



RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; SPACE; Europe; Russia; Ukraine

NOVAYA GAZETA'S MURATOV AWARDED NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Dmitry Muratov, editor-in-chief of Russia's independent *Novaya Gazeta* newspaper, has won the Nobel Peace Prize alongside Filipino journalist Maria Ressa. The Nobel Committee lauded Muratov for "[defending] freedom of speech in Russia under increasingly challenging conditions." The award comes amid a sweeping crackdown on independent media outlets in Russia which has intensified throughout the year. *Novaya Gazeta* is one of the few media outlets that has not yet been branded as a "foreign agent" by the Kremlin. Muratov said that the prize is a recognition of the increasing pressure and danger associated with being a journalist in Russia, and insisted that the award belonged to everyone on the *Novaya Gazeta* team. He particularly noted journalists that had been killed since the paper's creation in 1993, saying that the award "is for those who died defending the right of people to freedom of speech." Muratov is the first Russian to receive the Nobel Peace Prize since the fall of the Soviet Union. (*The Moscow Times*, October 8, 2021)

WHY RUSSIANS ARE FLEEING

A new poll by the *Tochno* news portal has attempted to trace where and why Russians have left Russia during the past twenty-one years of President Vladimir Putin's rule. The August 2021 survey, which polled some 900 emigrants between the ages of 14 and 70 from 65 countries via online surveys, notes a glaring discrepancy between the official statistics compiled by ROSSTAT, Russia's state statistics agency, and receiving nations in the West, which often exceed ROSSTAT figures "by 6-10 times." All told, between four and five million Russians are believed to have left the country over the past two decades, with emigration "accelerating since 2012" and approximately 300,000 departing annually in recent years. The reasons for their departure tend to vary, but concerns about "security" and the political situation inside the country figured prominently in the decision of many to leave. "I'm scared and bad in Russia," noted one respondent. "And I wanted my daughters to grow up in a more open and free environment."

Nor is this trendline likely to be easily reversed. Among the poll's respondents, only four percent indicated that they planned to return to their homeland, while 70% made clear that they would "probably never return." (*Tochno.st*, October 5, 2021)

RUSSIA BRANDISHES ITS ENERGY WEAPON

Rising energy prices in Europe have given Moscow new leverage over the continent, and the Kremlin is wasting no time in exploiting the opening. Amid surging gas prices in recent days, Russia swooped in to slash costs - while simultaneously linking Europe's gas price headache with the continent's refusal to play by Russia's gas rules. Russian deputy prime minister Alexander Novak explained that if Europe cooperated with fast-tracking the approval process of the recently-completed Nord Stream II pipeline, then its energy crisis could be "cooled" instead of becoming increasingly volatile. "The message he's sending is we won't send enough gas until you [allow this]," Naftogaz CEO Yuriy Vitrenko lamented. "And that means high prices and unhappy voters."

Kyiv has good reason to be concerned. Ukraine fears that if Moscow successfully push through approval for Nord Stream II, the volumes of gas that currently transit through Ukraine will be significantly diminished, resulting in both political and economic hardships for the country. (*The Independent*, October 8, 2021)

ROSCOSMOS IN THE CROSSHAIRS

Between next year and 2024, Russia plans to slash funding for space activities, reflecting President Vladimir Putin's displeasure with the performance of state space agency ROSCOSMOS. The envisioned cuts will slash costs in "manufacturing-technological activities" and "cosmodrome development," while funding for "scientific research and development" has been nearly eliminated altogether. Putin's directive is fueled by growing dissatisfaction with the performance of the agency, whose rockets have been notoriously unreliable and whose development of launch vehicles has lagged. The agency has also been beset by corruption and plagued by low morale in recent years under the leadership of its head, former deputy premier Dmitry Rogozin. (*Ars Technica*, October 8, 2021)

JUSTICE DENIED FOR GULAG HISTORIAN

Russia's Supreme Court announced that it has denied an appeal from gulag historian Yury Dmitriyev. Dmitriyev, who has already been jailed twice on sexual abuse and child pornography charges, is currently serving a 13 year sentence. He was first arrested in 2016, but shortly after a 2018 acquittal fresh charges were opened against him, extending his sentence. The historian's popularity stems from his extensive work in the Karelia region uncovering mass graves and locating thousands of Soviet-era regime victims. This work motivated more than 150 figures in the country's history community to plead for a review of Dmitriyev's case this summer. Their pleas, however, were denied. Dmitriyev, moreover, is now facing the prospect of a third conviction and still more prison time. Critics have viewed Dmitriyev's imprisonment as "political retribution" for his work. (*The Moscow Times*, October 13, 2021)