's urban dungeons. The most famous Moscow digger is Vadim Mikhailov. I once caddied for a few underground trips. The sensations from these descents were mixed. One of them was a walk along the Neglinka underground river, which is walled up in a brick pipe with a diameter of several meters. You can even go rafting on a rubber boat along the river. This “tourist dungeon” is designed for those who do not suffer from claustrophobia. Otherwise, the diggers’ “underground Moscow” consists of narrow trenches of underground utilities with rotten pipes and cables. It seems that once you get down here, you will never be able to get out of these labyrinths. I was scared to look at the rotten pipes. It seemed that they would burst from a light touch and the tragedy from the disaster movie “Metro” would be repeated.





In Soviet times, and even later, in the Russian nineties, the army personnel was often shipped off into the fields to harvest crops. For their work, the soldiers received a “barter payment” — in this case, they got paid in cabbage for the soldiers’ cabbage soup.





Film director Leonid Gaidai



Film actor Yuri Nikulin



Poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko and his wife



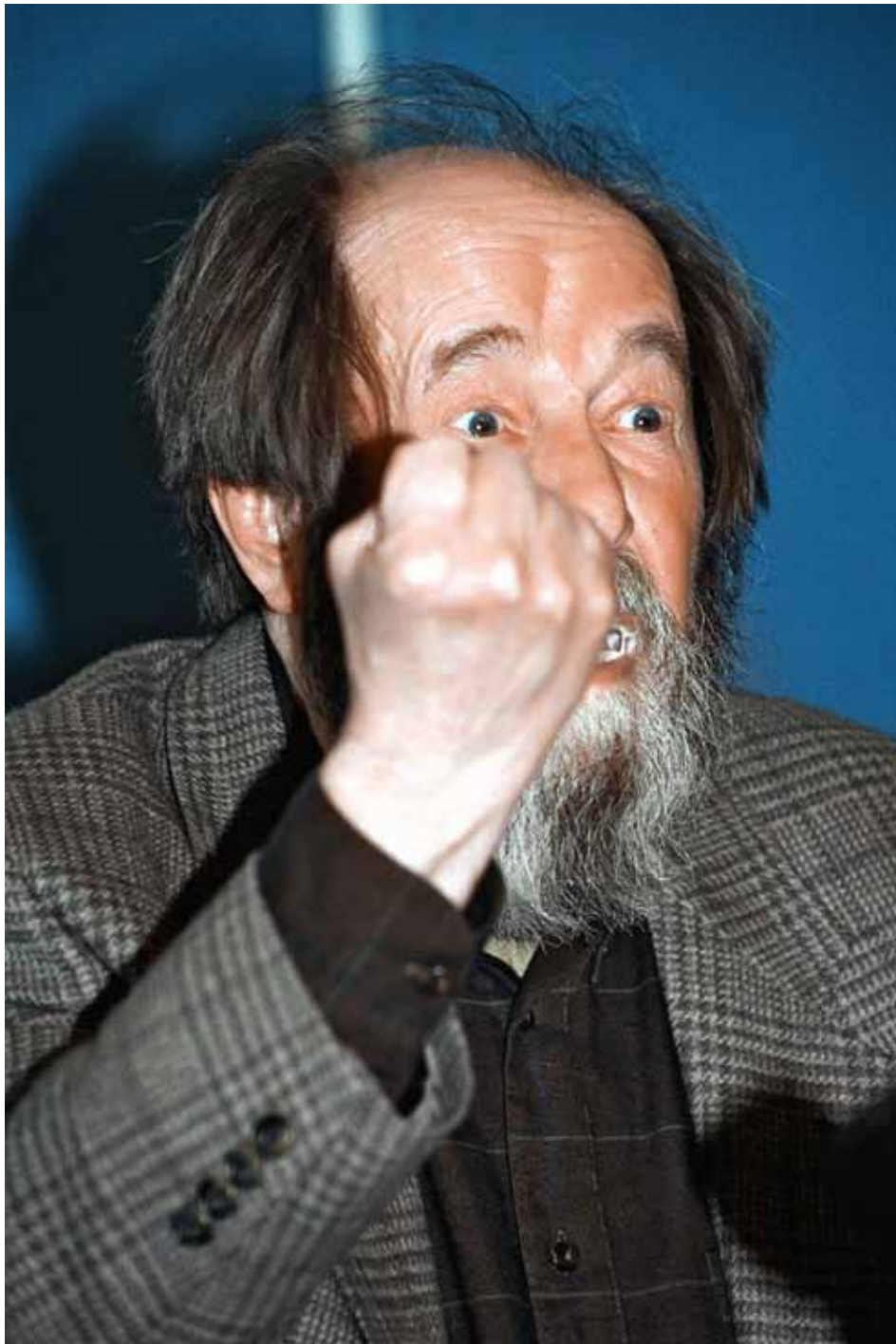
Satirist Mikhail Zhvanetsky



Film director Andron Konchalovsky



Film actor Arnold Schwarzenegger



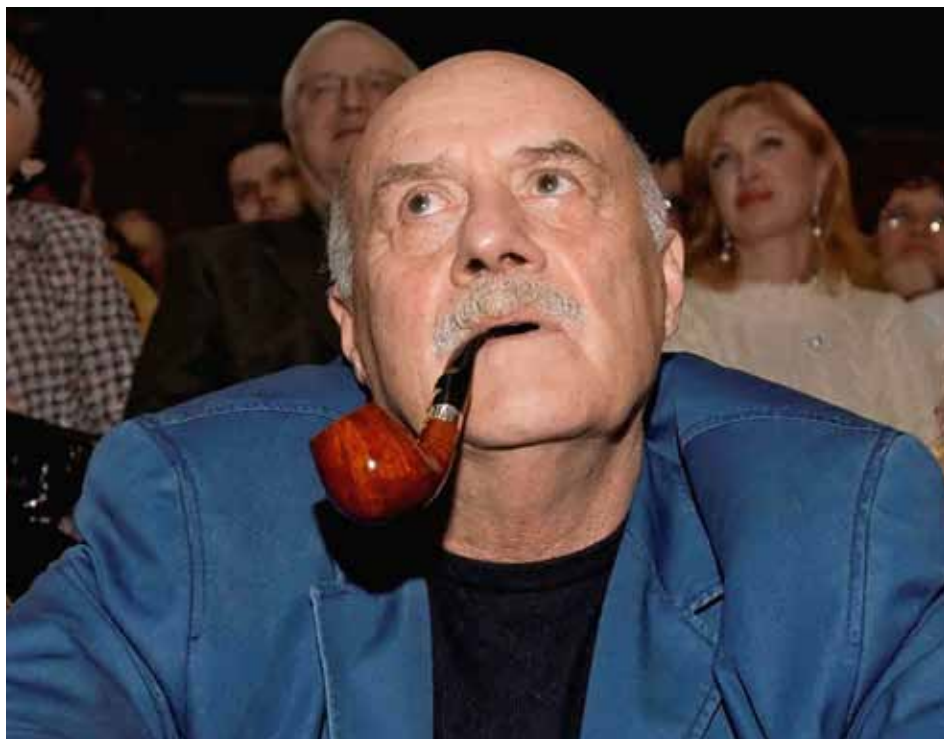
Writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn in the editorial office of Komsomolskaya Pravda



Film director Quentin Tarantino in Russia



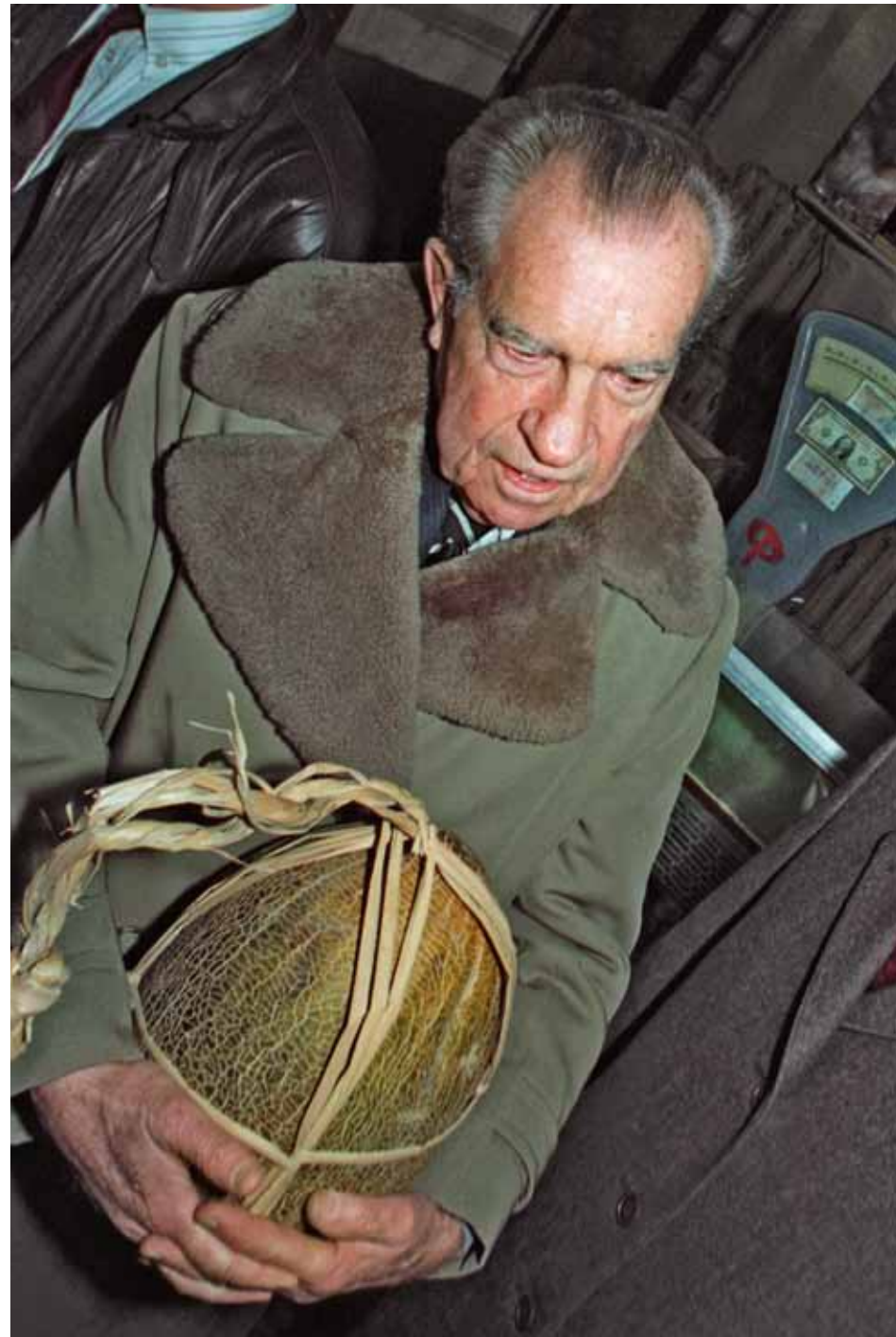
Songwriter and singer Alexander Rosenbaum



Film director Stanislav Govorukhin



Film actor Gerard Depardieu on the set of the sitcom Zaitsev+1



Former US President Richard Nixon with a melon, gifted to him at the Central Market of Moscow



Singer Joseph Kobzon



The showman Nikolai Fomenko



Film actors Mikhail Galustyan and Gerard Depardieu



Film actor Victor Sukhorukov



Singer Dima Bilan



Socialite Anna Semenovich and film actor Andrei Gaidulyan



March 2000. This tank fires point-blank at houses in the lowlands of the Chechen village of Komsomolskoye, where militants are surrounded, from a hundred meters away. There is nothing left of the houses, only foundations. Just yesterday, the militants were shooting back briskly from the basements.

I had to crawl on all fours in the mud in order to shoot photos. There were bodies of militants here and there. Some were crushed by tanks so that it was impossible to tell where their flesh ended and where the dirt began.

I photographed the tanks firing from behind and from the side, but I felt that I didn't have the shot I needed. And I wouldn't, unless I climbed onto

the firing tank. Otherwise, you can't see where it's shooting. I climbed up and squatted behind its turret. Then I stood up. It was scary to stand upright — I was becoming such a good target. And it was also hard to keep my balance as the tank was firing its shot as there was quite a shake. But I immediately forgot about fear when I started taking photos. The hardest part was capturing the shot itself. Back then, we were shooting on film, and you couldn't see the result like you can now on a digital camera. The tank fired about two shots per minute. After waiting for the right moment, I stood up to my full height and snapped. Several shots later, I left the position. That is how this photo came about.





The year 2000, the mountainous part of Chechnya. At dawn the paratroopers returned from a raid in which they were looking for militants. They didn't take me with them. I hardly slept all night — it was creepy, cold and damp in the tent. The soldiers collapsed from exhaustion upon their return.

Lying down side by side, huddled together from the cold. I remember how I barely overcame fatigue to get up and take a photo in the dark with my hands shaking from the cold. This Sleeping Soldiers picture was recognized as the Photo of the year at the Interfoto 2001 photo contest.



On the left is a picture that won an award in the international World Press Photo contest: pictured on it is some kind of bizarre imagery. Let me explain. This is not a resort, but the city of Grozny in May 2000. Three months ago, the city was liberated from the militants, but the situation has not settled yet. Shots can be heard, and sometimes the roar of explosions. This is the very center of the city, the roof of the only surviving high-rise building opposite the circus. Here, a detachment of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was located. I asked to pay them a visit to take pictures of panoramic views of the destroyed city from above.

I got to the roof and saw... a beach scene. Soldier were sunbathing in the spring sun. My appearance with a camera caused some commotion, but I calmed the sunbathers down by saying that I was taking a picture of a sniper. He was standing on the roof with a rifle, monitoring the situation. I took only a few shots so as not to disturb this “beach”. To be honest, I had other things on my mind. An hour ago, I was shooting the place where Tyumen photojournalist Alexander Yefremov died. He was in a car that hit a mine. Covered up bodies lay next to the crater... Just three hours ago, he and I were in the same car, but our paths diverged. I wanted to take panoramic views of the ruined Grozny, and he went to do a story about his fellow countrymen fighting. All my thoughts were on what had happened. I worked mechanically, not realizing that I had taken a photo on the roof that would soon become one of my most famous shots.









A firefighter pictured on the top of the Ostankino TV Tower in 2000. The fire did not reach the Seventh Heaven restaurant, but all the snow-white tablecloths were covered with ashes and soot. What I remember most about that day was the endless climb up (of course, without an elevator and with no lights on), up steep stairs, stumbling over scattered fire extinguishers, past

snapped thick cables that had previously provided stability to the tower. I came up here with the first group of firefighters. One of them immediately plopped down at the set table — when else will there be an opportunity to sit in such a restaurant!



2000. FIRE AT OSTANKINO TV TOWER



Ahmad Shah Massoud is an Afghan field commander of Tajik origin (the Panjshir Lion). After the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, he became the leader of the northeastern region of the country with a population of 2.5 million people. From 1992 to 1996, he was the Minister of Defense of Afghanistan. On September 9, 2001, an attempt was made on Masoud's life and the next morning he died of his injuries. This is a historical photo. A month

before his death, Massoud gave an interview to Komsomolskaya Pravda in his office, where he was later blown up. I remember that after several days of waiting, the conversation about the current situation in the country lasted about 10-15 minutes. He didn't want to be filmed and was in a hurry. I only took a few photos. The interview was only published in the newspaper when there was an informational occasion — his death.

PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



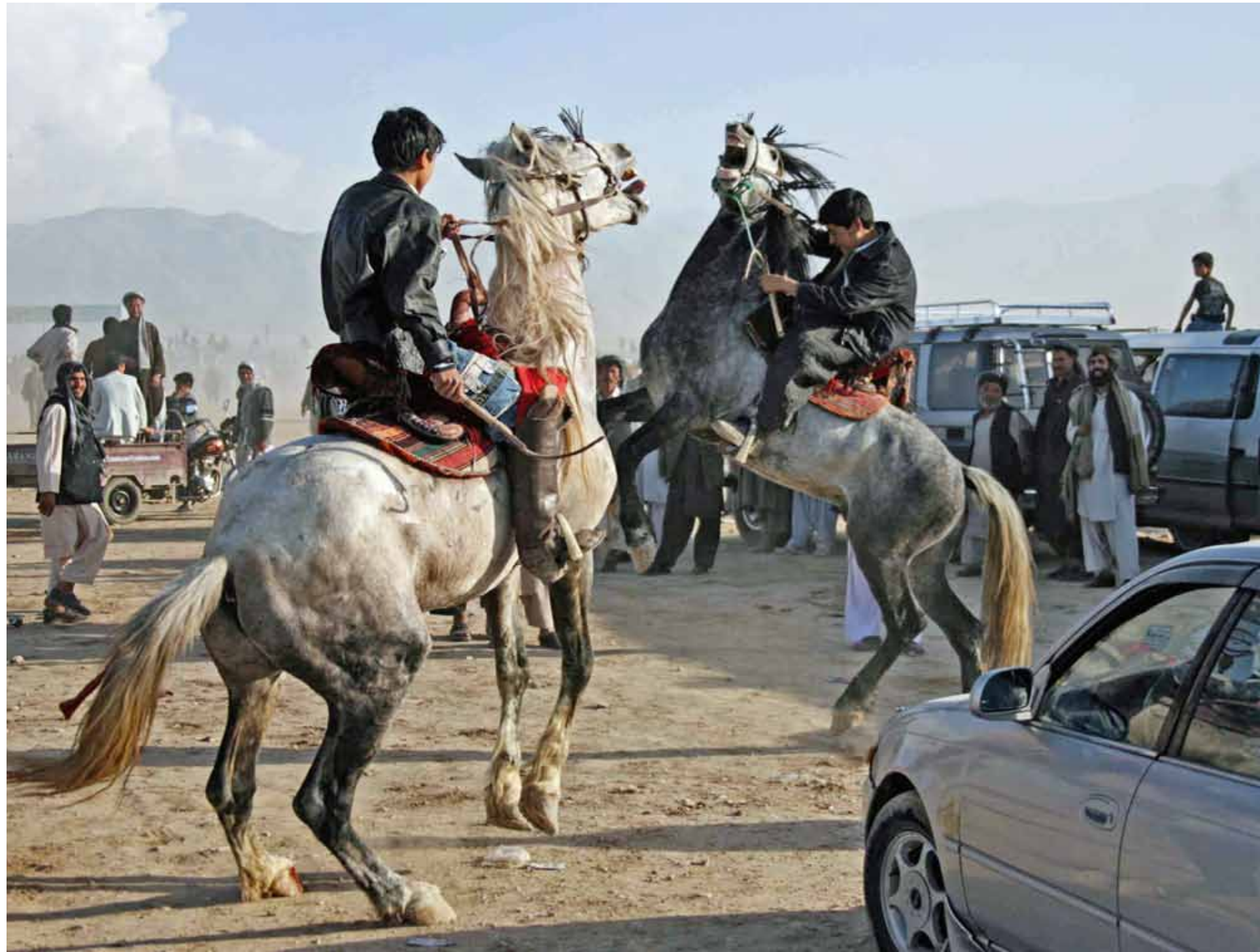
In this photo, an armed Afghani sits on the windowsill of Tajbeg Palace, which was stormed by Soviet special forces in December, in 1979. They say that the Afghan leader Hafizullah Amin was assassinated in this very room...



2001. AFGHANISTAN AFTER THE AFGHANI WAR

95





PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



2001. AFGHANISTAN AFTER THE AFGHANI WAR



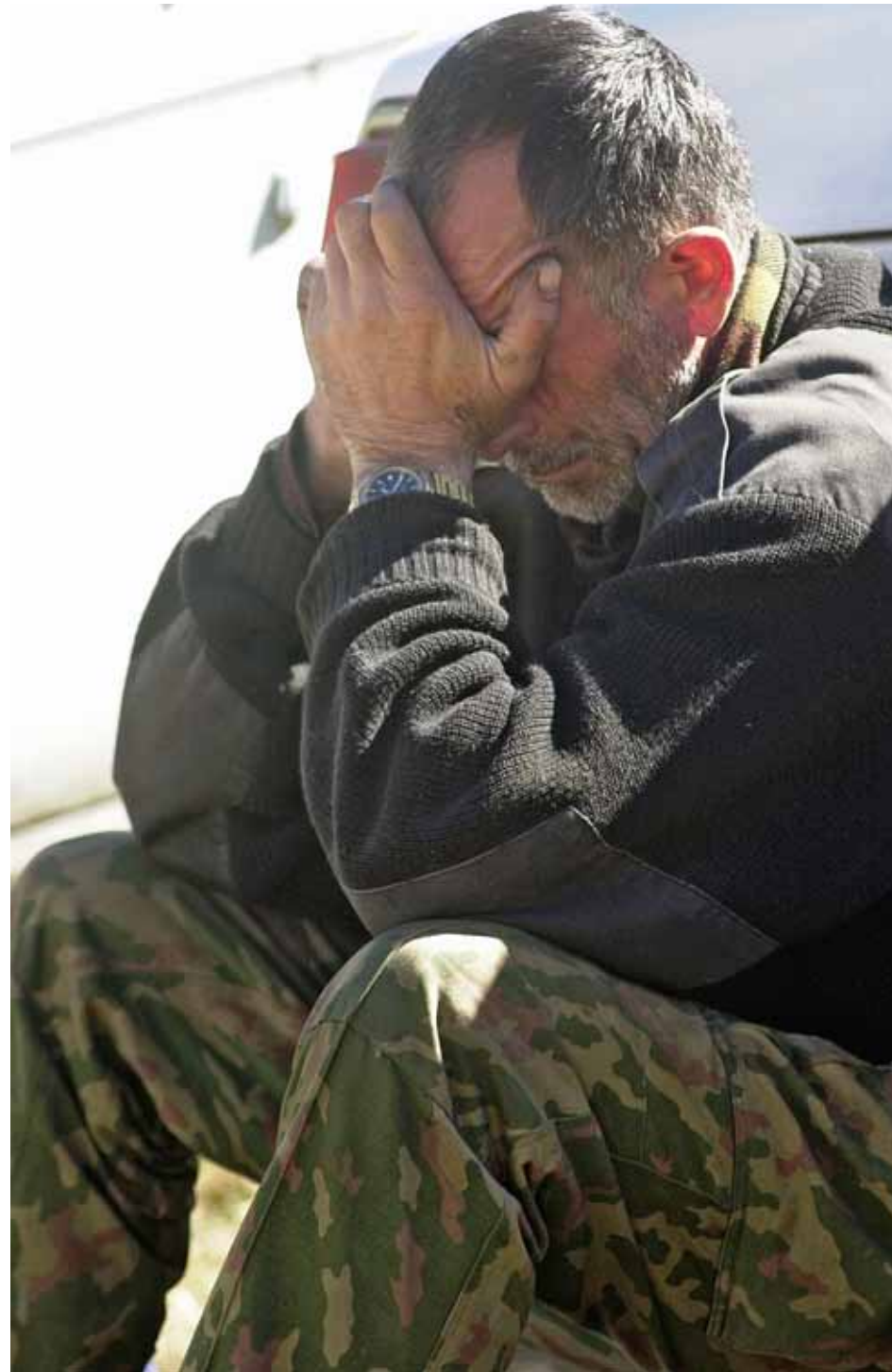
On September 20, 2002, the Kolka glacier came down in the Karmadon gorge in North Ossetia. The rock-ice slide covered 125 people... Among them is 42-person film crew of the movie *The Messenger*, along with the film's

director, Sergei Bodrov Jr. The search for the dead lasted about a year and a half. However, large-scale rescue and search operations did not lead to the discovery of the bodies.

PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



2002. NATURAL DISASTER AT THE KARMADON GORGE





After the end of the Chechen wars, the local OMON riot police brought order to the republic. I have participated in their operations to detain and destroy gangs several times. The OMON forces themselves suffered serious losses. Every time I visited their base, I went to the memorial wall, where I saw new plaques

with the faces of those who were no longer alive. Chief of Staff Buvadi Dahiev was the first to rush into the hotspots and fearlessly led his subordinates. For the first time, I photographed the OMON when Dahiev was carrying the body of his fallen comrade at the funeral. And the last photo was at his own grave instead...



In 2002, Matvey Shparo's expedition with two wheelchair users conquered the highest peak in North America, Mount McKinley. I was shooting the start of the expedition and, honestly, did not believe in its success. During training, climbers and people with disabilities were exhausted when they overcame steep climbs. As the least burdened member of the expedition, I was assigned to hang rations on the pharmacy scales, which included nuts, sweets, raisins, biscuits. The rations were very small. After packing, I had some extra food left, and I added it to the standard portions. I decided that the climbers would be happy about this. But I was exposed and forced to remove the excess. Every extra gram mattered on the difficult climb. Maybe if I hadn't been exposed, the expedition wouldn't have had a successful ending.





On October 23, 2002, forty Chechen militants took 912 people hostage at the Dubrovka Theater Center in Moscow, where the musical Nord-Ost was being performed. The terrorists mined the auditorium and planted 19 female suicide bombers with “shahid belts”. Due to the threat of mass deaths, the FSB

special forces launched an assault in the early morning of October 26, using soporific gas. All the terrorists were eliminated, but 130 hostages were also killed (many died in hospitals due to asphyxiation)... 782 people survived.





Not everyone knows that in the Krasnodar region on the Taman Peninsula there are real mud volcanoes with warm therapeutic mud. Such as, for example, the one in this photo. In Soviet times, it was perceived as a simple mud pit, but in the 90s, go-getters turned this place into a source of profit. Thousands of vacationers began visiting here. Some to get treatment, some seeking unusual sensations — when you bathe in dense volcanic slush, you experience the effect of weightlessness... And then you can rinse off in the Sea of Azov, which splashes nearby — literally a hundred meters from the crater of the mud volcano.



2003. SWIMMING IN A MUD VOLCANO



The maroon beret is the highest form of distinction of the special forces of the National Guard of Russia, which is a source of pride for their owners. The right to wear it is granted by taking the most difficult exams held twice a year, reminiscent of real combat operations. This is a real test with colossal physical exertion, which not everyone can handle. And only the best of the best receive the right to wear the maroon beret.





The restoration of Vera Mukhina's 24-meter masterpiece, which has been noticeably dilapidated since 1937, dragged on for six whole years — from 2003 to 2009. The monument was disassembled into 40 fragments, each of which was carefully studied, to establish the degree of corrosion and defects.

Ten percent of the parts had to be completely replaced. After the restoration work, the weight of the monument's frame more than doubled to 185 tons, and the height of the pavilion-pedestal increased to 34.5 meters (now housing a museum and an exhibition center).



May 9th, 2004. An explosion at a stadium in Grozny during a festive parade claimed the life of Chechen President Akhmat Kadyrov. I was standing to the side of the podium about seven meters away and photographed my friends at the riot police. And suddenly it felt like I was flying... Then I heard the roar of an explosion. I was thrown several meters away. Everything was shrouded in clouds of dust and smoke. And in this shroud, indiscriminate assault rifle gunfire began. I realized that I couldn't feel my legs. I reached for them with my hands. Still there. I fumbled for my camera, picked it up, and took a few pictures. There were people lying around. The gunfire stopped. I could barely get up, my legs were hurting. They were hit by fragments of shattered bricks. I had a hard time turning around and then hobbled towards the podium. The gunfire started again. ...Several bodies are lying in front of the podium. A man who looks like

the commandant is coming down from the tribune, his face white from dust — blood is pouring from his eye. The commander of the North-Caucasian group is being carried away — his leg is torn off. Local photojournalist Adlan Khasanov, with whom I spoke about 15 minutes ago, is lying in a pool of blood. He can't be helped anymore... The guards are carrying a body that is not visible. I'm trying to squeeze through. One of the guards raises his assault rifle over my camera and says, "I'm gonna smash it!" About 10 minutes after the explosion, the stadium is almost empty. The wounded and dead have been taken away. The bomb squad is dispersing the others — everyone is afraid of a repeat explosion. My legs reminded me of themselves — blood was oozing out, and right there, at the exit from the stadium, my wounds got bandaged. It finally dawned on me that I am alive! This time I dodged a bullet.



Alexey Nemov



Evgeniya Kanaeva



Svetlana Khorkina and Carly Patterson





The North Pole is like a magnet that attracts people. There's nothing to see here, though. It is an ordinary snow-and-ice desert. But with the onset of the polar day at the end of April, travelers are drawn here, despite the frosts below -30°C . Dmitry Shparo and his son Matvey are one of the most famous polar explorers.

Dmitry led the famous Komsomolskaya Pravda expedition, which came to the North Pole from the mainland on skis back in 1979. And Matvey Shparo, along with Boris Smolin, skied along the same path on a polar night. Now Matvey conducts annual youth polar expeditions.







Naina and Boris Yeltsin with Evgeny Kafelnikov at the Kremlin Cup



Maria Sharapova



These photos were taken on the Caspian Sea in Dagestan in the mid-2000s. The poachers caused a real mess here back then and the number of sturgeons sharply decreased. Even the border guards were involved in the rescue of the species. They began to monitor the and boat and speedboat activity at the sea. The local population, who traditionally fish, reacted negatively to these raids by the border guards, but ultimately had to comply.



2006. FIGHT AGAINST POACHERS OF THE CASPIAN SEA



In the Tuapse region, a flock of chimpanzees settled freely in the forest



Sunset in Chukotka



A drop in a cave on the Kuril Islands



A seal cub against the backdrop of the Baikal pulp and paper mill



A woodpecker in a forest near Moscow



Fyodor Bondarchuk with his wife



Mikhail Boyarsky with his reflection



Dmitry Dyuzhev with a double



Mikhail Efremov with me, in the elevator



Egor Konchalovsky, with a whistle



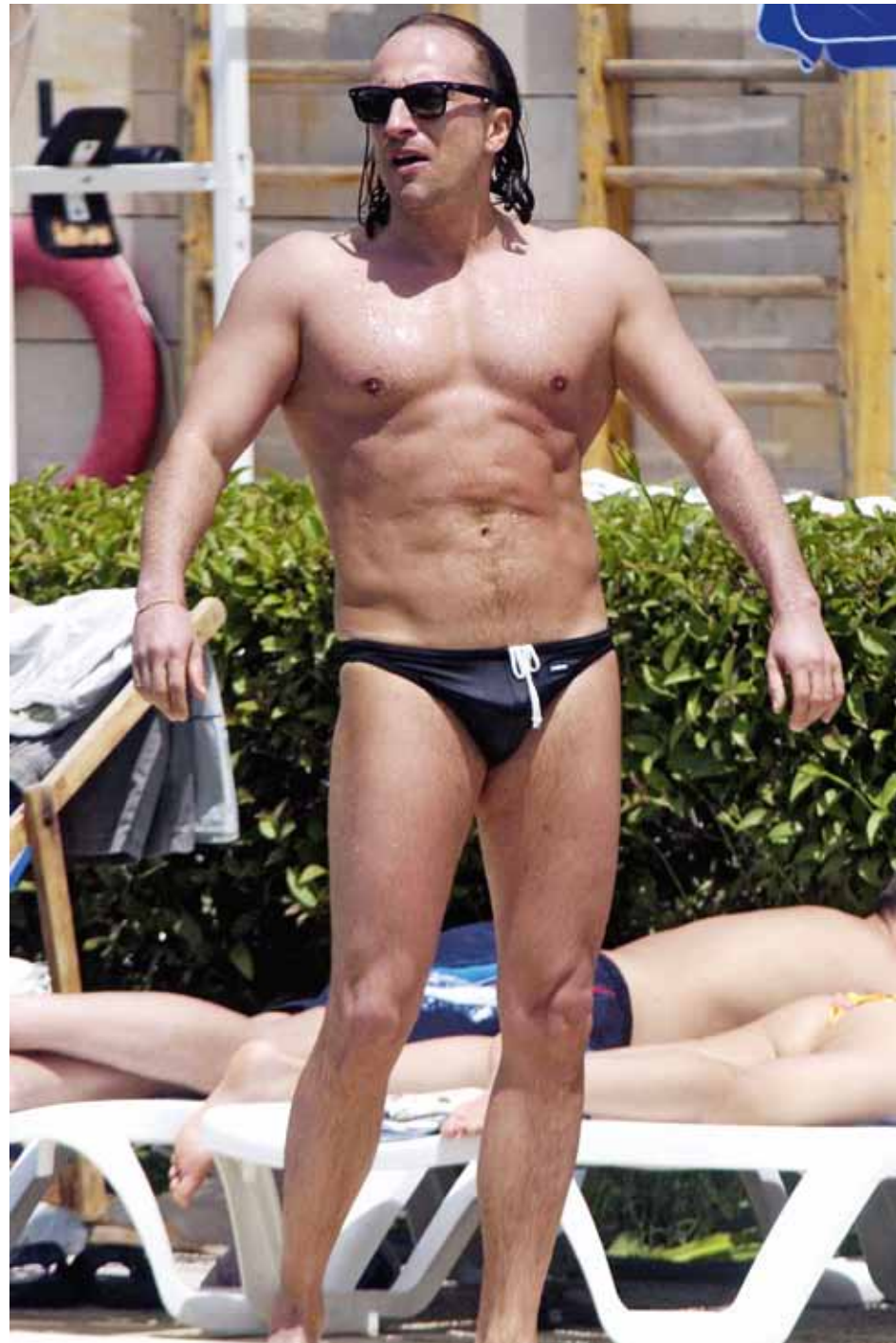
Oleg Yankovsky with a pipe



Alexander Strizhenov with Leonid Yakubovich



Nina Kurpyakova



Dmitry Nagiev



Nikita Mikhalkov









Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations rescuers at the site in Japan, helping to clean-up the aftermath of the tsunami that destroyed coastal cities

PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



2011. THE FUKUSHIMA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT DISASTER



08.15.2019. Pilot Damir Yusupov crash landed the plane in a cornfield. Everyone survived



07.10.2011. Mystic shot: lightning struck the crash site of the Bulgaria cruiseship



14.03.2004. A fire of the highest category of difficulty at the Moscow Manege



12.06.1997. The military transport aircraft AN-124 Ruslan crashed in Irkutsk



05.10.2001. Flood in Lensk

This is one of my main subjects. The rescuers of the Ministry of Emergency Situations are always the first to come to the rescue. They give their strength, and sometimes their lives. These photos show only a fraction of the country's major emergency events, captured on dozens of missions since the early 1990s.



02.14.2004. 28 people were killed under the collapsed dome of Transvaal Park in Moscow



05.05.1993. The crash of the passenger train Moscow — Stavropol — Elista



05.28.1995. Rescue of a child from the ruins after the earthquake in Neftegorsk





Yasmina Kadyrova and Valeri Kolesov

PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



Roman Kostomarov and Tatyana Navka



Alina Zagitova, Eteri Tutberidze and Evgenia Medvedeva



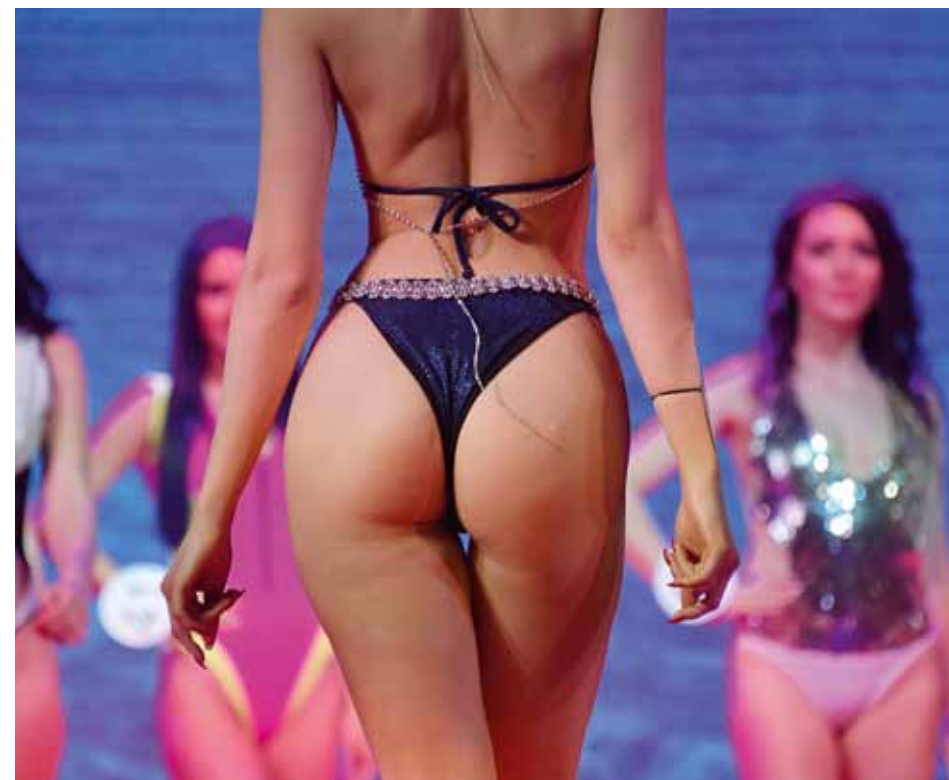
Evgeni Plushchenko

2006–2023. THE STARS OF FIGURE SKATING



Miss Universe beauty pageant owner Donald Trump gives a kiss to the winner Maria Gabriela Isler of Venezuela. The competition was held in 2013 at Moscow's Crocus City

PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



And these girls were photographed at the rehearsals of the most famous contests in the country: Miss Moscow, Beauty of Russia, Miss Russia

2013. RUSSIAN BEAUTIES



Denis Lebedev's powerful punch in a fight against the American boxer James Toney for the WBA cruiserweight champion title

PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



Yelena Isinbayeva's gold-winning jump at the Beijing Olympics



Marat Safin on the court

2008–2011. SPORTS IDOLS



Maxim Vylegzhanin — three-time Olympic vice-champion in cross-country skiing



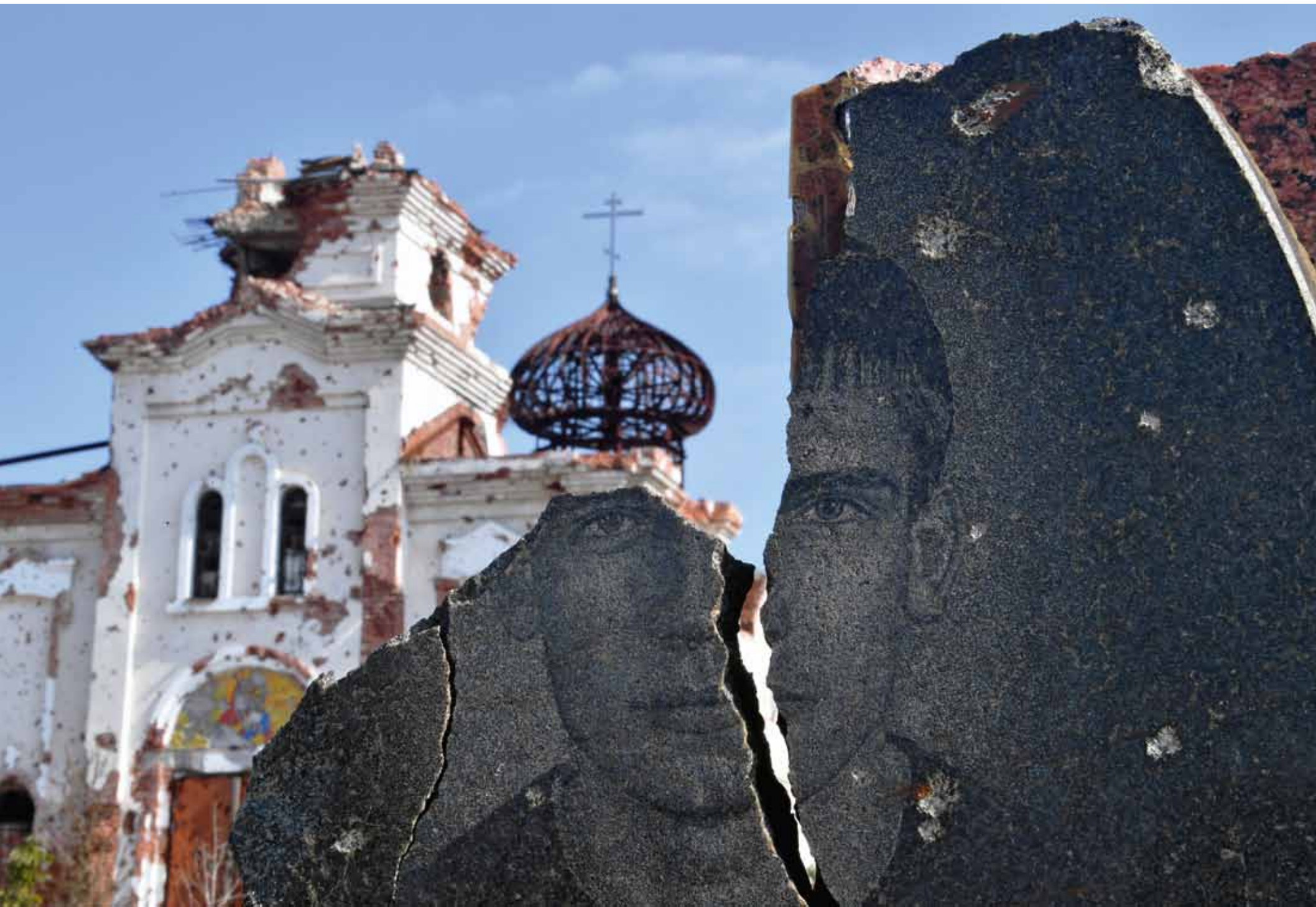
The closing ceremony of the XXII Winter Olympic Games in Sochi



Biathlon. Mass start (15 km). Men



Ekaterina Tudegesheva's steep turn at the Olympic track



PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



2014. DONBASS. WAR...



2007. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy invited Komsomolskaya Pravda to a dairy farm in the village of Vohrinka near Moscow, where he personally milked the cows, fed the calves and swept the cowshed.

PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



President Medvedev on a fishing trip with the leaders of the Duma factions



Yuri Luzhkov in the Blue Hall of Komsomolskaya Pravda



Secret negotiations between Prime Minister Mishustin and Speaker Volodin



Minister Gennady Onishchenko in the baptismal font



PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



2018. HOCKEY. THE GOLDEN FINALS OF THE OLYMPICS IN PYEONGCHANG





According to data at the beginning of 2025, in Russia since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, a total of 23 014 969 people have been infected, 400 023 have died, and 22 458 308 have recovered

PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN

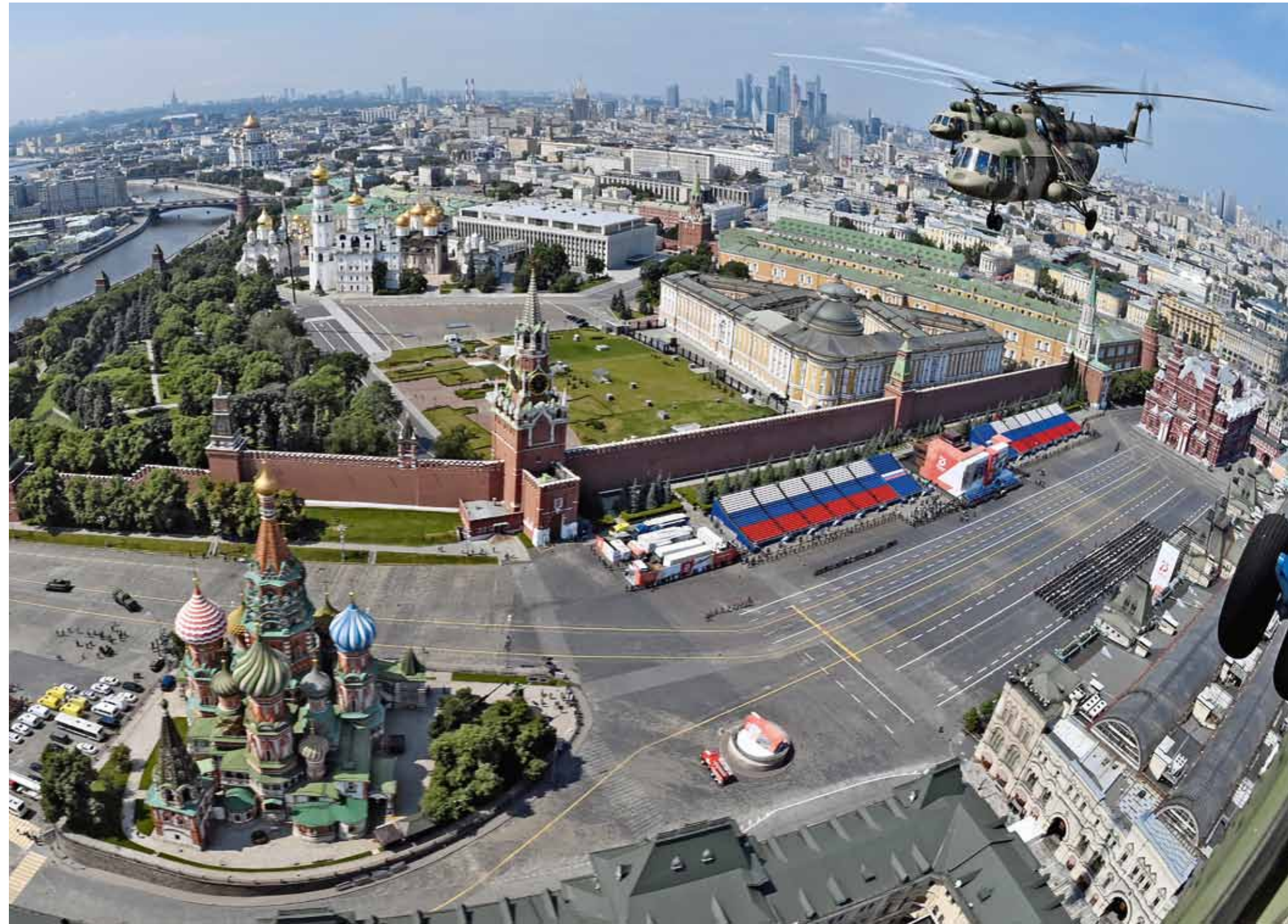


2020. THE ONSET OF COVID





PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN



2020. VICTORY DAY PARADE FROM A HELICOPTER'S FLIGHT





These photos show the work of the expeditions of the Russian Geographical Society in Chukotka and the Kuril Islands. In Chukotka in 2023, a search for crashed US aircrafts that were supplied to the USSR under Lend-Lease during the Second World War was conducted. Of the 8 094 planes sent to help us, 81 crashed en route. In summer, on the bare surface of the Chukchi

landscape, the wreckage of an airplane covered in moss is clearly visible from a search helicopter.

And in the Kuril Islands in 2021, the expedition operated with multiple goals in mind — they searched for bones of ancient marine animals and sperm whales, as well as Japanese military equipment from the Second World War.





PHOTOJOURNALIST VLADIMIR VELENGURIN

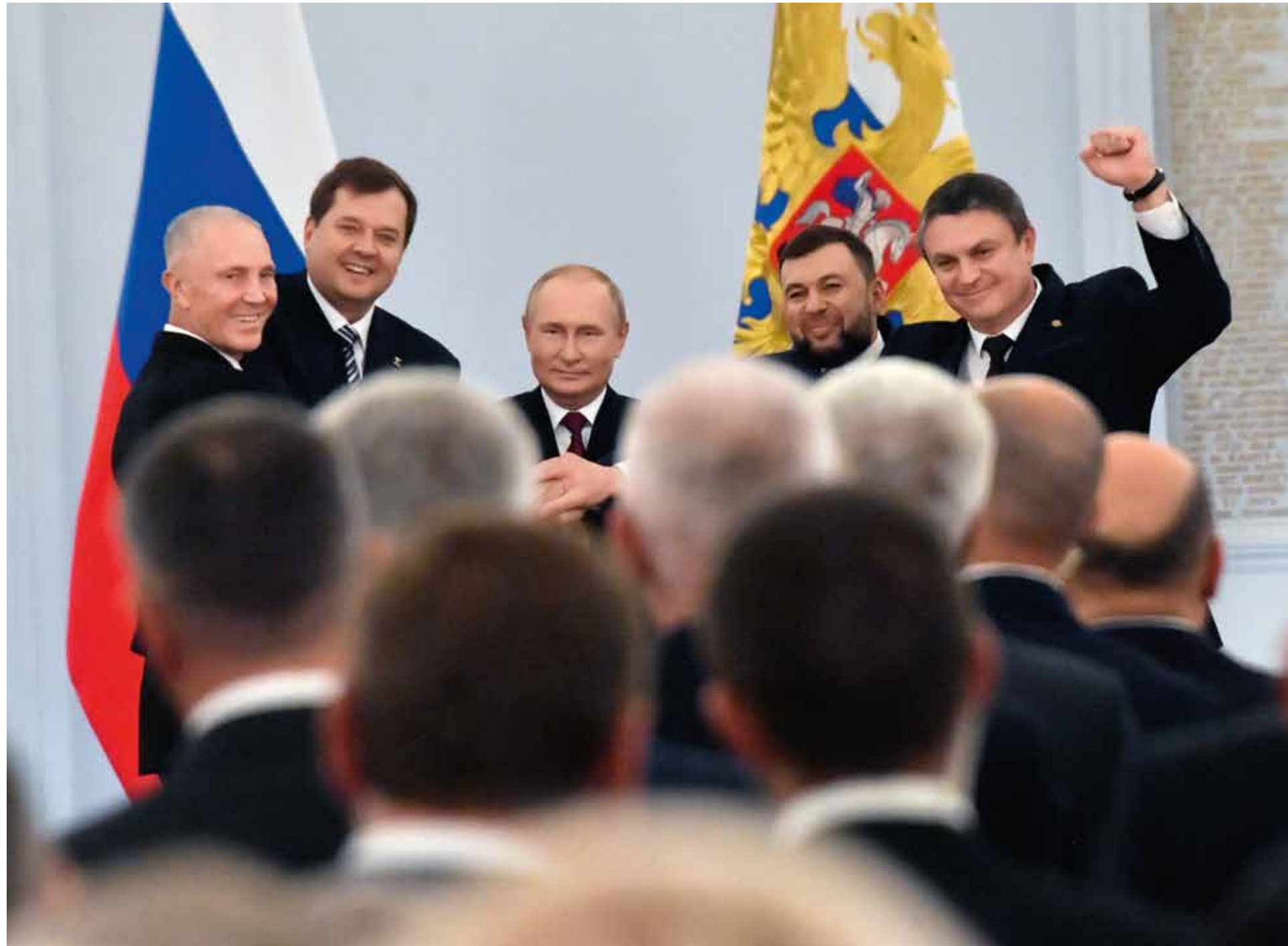


2022. A SPECIAL MILITARY OPERATION. MARIUPOL



175





Admission of new regions to the Russian Federation. September 30, 2022



An exhibition of captured foreign military equipment on Poklonnaya Hill, Moscow. May 1, 2024





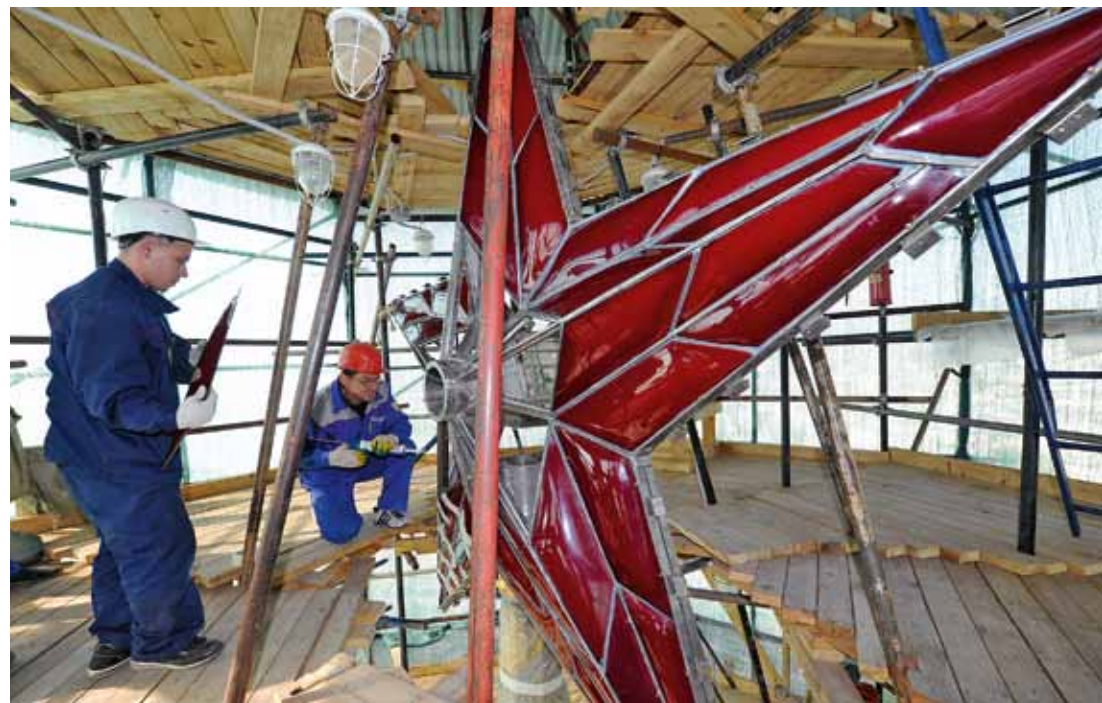
Lost in The Taiga was the name of a series of essays published in Komsomolskaya Pravda starting in 1982. The legendary newspaper journalist Vasily Peskov later wrote a documentary story of the same name about the Lykov family of Old Believers who had been hiding in the Western Sayan Mountains for almost half a century. Agafya Lykova is today the only surviving

representative of this family. In 1978, when the Lykovs were discovered by geologists, there were five of them: the head of the family, Karp Lykov, two sons and two daughters. After the death of her brothers, sister and father (in 1988), Agafya was left in the taiga all alone.









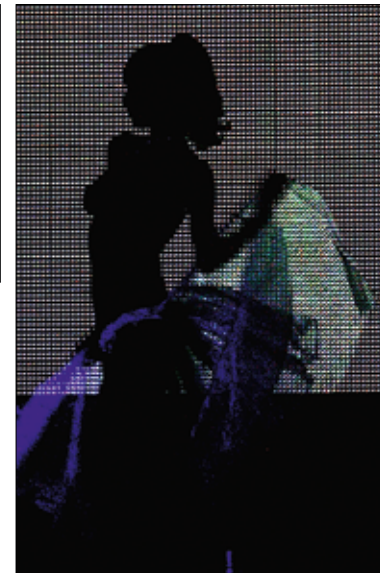


The capital of Russia has really become one of the best cities in the world in recent decades. It's growing, changing, and getting prettier day by day. I love shooting Moscow, its antiquity and its daily changes. It is like a real

perpetual motion machine, the wheels of which are turning faster and faster, bringing closer the even more wonderful future of our capital, and after it, for the whole country. And, so, the History continues!



I HAVE SPENT A TOTAL OF ABOUT THREE YEARS ON WORK TRIPS TO WARS AND DISASTER SITES...



Want to see how Vladimir Velengurin shoots his photo reports? There is nothing easier. Point your smartphone camera at the QR code and go to the Komsomolskaya Pravda website, where sixteen fascinating videos of our photo master are collected. Enjoy!

VLADIMIR VELENGURIN

...in the Chernobyl disaster area
...at the nuclear test site near Semipalatinsk
...after the fire at the Ostankino TV tower
...after the battle in the Chechen Village



MY PHOTO ARCHIVE IS A KIND OF A TEXTBOOK ON OUR CONTEMPORARY HISTORY...



PHOTO ALBUM AUTHOR'S AWARDS

World Press Photo
first and third prizes

Interpressphoto
two first prizes

The Golden Eye of Russia Prize

Interphoto
Photo of the Year 2001
and 17 awards in nominations

Awards of the Union of Journalists of the Russian Federation



I HAVE WORKED AT EIGHT OLYMPIC GAMES, AT MANY EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS AND WORLD CUPS...



I HAVE SHOT MANY MAJOR POLITICAL EVENTS AND THEIR PARTICIPANTS...