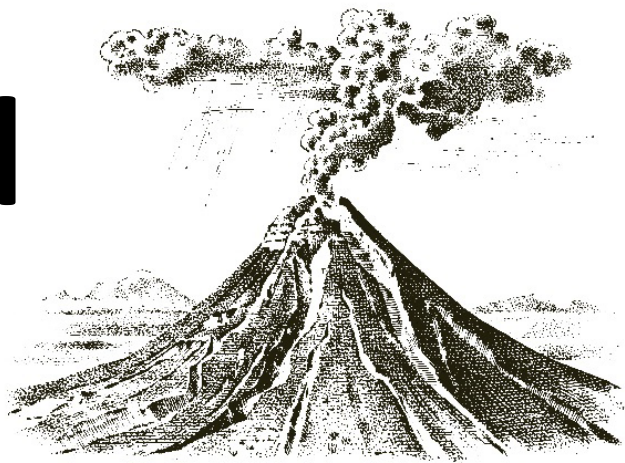


Inhabited Island



№ 1

July-August 2022

"Your conscience is spoiled by constant attention, it begins to moan at the slightest inconvenience, and your mind respectfully bows before it"

Arkady and Boris Strugatsky in "The Inhabited Island"

From the Editor. Dear readers, you are holding in your hands the first issue of the newspaper that we started publishing to break the silence of the Russian-speaking community of New Zealand about the events that "blew up" the world on February 24. The events continue to be the subject of close attention for people around the world. We think it is no exaggeration to say that the war in Ukraine is now perceived as the greatest tragedy of the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Therefore, our first issue is devoted almost exclusively to this topic. In the future, we will also, as fully as possible, reflect the events of the cultural life of our diaspora, especially those that other Russian-language newspapers in New Zealand, guided by their political preferences, are silent about.

How did the war in Ukraine affect the Russian-speaking community in New Zealand?



Olga Belokon

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched its "special military operation" in Ukraine. The world shook in horror. Fifteen thousand Russian-speaking people living in New Zealand felt a strange sensation — that they had suddenly become the subject of close scrutiny by others. Shocked by this news, our community split into four large groups

that day. While many of us still feel shock and shame at our homeland's actions (this is the first group, the position of which coincides with the stance of our newspaper), others express their "patriotic" feelings by

supporting this terrible war (the second group). Community members belonging to the third group do not support Russian aggression, but believe that the "collective West" and "Ukrainian Nazis" are responsible for unleashing the war, with Russia being a victim of this conflict. Finally, the fourth group includes people who are confused by the contradictory information that comes from the Russian media (the popular name for Russian television is "zombie box") and what they hear from other media sources. It is difficult for people belonging to the fourth group to define and formulate their attitude towards the war.

Although we don't know what the proportions of these four groups are, we can clearly see that the pro-Putin voices in New Zealand's Russian-speaking community are clear, loud and aggressive.

Let me give you a few illustrative examples.

New Zealand publishes two Russian-language newspapers, *Nasha Gavan* (*Our Harbour*), and *Rodnik* (*The Spring*). Both publications maintain a deep silence about what is happening in Ukraine. This looks at the very least strange and unnatural, since the whole world has been literally turned upside-down for more than four months now by what is happening and is closely following the events in Ukraine. These events look more like a global catastrophe than a local conflict between the two countries. Twelve million people have fled their homes, tens of thousands have died, entire cities have been wiped off the face of the earth. Massive brutal massacres of civilians by Russian soldiers are already under investigation by international war crimes experts. The world is facing a food crisis and the ominous shadow of a nuclear catastrophe hangs over the planet. New Zealand's Russian-language newspapers continue to publish "important" news about the performances of dance ensembles and vague articles about the impending "Era of Women's Energy". A month ago, I took to Facebook to criticise *Nasha Gavan* and call on the editorial board to break this strange silence. My post caused a wide response and a heated discussion in the largest Russian-speaking group "Russians in New Zealand", which has more than 10,000 members. It was easy to see that most of those who responded to my publication did not support my call. Unfortunately, the editors of *Nasha Gavan* joined the chorus of indignant voices and refused my call to break the silence on the war in Ukraine.

I run a school in Auckland, Russian for Kids, where we teach Russian language and literature, history and acting. Shortly after the start of the war, the parents of my students, teenagers of 13 to 14 years old, began to call me, asking not to discuss this topic in class. What drives these people? Fear? Or do they discuss this topic at home, expressing an opposite attitude towards the war? And recently I got a call from a young woman, the mother of a 4-year-old boy, who complained that ALL parents of children who attend a Russian-speaking kindergarten with her child hold pro-Putin views, and she feels very uncomfortable in this environment. The other parents began to treat her with hostility and unkindness

because of her normal, decent attitude towards the Ukrainian tragedy.

Our school, Russian for Kids, has been preparing a musical and poetic evening since the beginning of the year. The evening, which is dedicated to the 5th anniversary of our studio school will be held in Auckland at the end of July. After the war began, we decided that we would dedicate the final part of the evening to the Ukrainian tragedy. And suddenly it turned out that about a quarter of our group does not share our sympathy for Ukraine and adheres to pro-Putin views. Some of the supporters of the war were shocked to find themselves among "Ukrainian Nazis". Years of joint creativity and the ef-

forts of our studio to teach how to be "reasonable, kind, eternal", unfortunately, could not change their confidence in the correctness of their position in relation to this war. As a result, these people refused to participate in the evening and left our studio.

These examples demonstrate the extraordinary effectiveness of pro-Putin disinformation and propaganda here in New Zealand. This widespread presence of Putinism in the Russian-speaking NZ community suggests that the notorious pro-Putin propaganda not only exerts its influence directly through the Russian media available in New Zealand, but has also spread locally, within New Zealand. Unfortunately, facts confirm this assumption. For example, the president of the NZ Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots, an organisation that enjoys great influence in the Russian-speaking diaspora of New Zealand, publishes texts on his

Facebook page with the following content: "The sevens [members of the Group of Seven (G7) Ed.] forgot to mention the inevitable use of Russia's strategic nuclear forces in the conflict and the possible execution by quartering of Ukrainian nationalists on the Execution Ground in Red Square. All that is yet to come." (from a speech by the Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council, Dmitry Medvedev. The post was published on May 15th). It is so appalling that I cannot find words to comment on it. Pro-Putin voices here in New Zealand are also trying to create an atmosphere of fear of punishment or "public stigmatisation" for those critical of Putin or the war. For example, another fragment of Medvedev's speech was published on the same Facebook page: "to oppose the Government during a military operation is traitorous ... Everything is controlled in this



world. Each of us has a digital footprint. Everyone who writes nasty things about Russia, about the course of our country, about individual citizens should think about this.” After discussing *Nasha Gavan's* strange, unnatural silence about the war in Ukraine that I mentioned, I received calls from people who shared fears for their safety in case they needed to travel to Russia, and also for the safety of their loved ones living there. Some of them began to experience an acute sense of loneliness and feel depressed because it turned out their entire

social circle is made up of people who do not condemn Putin’s regime, and even support it.

Dear friends, we live in a free, democratic country. Our children and grandchildren do not deserve to be poisoned by the disgusting influence that the dark forces that have seized power in our homeland are trying, and not without success, to exert on our community. We must not allow this.

Chernihiv: history and reality

The hell of war.
Seas of soot and ashes
All the piano keys are one colour — black
Let's play on it
Smearing soot,
Under a rain of fire
Arms in someone's blood.

Vera Pavlova



Alla Shimanskaya

career was successfully developed.

Memories take me to the central part of the city with ancient churches, the famous cannons in the park on Detinets and green alleys that radiate from the central Red Square. Wonderful views of the Desna River, the forest park and the masterpieces of ancient monuments of architecture and architecture open up from the Ancient Val. It is also a very cosy city, which cannot leave anyone indifferent to its beauty, romantic antiquity and wonderful youth.

Chernihiv was first mentioned in 907, and in the "Tale of Bygone Years" - as the second city after Kyiv in ancient Rus - a powerful state of the Eastern Slavs. Here, on the land of Chernigov-Seversk, the events described in the outstanding literary work of the past - "The Tale

In my mind I am wandering along the quiet green streets of Chernihiv, which became my home after I left Russia, where I had spent all my childhood, youth and early adulthood. In my mind I follow my usual route, from my house in Pukhova Street to the Chernihiv State Technological University, where my teaching and research



Spassky Cathedral (Photo: V. Koval, Wikipedia)

of Igor's Campaign" were played out. At the beginning of the 11th century, as part of Kyivan Rus, a large Chernihiv principality was formed, the borders of which stretched from the Dnpr River to the upper reaches of the Oka River (south of Moscow) and the foothills of the Caucasus. Construction of the main temple of the city — the Spaso-Preobrazhensky Cathedral — began under Mstislav Vladimirovich, the first prince of Chernihiv and mentioned in the chronicle, in the 1030s. Not far from the majestic Spassky Cathedral is another ancient building — the Borisoglebsky Cathedral, which is richly decorated inside with frescoes and inlays. From Boldina Mountain there is a view of other monuments of the times of Kyivan Rus.

The creations of medieval architects combine amazingly and harmoniously with the surrounding nature. If you choose the path along the amazingly beautiful Desna at any time of the year, you can see a widespread panorama of a steep bank with hills, sandy banks, the blue ribbon of the river, organically intertwined with the silhouettes of amazing monumental structures and long stone walls of fortresses.

Nostalgic memories plunge me into a world of seemingly forgotten sensations and serene tranquillity. Suddenly, the smooth and bright stream of memories is

interrupted by a sense of horror and pictures of bloody flashes of exploding shells. My Chernihiv is on fire!



Trinity Monastery (Photo: Valery Sorokin, Wikipedia)

Chernihiv has become one of the cities most affected by Russia's monstrous invasion of Ukraine. From the very beginning of the war, Russian troops approached the city and, unable to capture it, began a massive bombardment of its civilian infrastructure from the air and from the land. **As a result of absurdly cruel blows to Chernihiv, kindergartens, residential buildings and shops were damaged...** Several residential areas were almost completely destroyed. In the first days of the war, rockets fired from Grad multiple rocket launchers destroyed residential buildings in my street, Pukhova Street. As a result of shelling of residential buildings and roads, two families I knew were killed. One family was killed by artillery shells hitting their house during a night-time bombardment of the city. Another family died when an artillery round hit the car, in which they tried to leave the city. Many of my friends, acquaintances and colleagues managed to leave, but, for various reasons, many were also forced to stay and witness the monstrous crimes of the Russian army.

According to the press service of the State Emergency Service: on March 14, 2022, during the siege of Chernihiv, the Chernihiv State Technological University (my university) was damaged as a result of heavy artillery shelling by Russian troops. On the night of March 22-23, as a result of an airstrike by Russian bomber aircraft, a road bridge across the Desna River was destroyed.

On February 27, as a result of missile strikes, the historic building of the regional youth centre (the former Shchors Cinema), which was an architectural monument, was destroyed. This historical building was destroyed twice — first during the Second World War when it was bombed by the Nazis, and now, on February 27, 2022 — by the Russian invaders.

The local football stadium was also bombed. In the centre of the field, where one bomb fell, a giant crater is visible. Another bomb hit the podium, turning it into a



Destruction in Chernihiv as a result of Russian attacks (Photo: NV / Alexander Medvedev, Wikipedia)

pile of plastic and metal debris. The children's library, located in a historic building near the stadium, was also destroyed.

Chernihiv Mayor Vladyslav Atroshenko, speaking at a press conference in the Ukraine Media Centre in Kyiv, said: "As of March 26, less than half of the inhabitants remain in Chernihiv, the city is completely destroyed — it is easier to count the houses that are still whole than to count how many have been destroyed ... during the operational encirclement of Chernihiv, the enemy deliberately destroyed the bridge that connected the city to roads toward Kyiv. The city has neither the opportunity to arrange humanitarian corridors nor to evacuate the wounded. Pedestrian bridges are under constant cross-fire, it is dangerous to transport goods across them. There is no continuous electricity supply in the city, water is available only in some areas, there are no lights in the city. There is no heat in the hospitals, the windows are boarded up with plywood, but doctors provide first aid and save lives. Volunteers are extremely helpful in providing people with everything they need."

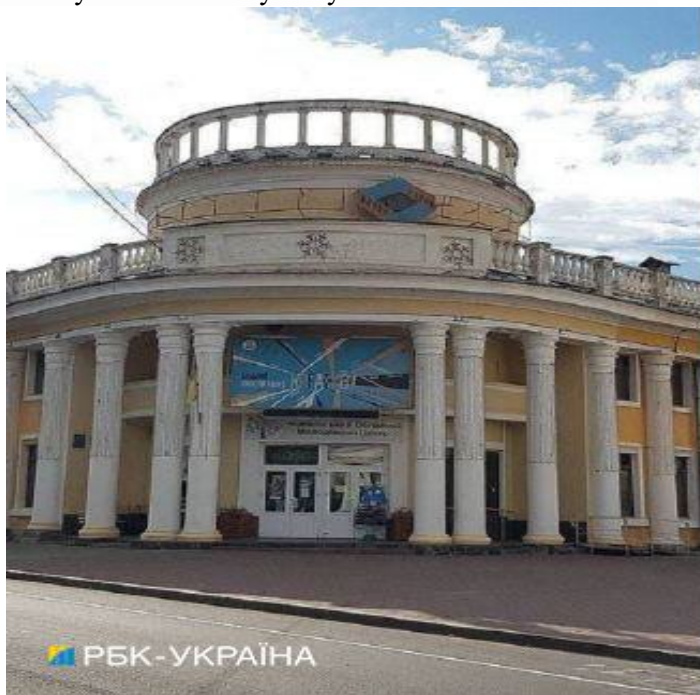
In Chernihiv, during the siege by the Russian army, a huge number of adults and children suffered as a result of artillery bombardments and aerial bombing. Even those who were not wounded or killed will remain victims of this war because of the suffering and horrors they had to witness.

The Russian military occupied villages and hamlets to encircle Chernihiv, where civilians were the victims. BBC News Correspondent Yogita Limaye, in her article "Twenty-Five Days in the Basement with Corpses" (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61030090>) describes how residents of the Chernihiv region endured the Russian invasion. For example, in the village of Yagodnoye, the Russian military took men, women and children from their homes, threatening them with weapons, and took them to the basement of a local

school, where they held them for four weeks. Approximately 130 people lived in a basement of 65 square metres from the 5th of March to the 2nd of April. A witness to the events, Mykola Klimchuk, spent a month in the basement. He slept standing up, tying himself to some gymnastic wall bars. Mykola says that it was impossible to move around in the basement without stepping on people. According to him, there were about 40-50 children, including infants. There was no ventilation in the room. The basement windows were boarded up. According to Mykola, during the month spent in the basement, he witnessed the deaths of 12 people. There was no way to immediately carry the bodies of the dead out

staying in the city to work to keep it running and to help people. These people also often died under shelling. It's impossible to know the exact number of victims right now. Some of the dead are still trapped in the rubble. In addition, there are cases where people have been burned alive in heavily bombed sites in such a way that you can't find their remains anywhere. Within the range of these bombs, everything that can burn burns in a matter of seconds because of the very high temperature.

Chernihiv became a fortress city in the way of Russian troops advancing on Kyiv. On the sixth of March 2022 for "achievements, mass heroism and the steadfastness



Before and after views of the Shchors Cinema after it was struck (collage RBC-Ukraine, Wikipedia)

of the basement. The soldiers did not allow corpses to be removed every day. And because of the constant fighting on the street - mortar shelling, shooting and explosions - it was also dangerous. "Sometimes Russian soldiers would take us upstairs and use us as human shields," Mykola says.

Many other residents of Chernihiv also had to hide in basements from the constant bombing and had to spend a long time without electricity, heating, water and food. Most houses in Chernihiv were destroyed by Russian artillery and people were forced to live in basements,

of its citizens ... as it repulsed the military invasion by the Russian Federation against Ukraine» Chernihiv was awarded the title «Hero City».

The heroism and courage of the soldiers who stood up to defend their people in the war against Putin's fascism will be described many times in scientific, historical and fiction literature, in films. Now, at the moment, the heroic Ukrainian people are writing history with their own blood on their land.

June Street Protests Against Russian Aggression in Ukraine: Two Protests and Two Messages



**Natalia
Podsolnukhova**

Two street protests were held only a week apart in New Zealand – on June 5 and 12.

The Anti-War March in Auckland on **5th June** was organised by activists of the Ukrainian community in New Zealand. The protest was conceived as an international one, its main appeal was Stand With Ukraine.

It was cold and windy on the day of the march. Despite this, about a thousand people came to the demonstration.

It was raining and I had the feeling that even the sky was crying with grief. Ukrainian-style embroidered shirts flashed in the crowd. Many people carried anti-war posters. A black coffin carried by two young men as a symbol of the imminent end of Putin's bloody regime drew attention.



Anti-war marchers at the Auckland War Memorial Museum

Among the protesters were Ukrainians who have lived many years in New Zealand and those who arrived recently. There were also Ukrainian refugees, for whom the very fact of the street protest can offer huge moral support. The protest was joined by Belarusians, Georgians and Poles, who understand better than others the potential danger to other countries of what is happening in Ukraine. Many of the

Russians who participated in the protest carried Ukrainian flags and Ukrainian wreaths on their heads. A lot of New Zealanders took part.

My husband's New Zealand aunt said shortly before the demonstration: "I'll go too! I have friends in Kyiv under the bombs." I met at the rally several colleagues from the university who decided to support the anti-war protest.

Drummers, who joined the tail of the column and set an excellent pace, added some zest to the march. Because of the thundering of the drums, I was never able to figure out who they were or how they ended up on this march. Either way, thank you so much.

I would also like to say a special thank you to the Māori Wardens, who not only preserved order on the march, but also exuded warmth and confidence that everything would be fine.

At the end point of the march – the Auckland War Memorial Museum – many speeches and words were said in support of Ukraine and condemning the Russian invasion.

On June 12, Russia Day, anti-Putin marches were held in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin as part of a global action by free Russians called "Independence Day from Putinism". Russia Day was chosen to protest as a symbol of hope that our country could break free of the quagmire of hatred, destruction, and dead ends into which it is being sucked by the Putin government.

The worldwide action that day began in New Zealand, which was then joined by marches and actions held in 74 cities across the world, including Yerevan, Vienna, Prague, Helsinki, Tbilisi, Paris, Strasbourg, Milan, Dublin, London, Amsterdam, Madrid, Stockholm, Washington, New York, Seattle, San Francisco, Berlin, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt am Main, Göttingen, Heidelberg and Munich ... German broadcaster Deutsche Welle published a short report and interview with the participants of this global action from New Zealand and Australia

<https://www.dw.com/ru/v-den-rossii-po-vsemu-miru-prohodjat-akcii-protiv-vtorzhenija-rf-v-ukrainu/a-62104566>. Protests took place in 34 countries.



Protest by Russian-speaking Kiwis in Auckland on June 12

In Auckland, only about 30 (!) people took part in the protest, which began in the Viaduct. The participants came out with white and blue flags, the flag of the Russian opposition. The main slogan was

Free Russians Are Against the War Unleashed by the Putin Regime Against Ukraine.

We were luckier with the weather this time and the sun shone brightly on the gathering. The reaction of the public to us was also warm: when we reached Queen Street, many passers-by gestured their approval to us, and passing cars sounded their horns in support. A

woman I did not know suddenly ran up to me and began to hug me. It moved me to tears. For the first time in more than 100 days of war, I felt, that there was a chance Russia would climb out of this black abyss, even if it takes 10, 20 or 30 years, but it will get out.

Australia-New Zealand Freedom Alliance



Irene Salavatova

"How will you vote, young people? For, Against, Abstain or Don't Care? I want to hear the opinions of young people, my former Russian students, my Russian friends," I wrote on my Instagram on 1st July 2020, when all the state-run television channels of our historical homeland whispered, sang and assured us of the need to amend the Constitution.

The most significant amendment would let President Vladimir Putin, despite having already served four terms, to extend his rule for two

more — up to 12 more years. This was despite the Constitution banning anyone from being President for more than two terms.

"For the first time this year, I feel an acute bitter feeling for a hopelessly drowning country, because though life has become more well-fed than in our 1990s, at the same time my country suffers from monstrous corruption. And I see and hear more lies pouring out of tightly controlled television, myths about external enemies, myths about the greatness of the Russian nation. I am sad for the murdered journalists and Boris Nemtsov, who died on the Kremlin bridge, for the peoples of Russia and Ukraine who are alienated for centuries.

Maybe I'm wrong?

A free press, independent and just courts, fair elections, protection of the elderly and poor... Tell me, Russians, what is on this list in the modern history of Russia? And who believes and knows for sure that after the adoption of the amendments it will be even better? Tell me about it. A stubborn corrupt government and an ugly power system seem to me to be the real evils that have seized Russian land. I see that among young people there is a great demand for a decent life, and it is growing. As long as Russia is located between Papua New Guinea and Uganda on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, it does not need to look for external enemies. Young people, you must, you are obliged to demand corruption ends, otherwise you will not have a decent life," my post ended.

The discussion that unfolded around this appeal to young people and Russian friends in July 2020 made me think and worry. Having lived abroad for 15 years, I naturally lost the sharpness of the sensations of the processes taking place in Russia. My elderly mother and I always shared the same views, and for a long time it seemed to me that everything was moving towards the heights of Western democracy. Under the onslaught of sanctions and international pressure, Crimea would be returned to Ukraine, a protracted incomprehensible war would end, and everything would be fine. And suddenly, amendments to the Constitution were being voted on. The obvious, cynical and shameless lies of the ruling elite were being used in a bid to retain power by any means.

My former students, now adults, my fellow teachers remained deeply indifferent. "I don't go and vote. Everything will be decided for us," was the most common answer. There were also more radical ones: "I will carry ammunition for Putin."

It became abundantly clear to me that everything was bad in July 2020 when the amendments to the Constitution were approved

And in August 2020, rigged elections in Belarus resulted in huge anti-government protests, which were ruthlessly suppressed. In September – Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was poisoned. Stories of

massacres of people who dared to join the opposition in Russia snowballed. In January, when Navalny who had returned from treatment in Germany was arrested at a Moscow airport, I, a Russian-speaking New Zealander, went on a solo picket in my city, the capital of Western Australia, Perth. I felt alone at the time. I knew only two like-minded people then. I didn't know that there are great numbers of us.

Further events in the Russian diaspora in Australia made me change my mind in a blink of the eye. A group of young people who gathered spontaneously in Melbourne and protested created a group we could use to communicate with each other. I and other protesting Russian-speaking people in Australia gradually joined

it, we connected with each other, achieving at that time the main goal - to unite compatriots for whom human rights and democracy are not an empty phrase. So, from a lone activist who went to a street protest, I turned into the coordinator-organiser of a group of democratically minded people in Perth who, like me, did not want to remain silent. We now have such activists in every major Australian city and some in New Zealand. Having met each other in January 2021, we continued to communicate, discussing the actions of politi-

cians, we followed the news, created our own content and, most importantly, each of us knew we were not alone. The geography of the cities of the first activists - Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Auckland, Wellington, Palmerston North.

Initially, our goals were to involve Russian emigrants in democratic processes, support political prisoners and democratic transformations in Russia. We wrote petitions to the Parliament of Australia, worked with the Australian media to cover the current situation in Russia, sought a ban on Kremlin propaganda through the retransmission of NTV news in Australia, organised street protests. Getting acquainted and communicating with each other in a common group, we often asked a key question: how did it happen that a country with deep historical roots, which has the most important resource - smart and talented people - found itself in a deep socio-economic dead end.



Communication with Russian and local politicians, open letters, petitions, all this was new and motivating for the members of our group. In September 2021, some activists signed up as observers of the elections to the State Duma at polling stations open for voting in Australia, having received official permits from the Yabloko party. For more than a year, in parallel with various actions, we wrote letters to political prisoners. Our like-minded people sent donations to human rights organisations.

The climax of the most brutal Russian dictatorship was the war, the news of which, despite all the warnings, thundered unexpectedly and terribly for us, those who were aware of absolutely all political processes in Russia.

There was no ambiguity, everything became clear from the first minutes of this terrible news until recently. With the outbreak of war, the agenda of our three organisations has changed. It has become important to create projects to help Ukrainians, support their protest rallies and aid funds, open new collections for charitable donations to Ukraine. Our small organisations in three different states, established at this time, volunteer helpers and activists in all major cities of Australia engaged in all possible charitable projects, their own and in aid of Ukrainian ones.

Now we can definitely say with pride that the Australia-New Zealand Freedom Alliance (Svoboda Alliance AU&NZ) is a public organisation in Australia, created by immigrants from Russia, Russian-speaking Australians and New Zealanders, who were the first in Australia and New Zealand to speak in defence of Alexei Navalny and all political prisoners, held protests in support of the first and oldest Russian human rights organisation "Memorial", supported protests of Belarusians,

and from the first days of the war took an active part in supporting Ukraine.

I call on all caring people in our countries not to stand aside, especially now, when Ukraine is paying such a terrible price with human lives, and again Russian soldiers will be returning to Russia in coffins. It is not only the Russian leadership that is to blame for this, but also our silence. We have allowed the country to turn into a society where no more human faces are seen behind the makeup of propaganda, and individual voices are not heard behind the jubilant crowd.

The regime of modern Russia has shown all the main signs of totalitarianism: unlimited power, the elimination of constitutional rights and freedoms, repressions

against dissidents, and the militarisation of public life.

Inevitable and complex processes are taking place in our diasporas. The Ukrainian diaspora has become stronger. The purest evil that blew up their world made

Ukrainians raise their heads and unite in the struggle for their freedom. Free Ukrainians are being re-

born as one nation. Free Russians, keenly aware of events, are looking for their new identity. Western society, among whose values we live, seeks our democratic voices, and every vote is priceless.

Do not be silent, unite! The price of freedom is incommensurably high. Let's create charitable projects together, wear Ukrainian embroidered shirts, make friends and build our unique new community for common causes and informal communication.

Our old national identity no longer exists, and we need to create a new one ourselves. Let's do it together and believe that Russia will be free.



Members of the non-profit organisation Svoboda Alliance AU&NZ with Professor Olena Govor and Ambassador of Ukraine to Australia Vasyl Miroshnichenko at the conference "Russian Invasion of Ukraine", Canberra, March 2022

"If you sit and be silent ... then the abolition of Russian culture will begin, because the whole world will think that Russians agree with the war."



Valeriya Balaban

Our correspondent, Valeriya Balaban, interviewed one of the organisers and activists of the anti-Putin and the anti-war movement in New Zealand — Nadia Dikareva who since the beginning of the war has also become known to many for her selfless activities in organising

fundraising and sending humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

- Why did you leave Russia, were there any specific reasons?

- Yes, and quite a lot. I was not satisfied with the political situation in the country. I was upset by the widespread lawlessness. I understood if something happened, and I was suddenly forced to ask the police for help – I would have to face the mafia sitting there, which deals with everything through bribes or connections. Not only will no one help, but they can only make things worse. Corruption and lawlessness were the main triggers for my emigration. Plus, I'm from Moscow, and life in this city is uncomfortable. These are traffic jams, crime, air pollution, poor environmental conditions. When we moved, we thought about the children, first of all, about their future.

- How did you get acquainted with the Russian community in New Zealand?

- For the first three and a half to four years, I wasn't very eager to communicate, and I didn't. I was more busy finding a job, getting residency, helping the kids learn English. Then, when we got residency and relaxed a little, I thought about how to help children improve their Russian language. I sent them to the Russian Saturday school "Our House". There, in fact, my communication

with other Russians began. At first, we communicated exclusively on "children's" topics. A couple of years ago, when Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was poisoned by the state, I took it very emotionally, and I became interested in political issues. I began to look for like-minded people. As a result, I met people who were, like me, concerned about what was happening in Russia. And I began to actively participate in the protest movement. There were not many of us, and we organised protests when some lawlessness was once again happening in Russia.

- Tell us in more detail, how did you get active and organise rallies yourself?

- We have a group of like-minded people. Before the war, we were 10 to 15 people. We went to rallies when Navalny was poisoned, when he was imprisoned, when historical society Memorial was declared a "foreign agent", when the governor of Khabarovsk was put on trial. On the eve of the war, on February 23rd, I watched part of a meeting of the Russian Security Council, and I sensed that something bad was going to happen. And on the 24th the war began... Our first rally was held on February 25, it was the first protest since the beginning of the war, and both Russians and Ukrainians took part. More than a hundred of us gathered. Many, I know, say: "why do we need these rallies? It would be better to do something practical." But I believe that the rallies are needed to show that Russians are not the same as Putin and his team so that both New Zealanders and the whole world see that Russians think differently, not all in the way the Russian government thinks. After all, if we sit quietly and do not express our position, then we agree. If everyone was protesting against the war, only quietly within themselves – then the abolition of Russian culture would begin, because the whole world would think that Russians agreed with the war. So I think the rallies are very important. So that everyone knows that Russians do not agree with the war.

- What is this war for you?

- For me, this is a very emotional question. I think I've never felt so terrible in my life as I did when Russia attacked Ukraine. This is shameful, and a sense of responsibility, and tears, and an ordeal. Despite me not having a single relative in Ukraine, what happened shocked me to the depths of my soul. I consider myself Russian. And my country, in my name, attacked another country and kills its citizens. It's unthinkable. I felt guilty, ashamed that in my name other people, who also call themselves Russians, kill innocent people.

Do you think that all Russians are to blame, is there a collective fault that lies with all Russians?

- I have thought a lot about this, read about it, and listened to interviews. And I remember one person saying: "We must clearly separate two things: guilt and responsibility." So there's that. Personally, I am not to blame for what happened. But responsibility, yes. Everyone who considers themselves Russian bears this responsibility. I consider myself Russian. And I believe that doing nothing now, sitting idly by, only increases the burden of responsibility. Because if I keep silent, then I agree with Russia's actions. And I disagree.

- How have you helped and are helping Ukrainians?

- Well, to begin with, I went to all the rallies, including Ukrainian ones. In the early days of the war, I opened a fundraising page and raised \$600. Then I contacted my friends from Ukraine, and we took part in a charity event, with the help of which we collected \$10,000. This money was sent to Ukraine through UNICEF. Then we organised a concert by the group, Hit Pump. We sent about \$13,000 directly to volunteers in Ukraine. Now we are planning a new charity event. And all the proceeds will go to help Ukraine. I will not list how many and to which funds I sent help personally.

- What happened to the Russian community after the war began?

- Since the beginning of the war, the Russian community has been split into 3-4 groups. There are those who are actively against the war. Others are against the war as a whole, but not openly, and do not condemn the current government in Russia. And there are those who support this war. However, I would very much like to see people unite against the war. But I don't understand how this can be done yet. Unfortunately, many people have swallowed the hackneyed propaganda. So far, perhaps, it is only possible to try to educate people, to try to show the truth. Some people believe everyone should

be gathered and obliged to oppose the war, but you cannot force people to do the right thing. I believe that yes, our cause is the right one, but I will not force anyone to change their mind. In short, so far I do not see how everyone can be united under a common denominator. Of course, I would like to, but always someone will be dissatisfied.

- A lot has been said about helping Ukrainians. Do Russians need help? Those who live abroad, since we are discussing our lives here in New Zealand.

- Absolutely. Because this is a situation in which you don't know how to behave at all. It seemed to me that since I was Russian, everyone at work would come up to me and ask me about the war, I was uncomfortable. But nothing terrible happened. I saw only support from those around me. My colleagues asked how I felt, were concerned

for me and supported me. I believe that most people still do not perceive Russians as the culprits of what the Russian government is doing. I think that psychological support is needed for those who came to New Zealand recently, having escaped from the regime, and those who are experiencing depression from what is happening in Ukraine.

- Do you have a family in Russia?

- Yes. My relatives live in Russia. My parents, brother and niece. Thank God, I did not have to quarrel with



Nadia Dikareva at a protest of Russian-speaking New Zealanders in Auckland 12 June 2022

anyone because of the war, because none of them support it. My brother has participated in protests before. But it's scary now. They even put people in jail for solo pickets and empty posters. I do not condemn Russians who do not take to the streets. I have friends who protested and as a result, both administrative and criminal cases were opened against them. It's scary. So we're here doing it for them.

- I know you want to set up an NGO here in New Zealand. What are the goals of the organisation?

- We need an organisation that can officially represent our interests in our dealings with local government and ministries —an organisation that can support refugees, both Ukrainian and Russian, fleeing the regime. It can help with language courses, finding accommodation,

household issues. So that it is not some person personally, but an organisation. If we have an organisation, we will be able to speak on behalf of a group of people, not just one person, and receive funding for various projects, including cultural ones.

- What is the Motherland for you? My Motherland is a place I love, and it has nothing to do with the government or the president. My Motherland is the city in which I was born and lived for 26 years. It's nature. It's my family and friends. It is the beautiful and rich Russian culture. Not the people who seized power there and not the horror they are creating. I very much hope in my lifetime to see a free, prosperous Russia, where people will live happily and in prosperity. I want to see Russia in such a way that I want to return to live there.

Editorial Report

New Zealand Government supports Russians living in New Zealand at a challenging time for the community

An online meeting of representatives of the Russian-speaking community of New Zealand with employees of the Ministry of Ethnic Communities was held on the 7th of June. The New Zealand Government is sympathetic to the fact that the Russian-speaking community is now experiencing an emotional shock and that there are dangers of hostility and even violence from a certain part of New Zealand society towards Russians. The meeting discussed these issues and ways in which the New Zealand Government can support our community. A police representative, a psychologist and a representative of the Ministry of Education participated in the discussion and made a number of useful recommendations.

The police representative stressed that the police take allegations of hate speech seriously and asked that all cases be reported to the 105 line, since even if the cases did not reach the level of administrative and criminal responsibility, such cases are registered in the database and police discusses the incidents with perpetrators.

The representative of the Ministry of Education advised that in case of hostility towards your child, you should start by talking to the teacher. If this conversation does not lead to a satisfactory result, you can contact the

school principal and the board of trustees. This is the standard procedure in all New Zealand schools for all types of problems. It is important to note that not a single real example of such a case was given at the meeting. The psychologist gave a number of general recommendations on how people can monitor their mental health and said that the New Zealand Government has already provided an opportunity for Russians to receive free psychological assistance. Information about this can be found on the website of the Ministry of Ethnic Communities:

<https://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/assets/News/Support-services-for-Ukrainian-and-Russian-speaking-Communities-v2.0.pdf>

The programme of the meeting provided time for four short reports by representatives of the Russian-speaking community, invited in advance as speakers (a total of twenty-seven representatives of the community participated).

Sergey Sushinsky (Dunedin, first report) shared the problems that he was able to identify in an online survey of several Russian-speaking groups on Facebook, including "Russians in New Zealand". Among the thirteen points he voiced, it is worth mentioning the problems

with travel to Russia from New Zealand and from New Zealand to Russia: in connection with the current sanctions, many had problems obtaining new Russian passports. Also, sanctions imposed on the Russian banking system have caused problems with receiving Russian pension payments. It turns out that there are also problems with obtaining New Zealand visas for relatives of Russians living in New Zealand. Perhaps most of all, the report expressed concern for the Russian-speaking community due to the intensification of pro-Putin propaganda within New Zealand. In this regard, the Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots (KSORS), a branch of the so-called World Council of Russian Compatriots, was mentioned. Positioning itself as a coordinator of cultural relations and cultural development in the diaspora, this organisation is directly supervised by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and currently actively disseminates pro-Putin propaganda about the war.

Ksenia Tauroa (Hamilton, second report) apologised for not specifically preparing for the meeting and raised the issue of potential bullying in New Zealand schools. As a schoolteacher and mother of two, she has not personally encountered cases of bullying, but suggested that such cases can occur, and we need to be prepared for this.

Valeria Liazkovskaya (Auckland, third report) shared the experiences of a person who has both Russian and Ukrainian roots. Valeria maintains contact with relatives and relatives living both in Russia and in Ukraine.

The last, fourth report of **Olga Belokon** (Auckland) was devoted to the reaction of the Russian-speaking community of New Zealand to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The text of the report with minor changes is published on the front page of this issue of the newspaper.

There was virtually no discussion of the reports; apparently, the organisers of the meeting wanted to provide an opportunity to speak to as many participants as possible, which took time, according to the rules, to discuss the main reports. **Olga Vakhrusheva** detailed the problem with Russian pensions, already mentioned in this report. Ms. McDonald spoke in defence of those in the Russian-speaking community who prefer to ignore the war, arguing that the newspaper *Nasha Gavan* does a lot of good and needs to be protected from "aggressive attacks" by open opponents of the Putin regime (that is, from our side, ed.). **Olga Tarasenko** emotionally shared her feelings about the war and complained about the difficulties of leading a Russian-language school ("Our House"), which is attended by both Russian and Ukrainian children. The most interesting, in our opinion, unplanned speech was the message of **Elena Niki-forova** about the creation of a new public organisation, the main purpose of which will be to support the anti-Putin and anti-war movement in New Zealand. Her message is posted on the 14th page of this issue of the newspaper.

It is also hoped that the meeting provided the Ministry of Ethnic Communities with useful information that will help to organise additional effective support for our community during this difficult time for us. New Zealand Ministry of Ethnic Communities Contact: <https://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/>

The informal group Russian-speaking Integrity Alliance NZ leads the movement of Russian-speaking newcomers opposed to the Putin regime



Elena Nikiforova

The 24th of February 2022 will forever remain a black day in the history of the post-Soviet countries and Russian-speaking diaspora. Shock, pain and shame for what is happening, mixed emotions of grief, compassion for Ukrainians, a sense of our collective responsibility, a desire to do something to help the victims of the war - all these emotions have taken hold of many of

us. We felt we couldn't just passively remain silent and do nothing. We felt an urgent need NOT to remain silent, to publicly protest against the war, to unite and do everything in our power to help the innocent victims of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

This is how our informal group Russian-Speaking Integrity Alliance NZ reacted to the events that began on February 24. The group arose spontaneously, in April 2021, after the poisoning and imprisonment of Alexei Navalny, one of the leaders of the political opposition in Russia.

The word Integrity in the name of the group (translated: "honesty, sincerity, conscientiousness, righteousness, dignity, integrity, ethics") reflects the fact that we are united by common moral values.

Since 2021, Integrity Alliance NZ has been organising protest rallies against the persecution of the political opposition in Russia, against the closure of the Memorial Historical Society, which studied the history of the Gulag and political repression in the Soviet Union. These events were held in Auckland in April 2021 and January 2022. In the very first days of the war, we organised an anti-war protest march in Auckland, organised and took an active part in a variety of charity events (marathon, sale of pastries, concerts) in order to raise funds to help the innocent victims of the war in Ukraine. We have also organised several Open Letters. One of them is a letter to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Auckland, calling for specific steps to help specialists and students, refugees from Ukraine. Another was addressed to the

administration of Alexander Park with a request to cancel the Russian-patriotic show "Miss Russia" as absolutely unacceptable now, when there is a war and every day children, women, the elderly - innocent victims of the war - die at the hands of soldiers acting under Russian flags and on behalf of the Russian state. Alexander Park said later it would not host the event.

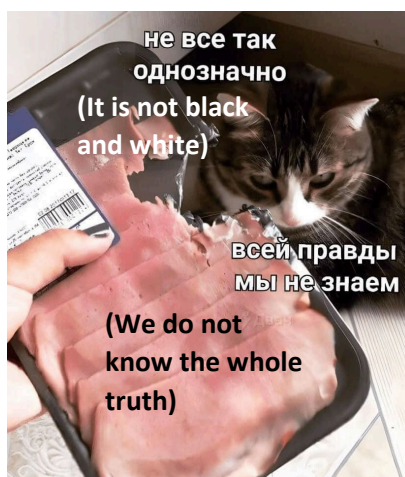
Integrity Alliance NZ also took part in a large anti-war protest march in Auckland on June 5th, marking 100 days since the start of the war. On Russia Day, June 12, our group organised anti-war protest rallies in Auckland, Dunedin and Wellington, joining the World Protest of Russians held in 30 countries and called Independence Day from Putinism.

We have many ideas and plans for the future. We will help Ukrainians and support human rights activists based in Russia. We will help compatriots living in New Zealand to free themselves from the toxic, corrupting imperial mentality and open their eyes to the criminal nature of Putin's regime.

Our Integrity Alliance is growing and growing rapidly, and we now have more than 150 people with us. If you want to learn more about our group or join our initiatives, you can find us on Facebook at this address:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/474401104164113>

Join us!



What happened? Let's see:

1. The ham bit off itself because it's an anti-ham ham
2. The cat is not to blame. He was afraid that the ham would be eaten by the hostess and protected the ham from the hostess.
3. This is an information war between a cat and some ham. The photo is fake. See, the joints on the tiles on the floor are uneven
4. I do not understand the ham, it is difficult to say whether it has been bitten off or not
5. On TV they said it wasn't a cat

Source: Ivan B. https://t.me/most_na/7212

Clarification for English speaking readers

Common memes used to whitewash the crimes committed by Russians in Ukraine

It is not black and white. We do not know the whole truth.

Ukraine military bombed Ukraine cities.

Ukraine planned to attack Russia and Russia had to protect itself.

The photographs of bombed houses and dead bodies of civilians are fake.

I am not an expert and cannot judge if the residential areas were bombed.

On TV they said that Russian soldiers did not commit any crimes.



The school, Russian for Kids, invites school-age children to study Russian language, literature, history and acting. Classes in small groups. Individual lessons in Russian language and literature, both at school and online. Enrolment in groups - after the interview. The beginning of classes in the third semester is from August 1.

More information about the school - www.russianforkids.co.nz; <https://www.facebook.com/russianforkids.co.nz>; <https://www.facebook.com/russianforkids.co.nz>

Telefon: 02108450845; 66 Rosecamp Rd, Beach Haven, Auckland



Famous Russian TV presenter and comedian Maxim Galkin was forced to leave Russia after openly opposing the war in Ukraine. He will present his new show (in Russian) in Auckland on 8 September.



Do you want to advertise in our newspaper?

Would you like to subscribe to our newspaper's free e-mail newsletter?

Keep in touch olgabelokon@russianforkids.co.nz or call 02108450845

Would you like to support our newspaper?

Donations: Russian for Kids Inc., ASB Bank # 12-3035-0005286-00

Olga Belokon's studio presents:

Musical and poetic evening

29 July at 7pm, Rose Centre, 4 School Rd. Belmont

In the first part of the evening (7pm to 8pm) we will show theatrical miniatures and excerpts from our children's performances. You will see the "revived" poem by Samuil Marshak "Baggage", "The Tale of a Stupid Mouse" and other children's mini-performances. For this part of the evening we invite children from 5 to 100 years old.

In the second part of the evening (8pm to 9pm) poems and songs based on the poems of William Shakespeare and Robert Burns (music by Sergei Nikitin, Alexander Sukhanov, Dmitry Bogdanov and Valery Kaminsky) will be performed.

The third part of the evening (9pm to 10pm) will be dedicated to the Ukrainian tragedy. There will be no flags or political speeches. We want to share with you our common pain and express our attitude to the tragedy by artistic means. Poems and songs based on poems by Ilya Ehrenburg, Alexander Kushner, Vladimir Vysotsky, Lev Blumenfeld and Alexander Gabriel will be performed. Music Sergei Nikitin.



Tickets: 02108450845

olgabelokon@russianforkids.co.nz

Ticket price for **all three parts** - \$35

Children from 5 to 16 years old – free of charge.

In between parts of the evening the buffet will be open.

The proceeds received from the buffet will be transferred to help Ukraine.

The action is organised by the group United for Ukraine NZ

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Founder of the newspaper – Russian for Kids Inc.

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