MGIMO JOURNAL
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2025



Diplomatic Academy is back on MGIMO track

Anatoly Torkunov

"Our Goal is Technological Leadership"

With Flying Colors

Anwar Ibrahim and Jeffrey Sachs have passed their MGIMO test

Where The Oka and Volga Rivers Merge

Dmitry Starostin is Our Man in Nizhny Novgorod

Anna Chernova's Stand-Up Comedy



More than 250 MGIMO graduates and the university's friends participated in the MGIMO Rector Golf Cup, held on the course of the Zavidovo Golf Club.

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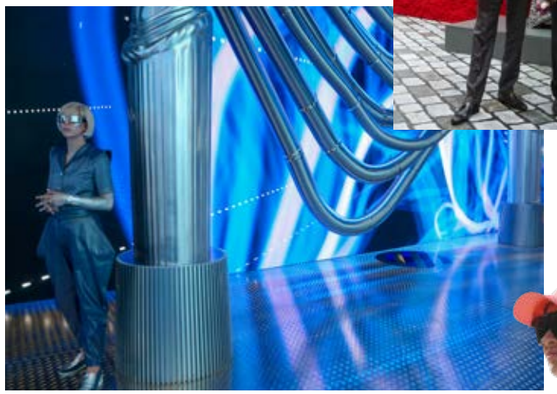
MGIMO traditionally took part in the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum 2025 (SPIEF), held under the slogan "Shared values are the foundation for growth in a multipolar world."









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In 2020, the Sports Diplomacy Center was established at MGIMO. It gave a start to the Global Sports: Legal Regulation, Positioning, and Communications professional retraining program.



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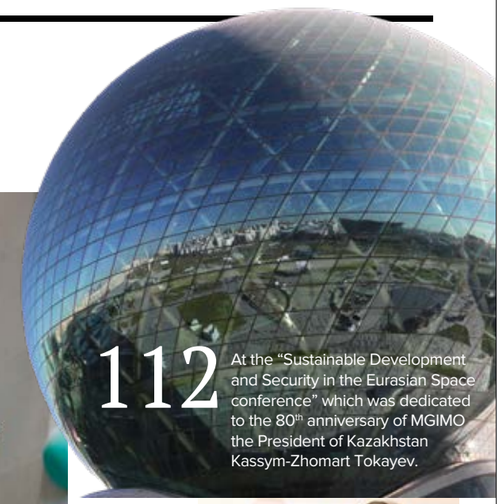

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MGIMO ALUMNI

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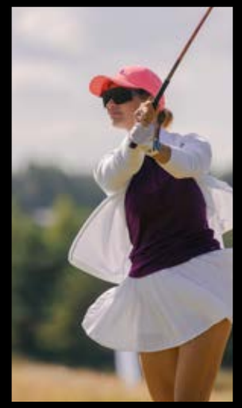
Photos by **Igor Lileev, Anna Bananova**

THE DAY OF CAPTAIN

MGIMO Rector Golf Cup was held on the course of the Zavidovo Golf Club. The participants and guests of the tournament warmly congratulated Anatoly Torkunov, the captain of the club, on his anniversary.









More than 250 MGIMO graduates and the university's friends participated in the tournament and beginner golf training programs. The competitions were held in a team format, and since each team had two people, they competed in sports pairs, friends and married couples. A team golf tournament, beginner workshops and a putt competition were held as part of the sports track. The tournament was held in five sets in pairs scramble. In the diplomatic competition, the first place went to Fan Tuan Khan, a member of the Board of the Vietnamese Tennis Federation, and Nguyen Doan Hai, an attache at the Vietnamese Embassy. As for the honored guests of the tournament, Svetlana Zhurova and Maria Kashina came third and received cups from the rector. Evgeny Manturov and Sergey Markus became the silver medalists, and Mikhail and Polina Puchkov won. The first place in the student competition went to Artyom Lebedev and Alexander Zikh. They are successful not only in golf, but also academically, excelling at university tests and exams. Daria Andreeva and Mirjalol Khusanov won the graduate tournament. Alexey Sidorov and Konstantin Sokol came first in the open competition. Irina Chernova and Artyom Dunaev were awarded for the farthest strike,

























More than 250 MGIMO graduates and the university's friends participated in the tournament, competing in pairs.

with Karina Budantseva and Alexander Zaichenko winning the most accurate one. Presenting the trophy in the putt nomination, MGIMO graduate, Minister of Education of the Russian Federation Sergey Kravtsov, seized the opportunity to address congratulations to A. Torkunov. "As a person involved in education, I would like to thank you very much for the school history textbook. This is a great achievement that every school now uses. Let me present you with the Loyalty to the Profession award. And thank you so much for educating and raising us!"
The evening ended with a reception featuring friendly communication and dancing: students rocked the dance floor, and later, having enjoyed fish soup and pilaf, stood alongside other winners of the tournament at the award ceremony.



ANATOLY TORKUNOV: “OUR GOAL IS TECHNOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP”

Interview by **Igor Drobyshev**
Photos by **Alexey Bakhtin**

In 1993, Anatoly Torkunov, having become rector of MGIMO in the conditions of “shock therapy” and the collapse of the education system, did, in fact, save the university from destruction. Then he launched it onto a high educational orbit.
Thirty years later, there will be new challenges: a break with the West, a reorientation to the East, and artificial intelligence. There are new priorities and new dangers. “Today I received about 20 messages on my phone from scammers,” the rector laughs. “Moreover, they are coming up with more and more new schemes, fake calls from public services, offer to re-register something.”

MJ: Artificial intelligence is a double-edged sword.
This is not just a technological issue, but also a deeply philosophical one, and we are still far from understanding what all of this will lead to. Therefore, at this stage it is important to find some ways and means to fit a person, as a biological organism, into this new external environment, this artificially created nature. The reality of people communicating not with each other, like two biological organisms, but with artificial sociality.

If a person loses his soul through constantly turning to AI, then an entire university can be deprived of its soul in this way. And this is a great danger.

It is clear that AI has its prospects, but it is also fraught with great danger. These horrors that we have seen about AI in American films, especially in most dramatic and extreme scenes, unfortunately, are no longer fiction. They may well happen in real life.
I've been talking to one person here, and he holds a rather high position. “We will not let this happen, " he assured me. “All of this can be technologically controlled.” But he is mistaken, these processes no longer depend on us, they have already begun to be introduced into our lives.

MJ: Still, a lot depends on us, for example, we can stop using ChatGPT.
Unfortunately, people are built in such a way that they often fail to look for easy ways, such as learning through analysis and questioning, but resort to ChatGPT instead. That is, we deny ourselves intellectual work. It seems to us that it will be easier if we just click the buttons and get the result.
I myself am one example. For the anniversaries of my comrades, I have traditionally been writing simple poems for a long time, and then I read them out for everyone. And I always did it myself, using my imagination. One day I had to write something urgently, and I was very tired. I thought, who not ask ChatGPT for a particular rhyme. And then I realized that I did not want to read the result out.

MJ: Why?
It turned out to be soulless. And this is a great danger. Because if a person loses his soul through constantly turning to AI,



then an entire university can be deprived of its soul in this way. Now there are many publications on AI threatening the spirit of the university and traditional university values. And advanced professors and scholars increasingly come to understand that it is no longer the work of the brain that will give aggregated conclusions on a particular issue, but the artificial intelligence that people will turn to. And this is already a widespread situation.
I couldn't have imagined this when I was studying at MGIMO! If in my time, or even the 1990s, a student had to work with a lot of sources to create a paper, to aggregate the knowledge he had received from various sources, and analyze them, today he just turns to ChatGPT, Le Chat Mistral, or DeepSeek, which allow him to get access to some ready-made information. And the problem is that a lot in AI is based on information that is not verified. This is a challenge for the teacher. Yes, a student can use AI — this is normal, but the work should still be independent. And conclusions should be made as a result of a person's intellectual work.

MJ: What are we doing to turn AI to the benefit of the learning process?
For MGIMO, a university of the humanities, though with a touch of technology, it is very important to develop in its fields in conjunction with serious sociological, psychological and cognitive research. After all, a human being is far from studied, we do not understand much about his behavior, especially that in groups. We need to learn more about human beings and their capabilities, their ways of thinking, and how they will develop in the face of AI and digitalization.

Today, the goal of the Priority 2030 state support program is no longer "academic leadership," but "technological leadership".



MGIMO's technological core includes neuromarketing and neuro-linguistic laboratories, a center for generative networks, hybrid classrooms, and a linguistic virtual reality model. These have all become the university's own hardware foundation for technology projects. Our goal is to learn how to work professionally with generative networks, to "complete" machine intelligence.
The emergence of such centers and laboratories is a global trend, and we were one of the first ones to create our own laboratory, meeting the demands of large trading companies for whom marketing is important. The laboratory also has remote equipment, so research can be conducted on site – in shopping malls.
For those who are studying to become a marketer, with the profession being in high demand, this is an extremely important area, and we will continue to expand it.
We have a corresponding master's degree program. We conduct neuro- and cognitive research. The program includes training in negotiation practice, not only diplomatic, but also business one, taking into account psychology and cognitive types of research.

MJ: MGIMO has once again entered the Priority 2030 state support program.
Yes, but the "Priority" today is no longer some simple "academic leadership", the main task is technological leadership. What should the socio-economic and humanitarian universities that we belong to do?
Firstly, it is necessary to promote technological development by training personnel who provide management, financial and economic efficiency, and legal support for high-tech projects, including those with an international component or those focused on cross-border technology transfer. This task can be achieved by "immersing" future economists, lawyers, and managers in the subject field of modern high-tech industries and promising areas of technological development. This possibility arises in the case of the implementation of online educational programs and through consortia of MGIMO with technical universities.

The second key criterion for the participation of socio-economic universities in the Priority 2030 program in its new format is the high technological level of the educational process, achieved through modern digital solutions, the creation of an internship infrastructure and launching internships at leading companies of some promising technology segment.
The tools and methodology that will be invented as part of our scientific and educational search will be used by the real economy, our partners, and the "driving forces" of the economy, who we actively cooperate with. These are the energy giants, such as Rosneft, Transneft, Gazprom, and the largest high-tech companies — Roscosmos and Rosatom. We aim to ensure that our latest developments and solutions are implemented, guaranteeing the technological sovereignty of the country. Sovereignty is not isolation, but the ability to create and broadcast one's own meanings and values globally.

MJ: Digitalization has confidently entered the MGIMO educational process, so is it digital diplomacy that will rule the future?
Yes, although it is the same good old diplomacy, it involves the use of new means of broadcasting, taking into account the study of big data, the possibilities of AI, and those of information technology in general. Basing our work on scientific and technological achievements, it is important for us at MGIMO to further promote research in the field of international relations theory, conflict resolution, etc., taking into account the fact that AI will interfere in all these processes. In the future, our graduates will become not only "guides" of national interests and values, but also "architects" of new systems of meanings in the global digital space.
Technological development is increasingly becoming a field of geopolitical and geo-economic competition, where those who are able to create sustainable ecosystems of trust and cooperation win. The MGIMO Bachelor's program "Big Data and Modeling of International Processes", which we implement jointly with leading scientific centers, gives students the skills of analyzing and predicting international situations using modern data processing, modeling and digital diplomacy tools. We combined our fundamental humanitarian training, historical and political analysis with the mastering of programming languages and the practice of working with big data.



In the future, our graduates will become not only "conductors" of national interests and values, but also "architects" of new systems of meanings in the global digital space.

MJ: MGIMO has already reached the stage where it can become a national institute of global development, has it not?
I agree with that. I would like to repeat that this is possible primarily due to the development and strengthening of our ties with the real sector, with our largest structures. There should be many development institutions in the country - most importantly, they should have unique competencies, like MGIMO, which offers excellent regional studies, deep legal and extensive economic knowledge, as well as a powerful foreign languages school which includes teaching them against the backdrop of the development of machine translation and the use of AI. MGIMO's internationality is designed to ensure the country's technological leadership through the passing on of best practices, promotion in foreign markets, and borrowing missing technologies or their components.









ANWAR IBRAHIM “PASSED HIS MGIMO TEST” WITH FLYING COLORS

Photos by **Igor Lileev, Tikhon Malevanny**

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim arrived at MGIMO the day after his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin. And he couldn't help but tell the students about it. “Do you understand the way I felt? We, representatives of a small country, met with the president of a huge power and felt at home, we felt comfortable in the Kremlin.”

With a smile, Anwar Ibrahim recalled the riddle that the Russian president had asked him as a joke. It completely relaxed the atmosphere of the summit, making it truly amicable.

During a tour of the Saint Andrew's Hall of the Grand Kremlin Palace which used to serve as the throne room for the tsars, Vladimir Putin asked, pointing to the three thrones: "Mr. Prime Minister, here are three thrones: one for the tsar, the second for his wife, the tsarina, and who do you think the third throne is for?" Anwar Ibrahim replied with no hesitation: "For his second wife." "This is the answer of a real Muslim, a representative of Islamic culture," Putin said admiringly.

"You can't sit on the throne alone," Ibrahim told the students, "and I assumed





Ibrahim: "Just like Russian people, we don't believe in relations based on force and arrogance. Every nation deserves recognition and respect."

that there were three people on the throne: the king sat in the middle, the eldest wife on the right, and the second on the left. But it turned out that the tsar's mother was sitting on it with them. I should note that not all Muslims agree with polygamy. As a Muslim, I have only one wife. Even one wife is sometimes too much for me — talk about having more of them! But this shows how friendly the atmosphere was, I didn't even know how to react. The president and I were talking about nuclear energy and education, and suddenly were conversation got so personal. And I just had to adjust on the move, to somehow return the joke. In the end, we were photographed in this room and it became clear that everything they say about Putin is a myth. We were on one mind and parted as great friends. I think this is a good sign for our relations, and I will definitely tell my ASEAN colleagues about it."

Ibrahim stressed that both the Kremlin and MGIMO had treated the Malaysian delegation with special respect. "Just like Russian people, we don't believe in relations based on force and arrogance. Every nation deserves recognition and respect, be it big or small, rich or not quite so rich. We can work together only on the condition of respect for cultures, faiths, and traditions."

Indeed, the distinguished guest received a warm welcome at MGIMO. The Rector of the University, Anatoly Torkunov, announced the decision of the Academic council, which unanimously voted to award Anwar Ibrahim the degree of Honorary Doctor of MGIMO for his contribution to strengthening peace and international cooperation and for his efforts in developing friendly ties between peoples.

Rector Torkunov noted that cooperation with Malaysia as an ASEAN country has always been special to Russia. "We have had the honor to host Malaysian leaders here more than once, but I would like to point out one special circumstance: it was this year that we restored the teaching of the Malay language. And now we have the languages of all ASEAN member countries taught at MGIMO, which, I think, in itself is an important indication of the attention shown by the leadership of the country, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the university to the Southeast Asian region. We are implementing new educational programs, including the original innovative Master's program, the implementation of which is done with the support of the ASEAN Center and our Jakarta ASEAN Center colleagues. This master's degree is related to exploring further opportunities for our cooperation with the ASEAN countries, and representatives of all ASEAN countries study at it alongside Russian students."

MGIMO is building fruitful relations with the University of Malaya, the alma mater of Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. A large agreement with the university is underway, and it has become the basis for the work of the ASEAN MGIMO Center. "We know," Anatoly Torkunov said, "the university stands out by the truly high level and quality of its teaching and research. We are pleased to deepen cooperation with the Islamic University, and with the Asia Pacific University, our students have visited Malaysia numerous times, and today we are implementing a double degree program with one of these universities. This year graduates will receive two diplomas."

Anwar Ibrahim was presented with a doctoral robe and an academic cap. In his Bridging Worlds in a Fractured Age doctoral lecture, the Malaysian Prime Minister started with his love of Russian literature. "For my whole life, while I was studying — and I got even convicted for my beliefs — I have been drawn to Russian culture, reading the works of Russian scientists, writers, and philosophers. There is no other country with such a rich culture that has produced thinkers like Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Tolstoy, Pasternak who had a thorough understanding of a person's strengths and weaknesses, his grief and greatness.

Let me remind you of the saying of Solzhenitsyn: "The line between evil and good runs through the human heart." What a deep thought! We are fighting for good against evil, and this struggle starts within each of us. After all, it is not pride that rules the world, but human modesty and humility."

"We are at a turning point in history," continued A. Ibrahim. — The world is going through a profound change. It is flabbergasting that after the WTO and globalization, the world is now falling apart: we have sanctions, military actions, customs duties… The whole world had been building this structure, and now everything crumbles. Malaysia, just like

Torkunov: "MGIMO is building fruitful relations with the University of Malaya, the alma mater of Prime Minister A. Ibrahim."





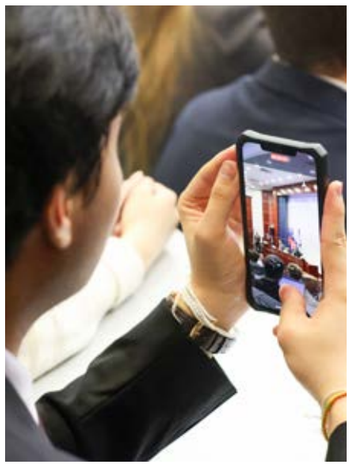


every other ASEAN member state, is critically dependent on trade, and I must admit that this is an existential threat to us. We became hubs for the production of microprocessors, electronics, and advanced technology, and suddenly all of it went to waste. But let's not despair, let's move forward, and build peace together — that's exactly what universities like MGIMO exist for. Cooperation in education is a necessary and right thing to do. About 140 students are studying in Malaysia, and there is about the same number of Malaysians studying in Russia. We have also restored Russian language teaching at the University of Malaya, so the process is mutual."

***

"We need a new world order," Anwar Ibrahim went on to point out. "And it can arise on the BRICS basis. In a sense, I represent my ASEAN colleagues here who hope for Russia's support when applying for BRICS membership. By the way, Russia has already supported our candidacy for joining BRICS. Through membership in this organization, we expect to expand our markets and open up new horizons of cooperation.

Ibrahim: "For my whole life, I have been drawn to Russian culture, reading the works of Russian scientists, writers, and philosophers. There is no other country with such a rich culture!"



This year, the main issue that our Government was working on was the topic of equity and sustainability. We have focused all our programs on this. We are currently implementing the concept of a unified energy grid that would connect the entire region from Indonesia to Laos. The next point of the plan is to get the entire region covered with an Internet network. Capitalism creates terrible inequality between the poor and the rich. Digitalization brings equality to our lives and allows all citizens to gain broad access to economic and political activity. Hence another important issue: cybersecurity. We are constantly dealing with this threat, but it cannot be solved on the spur of the moment, even regionally. This requires the participation of major players, such as Russia, the United States and China.

I do not agree with those who say that international relations are built on conflict. Do you want an example of the way you can work together for the benefit of peace? This is our region, the most peaceful and the fastest developing one. Why? The answer is simple: the leaders of ASEAN countries maintain very close relations, and we resolve all issues by consensus. Let's say, I come to Bangkok today, where I meet with representatives of the military junta, and tomorrow I go to Myanmar, where I talk to the opposition and former prime ministers. I hold consultation with everyone. When the earthquake struck, an urgent truce was needed to provide humanitarian assistance. I called everyone, and all the countries in the region, from the Philippines to Laos, gave the go-ahead.

"I passed the test, didn't"? the Prime Minister asked Anatoly Torkunov. "You did it with flying colours!" the MGIMO rector replied.



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Alexander Torkunov thanked the distinguished guest for the emotional speech, adding: "We are surely delighted with your knowledge of Russian literature."

The students lined up at the microphones to pose questions to the distinguished guest. Some even addressed the Prime Minister in Malay. Among them was Denis Zhuchkov, an ASEAN Master's student who complained that he still did not have a good enough command of Malay: "I'd rather switch to English."

"Come on, don't be shy! — Anwar Ibrahim encouraged him. "You're doing pretty well." You started learning the language in September and your command of it isn't that bad. For that, I'll say "Terima kasi" to you. In Malay, it's not just "thank you," it's something deeper than that. As they say, this is something from the bottom of my heart."

"We have good teachers," Denis replied, "so the studies are going well.... I'm already applying language in practice. Last year, Kazan hosted a BRICS forum, and I was lucky to work there as a volunteer of the protocol service."

After receiving yet another question in his native language, Anwar Ibrahim joked, "I think I'm taking the Malay test myself."

That was the end of the meeting. "I passed the test, didn't I?" the Prime Minister asked Anatoly Torkunov. "You did it with flying colours!" the MGIMO rector replied.



ANNA CHERNOVA'S STAND-UP COMEDY

Photos by **Yaroslava Volkova, Dmitry Kucheryavy, Svetlana Lobova, Natalia Markova, Yana Kuznetsova**

When Anna Chernova, a 2008 MGIMO graduate, told her parents that she had taken up boxing, went to therapy and was a stand-up comedienne, they told her: "All of the above is nonsense, but stand-up comedy is something interesting!"
Today Anna is one of the Russian-speaking Dubai's leading stand-up comediennes, and this city potentially offers a fairly large audience.

MJ: How did you, a MGIMO graduate, a candidate of political sciences, a mother of three, finally get as far as to take up stand-up comedy at 40?
This was a long path. As a child, I had two passions – music and writing. Back in my schooldays, I began writing for a children's newspaper, wrote notes on scout trips and traveling to different countries.
For seven years I learned the piano, taught myself to play the guitar and performed at school shows. I even thought of enrolling at a music college, but I ended up going for international journalism and enrolled at MGIMO.
In my third year, I started working at RIA Novosti, and ever since I have spent nearly half of my life being connected to news in one way or another. But it is not just news. I worked as the director of the Russian-Polish Centre for Dialogue and Agreement, but then returned to news again. I worked as a news reporter in Warsaw, back in Moscow I became a Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's press pool journalist, went abroad with him. And then my husband was offered a job in the UAE, and for nearly 15 years I have been living in Dubai.
Here I had three children, became a mother of many, but I always continued with my work as a journalist. Even when my first child was born, I was finishing writing my thesis.
Once I went to an English-language stand-up show in Dubai. I didn't like it. The jokes were primitive, there was a lot of swearing, the set of topics was narrow: nationality (there are a lot of foreigners in Dubai), Tinder, dates. But, most importantly, people often reacted not to the joke itself, but to obscenities. I'm not a prude, I can also use a swear word to make a joke better when it is appropriate, but still… And so I thought, I do have something to say! I've always loved comedy, but I never thought I'd ever be the one to make people laugh.



Stand-up comedy is a kind of catharsis. You are not just joking, you kind of uncover, expose your soul.

MJ: What did it all start from?
There is such a thing as an "open microphone." Comedians take the stage, try out new jokes or perform for the first time. I thought: I will speak, speak out, tick it off my to-do list and go back to my usual life. But when I heard the audience laugh… It made me think. I estimated that I probably had enough material for five Netflix shows!

MJ: Was it a performance in English?
Yes, it was. My friend and I came to some shabby bar in a strange neighborhood. I was wearing a very beautiful orange dress, my hair was styled. My friend told me: "Anya, why did we come here?". I myself did not fully understand it, but I wanted to give it a try. That was the same thing as me doing a skydive when I was in my first year at MGIMO… In general, I took the stage, told them about the life of a mother of three, although my image didn't fit the material. But the audience found it interesting, they really sense it when you really care about what you are talking about. Of course, I was worried because I spoke English. And when I first performed in front of Russian speakers, I had more room for improvisation, hence the feeling of confidence.

MJ: How did you find your Russian-speaking public?
At first, I analyzed the market and realized that there were no Russian-language stand-up comedians in the UAE, but the audience could be a large one. And I thought, why not open my own club? So that people who speak Russian can come there, communicate, and have a laugh. Gradually I found some like-minded people – these are the guys who are now developing Russian-language comedy in Dubai together with me. Today we are the only officially registered Russian-language stand-up club in the UAE.



MJ: It was not easy to change the situation, was it?
Yes, it was pretty hard. I had to, as one might say, fight for my audience. Gradually, the audience who went to the English-speaking stand-up shows became ours. Despite the difficulties, we never performed for little audiences. This is probably because people feel your sincerity, and understand that this is not about money at all.
In a short time (in about a year) we went a long way – found our audience, venues, comedians and comediennes, acquaintances and contacts.

MJ: How do you gather material for your performances? What are you joking about?
First of all, performing in your native language is a tremendous pleasure. I can say, I drink my own jokes in! I joke about children. This is what I am most comfortable at. At first, I was looking for myself and thought that not everyone was interested in this, and then I realized that on no other topic did I feel so easy and confident. These jokes are hard-won and real. Moms will understand me!
Stand-up comedy is a kind of catharsis. You are not just joking, you kind of uncover, expose your soul. You talk about things that are very important for you, these sensitive things, turning them into jokes. We called our stand-up club Facepalm Comedy, because we can laugh at ourselves, say things that some could "facepalm" at.
I joke about how imperfect a mother I am, how sometimes it is not me teaching my children things, but the other way around. I joke about my looks – the fact that I only weigh 99 pounds, or that I have small breasts. On stage we sure exaggerate things, sometimes we bring it to the point of absurdity. I can joke about anything without feeling awkward.
Stand-up comedy is about sincerity. If I myself do not believe in what I am saying, the audience will immediately feel whether it resonates with me or not, whether I believe in what I am saying.



I am constantly looking for new ideas. You can see them everywhere: on the road, in conversations with friends, around children and even in your sleep.

MJ: Please give us an example.
Well, let's say I developed depression at 40. I went to see a therapist, and he told me I was going through a midlife crisis. And he told me I now owed him 3 thousand dirhams. And everything seemed to pass in an instant!
I tell the audience things the way they truly are. That I try to be a good mother, that I am very attentive to children. Just the other day I got some balloons for my son's birthday, bought him a cake, some decorations and gifts which I laid out in different places. And I thought, he is going to be stunned in the morning! And he was indeed stunned. Because his birthday was a month away.

MJ: Yes, that is really bad. And you have three of them...
Yes, they say, three children is a lot. But a friend of mine has five. I ask her sometimes: "How are you?" She goes like: "Okay, after the third one it doesn't matter." Me: "Great, but are you fine with the fact that I am standing behind you and that you are talking to a wall?"
Children are regular suppliers of stand-up material. Once my daughter asked me: "Mom, did you know that rabbits often eat their babies right after giving birth?" And I said: "This is the first time I have heard it, but initially there were actually four of you."

MJ: Did your professional experience come in handy?



It both helps and gets in the way. As a journalist, I first went into details and explanations a lot. And in stand-up comedy it works the other way around, you need to get rid of everything superfluous. A short intro and a punch is what you need. On the other hand, as someone who worked in the news, I know how to identify the main idea of a text as quickly as possible. And I am constantly looking for new ideas. You see them everywhere: on the road, in conversations with friends, around children and even in your sleep.
Many years of communication with fellow journalists, people with a special sense of humor and healthy cynicism, also left an imprint. Without this, the newsmen will not last long.
The most important thing is to constantly perform and write, write material. The more often you perform, the easier it is for you to perform. The more you write, the easier you come up with new material. I noticed that I was even joking when talking to our Filipino nanny. She gives me an intro, and I give her a punchline. About children, of course.
And you can no longer go without it, as if it is bursting you from the inside, you want to share these jokes.

I am sure, laughter heals and helps you develop such important qualities as empathy. Many try stand-up comedy, seeing this as a therapy thing.

MJ: And if people don't find them funny? You want to share it, and they don't take it from you. What is there to do?
Indeed, humor is subjective. Even if people "do not get" my jokes, one should not get offended! You either own the situation or you don't. Let's say you are joking about your children, and there are only young people in the audience, and they care about completely different things! What comes with experience is the understanding of what kind of material will be better liked by a specific audience.
By the way, many try stand-up comedy, seeing this as a therapy thing, and I understand them. I am sure, laughter heals and helps you develop such important qualities as empathy.
For me, I truly enjoy it when I hear people laughing at my jokes. This probably makes me a little happier.
I grow together with our stand-up club, we help each other, this is where I met my friends. We are united by our understanding of humor and a common goal: to turn our club into something big and important. After all, stand-up comedy in Russian is a new phenomenon in the cultural life of Dubai. This is the very soft power that awakens interest in Russian culture and in Russia.









FATTAH CHODIEV: “BEAUTY KNOWS NO BORDERS”

Photos by International Chodiev Foundation

“The language of beauty, culture and art is the best means of establishing good relations between peoples,” says Fattah Shodiev, Japanist, 1976 MGIMO graduate, and now entrepreneur, philanthropist and founder of the International Chodiev Foundation, the largest and oldest private charity organizations in Russia. *The Heaven on Earth* exhibition which has become one of the key projects of the Foundation, was held in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow.

The exhibition is unique in many ways. First of all, the exhibits themselves are unique: These are 23 Orthodox icons painted by Japanese artist Hiroko Kozuki, in strict compliance with the ancient Russian icon painting tradition.

"It's amazing how deeply and subtly Ms. Hiroko has understood Russian Orthodox art, a person raised in a completely different cultural tradition," Chodiev says, "I think this exhibition is phenomenally successful against the background of cultural cooperation. We have been working towards this for many years."

The activities of the Chodiev Foundation, which celebrates its 30th anniversary next year, are also unique. Chodiev himself is convinced that cultural cooperation is the foundation on which long-term good-neighborly relations are built. He was the one who saved Japan's unique collection of kimonos by master Ichiku Kubota and then displayed it in the best exhibition halls in Moscow and St. Petersburg. But there is more to that.









The Russian representative office of the Foundation has been sponsoring joint Russian-Japanese cultural projects for many years, the Foundation has brought kabuki theater to Russia, held annual festivals of Russian culture in Japan and vice versa, etc. At the same time, the exhibition of Russian icons painted by a Japanese woman is very special.

"When F. Chodiev first saw this beauty at the residence of Ambassador Kozuki," recalls Olga Monakhova, director of the representative office of the International Chodiev Foundation in the Russian Federation, "he immediately exclaimed: "People must be see it! Nowhere else, but in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior!"

Hiroko Kozuki trained as an art historian. She first came to Russia in the 1980s with her husband, Japanese diplomat Toyohisa Kozuki. In 2015-2023, he worked in our country as Japan's ambassador to Russia. The couple traveled a lot, visited ancient monasteries and churches. There, Ms. Kozuki saw Russian Orthodox icons for the first time, these unique works by ancient masters. This made such an impression on her that she wanted to thoroughly study icon painting, and in 1999 she painted her first icon. Ms. Kozuki recalls how she took up an international icon painting class 25 years ago. "We painted them in the Old Russian style. And before each lesson, we prayed and thanked God. This experience allowed me to learn a lot not only about the icon-painting technique, but also about the soul of the Russian people. As I became interested in Russian culture and its Orthodox religion, I was increasingly attracted by the icons' spiritual beauty. I was lucky enough to come to Moscow four times, in total I spent 17 years here. Over the years, my husband and I have visited many churches and monasteries almost all over Russia."

Chodiev: "It's amazing how deeply and subtly Ms. Hiroko has understood Russian Orthodox art, a person raised in a completely different cultural tradition"

Today, her work is highly appreciated by the most discerning experts, and several icons by Hiroko Kozuki are owned by Russian churches and monasteries. Starting at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, the exhibition of Hiroko Kozuki's Orthodox icons set off on a journey of Russia.

"The exhibition is dedicated to peace," said Akira Muto, Japan's Ambassador to Russia. — I hope that it will help strengthen mutual understanding and peace. This idea is most welcomed by the Japanese government."

"There are many opportunities to get closer to God", says Hiroko-san. "When I look at an icon, I am strongly influenced by its beauty. You stand in front of it, look at it, and this is already a conversation. I think that's the beauty of it. Ask it a question, and the icon will answer. There will be a conversation."

JEFFREY SACHS: “THE PLANET MUST FUNCTION EFFICIENTLY”

Photos by
Igor Drobyshev, Igor Lileev

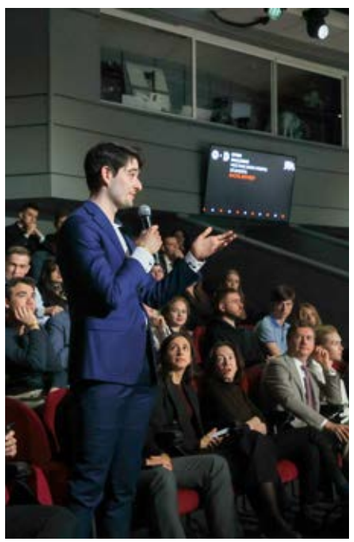
Boris Titov, a 1983 MGIMO graduate and Special Representative of the President of Russia for Relations with International organizations to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals, presented a report titled *Russia and Sustainable Development* at the UN headquarters in New York. This report was prepared by MGIMO.
It’s just a few blocks from the UN headquarters where Jeffrey Sachs lives. Sachs is a well-known American economist, professor and director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University. He recently visited MGIMO in Moscow, and we seized this opportunity to question him on the topic, as well as on other important issues of global development.

MJ: How did you find yourself involved in sustainable development?
I really like the concept of sustainable development, and it's no coincidence that I've been working on it for the last 25 years. In 2002, I even transferred from Harvard University to Columbia University. I remember being asked what position I would like to get, and I replied, “professor on sustainable development.” They were surprised, not knowing what this was. “That's why,” I say, “I need such a position, so that people would ask me, and I would explain it to them.”
Today, we know much more about sustainable development, because we have Sustainable Development Goals. What does this concept mean? In short, this is a more efficient and complex economic development.
For many decades, the goal of economic development was simply to increase the national product, or GDP, per capita. This indicator was supposed to grow, indicating national power and prosperity. This is the most important indicator that world leaders are still primarily paying attention to. “We are growing!” they say, content, and this is why they are proud and bragging.

The political system of the United States, in my opinion, is so ineffective that they still fail to understand that sustainable development serves the interests of the American people.







But the idea of sustainable development is something completely different. The goal is to improve the quality of life. This is a different thing from the per capita output growth rate which is also important, but 50 years ago it was done by destroying forests, poisoning the soil, and polluting rivers. But does it improve the quality of life? And then throw the climate, which is dangerously changing, into the mix.
By the way, the growth of the national product per capita makes one person, such as Elon Musk, the owner of 300 billion dollars, while the remaining billion people living on Earth eke out a miserable existence. What's so good about that?
The concept of sustainable development includes four main goals, which, although interconnected, are all independent. Firstly, we must improve the average financial standard of living in society. Secondly, the principle of honesty or fairness should be put at the forefront. In other words, it is necessary to ensure a fair distribution of national income. Thirdly, if we strive for progress, we should not reach it by destroying nature. And finally, we must achieve all this in a peaceful environment.
Thanks to an efficient and fair economy, diverse minorities or large groups of the population will not be left behind in terms of development. I am talking about women and girls, or any other individual who has not found himself in society.
We must keep in mind the three major risks that are associated with the environment: climate change, biodiversity destruction of and nature pollution. These risks are aggravated by conflicts and wars between states, let alone the danger of nuclear war.
The idea of sustainable development was suggested by Norwegian Prime Minister Gru Harlem Bruntland, whom I was personally acquainted with. In 1992, a conference was held where all states agreed that they would prevent man-made climate change, protect biodiversity, and stop desertification. However, over the next 20 years, they did nothing at all. On the contrary, the situation got worse, and the conference reconvened in 2012. I was there, and it turned out to be one of the most impressive events of my life. I remember a woman from Colombia raising her hand and saying, maybe we should adopt the Sustainable Development Goals, because by that time we had the Millennium Development Goals, which were mainly about fighting poverty. But the idea of sustainable development makes sense if it is promoted in all four dimensions.
The idea was well-received, and governments began their negotiations. To agree on four goals (not a single one) is not an easy task for 193 States, so the process took three years. I was actively involved in it, as an adviser to the UN Secretary General. But the result was great, and 17 Sustainable Development Goals were agreed upon. And on September 25, 2015, Pope Francis made an open statement before the UN General Assembly. It is our moral imperative to implement the idea of sustainable development, he said. And all governments have approved these goals.



For our planet to function efficiently, we need to set ambitious goals and create new opportunities, such as using AI and new digital systems.

MJ: It's been 15 years, what are the results?
Unfortunately, the goals are still goals. Unfortunately, the United Nations has neither the power, nor the ability to force



their implementation, and it doesn't have the money either. Declaring goals and achieving them are two different things. The only thing the UN could do was to urge governments to release the VNR (Voluntary National Review) report where countries report what they have achieved. Everyone was mentioned, with the exception of two: Haiti, which is in decline and going through an internal conflict, and the United States, because their political system, in my opinion, is so bad and ineffective that they still fail to understand that sustainable development serves the interests of the American people.

MJ: Why is this so?

The United States considers itself an exceptional country. If it's good enough for the rest of the world, they argue, then it's not good enough for us. "Why should we do something just because others like it?" The United States did not take sustainable development seriously. In general, partly because of this, nothing impressive happened. If the richest economy is not interested in this problem, then where can the money come from?

In 2016, President Trump came in, and for four years he has shown some obvious





indifference to the goals of sustainable development. He doesn't believe in man-made climate change. Under President Biden, no one talked about sustainable development goals either. No one was up to it because of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

I was a special adviser on the goals to both Ban Ki-moon and Antonio Guterres, and I traveled the world talking to governments, reading their reports, and making recommendations. But there has been little progress. I concluded that in these circumstances, two approaches have been formed. I find one completely unacceptable and cynical, although it prevails: "those who believe in these goals — and these are mostly the UN — are narrow-minded people and do not need to any help". I consider the second approach necessary for us: goals are important because climate change and the destruction of nature are really dangerous. Billions of people live in extreme poverty, and this is also one absolutely terrible reality! Just fancy: half a billion children do not have access to education! Calling those who worry about this narrow-minded is wrong and immoral. It's easy to be cynical, it's harder to do something useful.

But for this, it is necessary to invest billions and even trillions of dollars — the only way we can help the poorest regions, accelerate the transformation of energy to build a secure global energy system. But this requires a different, common attitude to this problem globally. And we do have such an experience! We were taking the right steps. Let us recall the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, which was developed as a result of international cooperation and adopted in the 1960s, changing the global security situation for the better. We can recall other important agreements.

It is necessary for our planet to function efficiently. And to do this, we need to set ambitious goals and create new opportunities, for example, using AI and new digital systems. This will help us progress faster.

The only way for our planet to function efficiently is to build a secure global energy system.









Texts and photos by **Igor Drobyshev**

VIETNAMISTS

Among the graduates of the Vietnamese chair of MGIMO which celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2024 there are people of different professions: diplomats, employees of the Security Council of the Russian Federation and the Presidential Executive Office, political scientists, scientists, and businessmen. But they all contribute to strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership between Russia and Vietnam.

FRIENDS GATHER AT THE VIETNAMESE EMBASSY

Since June 2021, the position of Vietnam's ambassador to Russia has been held by Dang Minh Khoi. He graduated from MGIMO in 1989, as did his wife, Le Lin Lan, a 1991 graduate. She is a professional diplomat as well, having reached the rank of ambassador. From 2019 to 2023, Ms. Lan as the head of the diplomatic mission of the SRV represented her country in the Swiss Confederation and in the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Recently, Ambassador Khoi and his wife arranged a small MGIMO reunion: they invited their good friend Berik Balgabaev, Advisor to the FIDE President and a 1991 graduate, whom the future ambassador shared a MGIMO dormitory room with, to visit them at the embassy.
For this occasion, Mrs Lan wore a traditional Vietnamese women's áo dài dress that looked rather exotic in the interiors of the historic mansion on Bolshaya Pirogovskaya Street in Khamovniki where the SRV embassy is located.

MJ: Berik, how did this become that you and the future Ambassador of Vietnam ended up in the same room?
In the USSR, there was such a practice that the Soviet students who were learning the languages of the socialist countries shared their dormitory rooms with the native speakers of these languages. It was Dang Minh Khoi, a third-year student, who turned out to be the native speaker of the language of my study.
Khoi: When I came to study in Moscow, it was the university itself that made the biggest impression on me – its grand building in the South West Moscow was probably the most modern educational building in the Soviet Union at that time. Our lecturers were very reverent to their students. I remember my Chinese teacher Ms Morozova who often invited us for coffee or tea at the canteen. But some of the lecturers were very strict: the world economy was taught to us by a professor who came from Moscow State University and gave everyone high marks, but he could torment his students for hours.
Balgabaev: Thanks to Khoi, I got to know many Vietnamese guys, his friends. For example, I met Chan Kuok Nguyen who studied in a Japanese group with Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, the future president of Kalmykia and the president of FIDE. These were interesting young people who I still keep in touch with. They gathered in our room, ate the food they had prepared in the kitchen, and talked…
Khoy: Berik was not very pleased, because we made noise, talked loudly and hindered with his studies. Especially when we started playing cards.
Balgabaev: At first they did, but I learned to appreciate it, because I constantly heard Vietnamese speech, which helped me master this complex language.
Khoi: I was actually joking. Berik was very tolerant attitude towards our lifestyle and, although we were very noisy, he never complained. We talked like good pals, even friends.

MJ: Did you learn something from each other during your time together?
Khoi: Berik was very hardworking, he really liked to speak Vietnamese to me and he asked me to do so. All in all, it was a mutually enriching process.
Balgabaev: Khoi was a straight A student and a very serious one at that, I even learned a few things from him. For example, when he was preparing for exams, he literally put his life on hold. But he also knew how to rest.
I still remember an important lesson I learned from the Vietnamese. One Saturday I am sitting there and studying, and they are resting and having dinner,



Khoi: "When I came to study in Moscow, it was the university itself that made the biggest impression on me – its grand building in the South West Moscow."

and suddenly they say: "Berik, what are you doing?" "Studying." "Don't you know grandfather Lenin said: "To study, to study and… "? Me: "To study!" "No! To study, to study and to rest! Or otherwise?" "What?" "You'll end up in a hospital!" Since then, I

have made it a rule to rest on Saturday. It got better when the Vietnamese were cooking. Vietnamese food is hot and spicy! Its thick aroma spread around the corridor. When they brought food from the kitchen, our windows got foggy. Our room was the furthest one down the corridor, and its value lay precisely in the fact that it had two windows that faced two different sides, but because of the Vietnamese cooking, both windows were foggy, and we didn't see anything at all!
Khoi: I remember that German students also did not really like to rest, they studied very hard. Unlike the Germans, the Vietnamese, although they were average students in terms of study, loved to come together with their friends, from different years and departments, held a feast and played different games! By the way, we didn't really ball out: we usually bought a box of vermicelli and a can of sprats.
Lan: And it was me who cooked the vermicelli!
Khoi: Sure! Lan was our chef! And on Saturdays and Sundays there was a disco.
Balgabaev: Girls from all over Moscow sought to get invited to MGIMO discos!
Khoi: Everyone wanted to get to know MGIMO students, the future diplomats.
Balgabaev: I remember how my classmate, Slovak Maroš Šefčovič, now the European Commissioner for Trade Policy and Economic Security, rocked there. He became the first ambassador of our class – he became the head of the Slovak Embassy in Israel.
Lan: I remember the national weeks when students from different states represented their countries. We also held the Week of Vietnam, sold our traditional souvenirs, danced Vietnamese dances in our national costumes.
We also talked with the lecturers of Vietnamese – it was useful for them and us alike. I want to seize this opportunity to congratulate the Vietnamese department on its 70th anniversary!



Balgabaev: "One Saturday I am sitting in our room and studying, and the Vietnamese students are having dinner, and suddenly they say: "Berik, what are you doing?" "Studying." "Don't you know Lenin said: "You must study, study and... "? Me: "Study!" "No! Study, study and rest! Or else?" "What?" "You'll end up in a hospital!" Since then, I have made it a rule to rest on Saturday."

Balgabaev: I was lucky to witness Khoi courting his future wife Lan. We studied together.

MJ: And what is Vietnamese courtship like?
Well, they do it the usual way. I witnessed the early stages of their romance. By the way, I also met my future wife in the dormitory and courted her in plain sight. The only difference is that it was in Vietnam, she was an intern at Hanoi University as well, but from the Institute



of Asian and African Studies. After my 4th year, I spent a whole year in Vietnam, and I communicated with the Khoi family quite a lot. We even became friends with Khoi's grandfather, a well-known lawyer, and I sometimes practiced my French with him.

MJ: You have a unique family: both husband and wife are ambassadors. I don't know if there are any such cases among Russian diplomats. I am sure there was no such couple in the Soviet Union. What about Vietnam?
Khoi: Vietnam has such couples, as far as I know. Most importantly, Lan and I reached this high together: we started by entering MGIMO where we studied together, she was two years younger than me. We studied very hard, we read manuals from morning to night, sat in the reading room of the library. The Russian language was not easy for us to learn. In my opinion, it is the most difficult one in terms of grammar.

MJ: Mr. Ambassador, what turn did your career take after your graduation from MGIMO?
Khoi: I started my career in the Department of China (now the Department of Northeast Asia) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam,



1980s. Sochi. When Khoi and Lan, MGIMO students, were young

ten years later I went to China, where I was consul, then deputy consul general in Guangzhou province, then adviser, adviser-envoy, and finally the envoy at the Vietnamese embassy in China.
Returning home in 2010, for five years he was Deputy Director, Director of the Department of Northeast Asia and at the same time Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs. Finally, he was appointed Deputy Minister. From 2015 to 2019 I was the

We didn't really ball out: usually bought a box of vermicelli and a can of sprats. And Lan was our chef!



2020s. Sochi. MGIMO graduates Khoi and Lan — a two-ambassador couple

Berik Balgabayev was born in Kokchetav, in then Soviet Kazakhstan. Today, he believes that by enrolling at MGIMO and learning the Vietnamese language, he "stroke lucky, because, in addition to getting to know the culture of Vietnam, he got to meet a lot of interesting and talented people."

MJ: How did your career go after graduating from MGIMO in 1991?
My first business trip to Vietnam was to Hanoi from late 1991 to 1995. For two years, I was an assistant to Mr. Hamidulin, whom I respected very much, to take it a bit further – I loved him. It was both a professional school and one of life. The ambassador was harsh but fair. After that, I wasn't afraid to work with anyone.
As for the Vietnamese language, I am grateful to the Vietnamese chair, I was not ashamed of my language skills. They allowed me to work as an interpreter as well. I interpreted the future Russian Prime Minister S. Stepashin, who came as the head of the delegation.
My second business trip was to the south, to Ho Chi Minh City. There we supervised Vietsovpetro, a joint venture for the exploration and production of oil in the continental shelf, the largest investment of the USSR abroad (with an authorized capital of 1.5 billion dollars). It even came as a separate item in the Soviet budget! I often traveled to the construction site which was located 120 km from Ho Chi Minh City. There, in the city of Vung Tau, there was a whole town for Soviet and then Russian specialists. I did it all: I married, divorced, and buried people —provided them with a full range of consular services.

MJ: Why did you leave the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?
In 1995, the President of Kalmykia (a Russian republic) Kirsan Ilyumzhinov who had known me since university (we lived in the same dormitory), was elected president of the Chess Federation (FIDE). He had his first overseas trip to Southeast Asia, and he met me in Hanoi. I asked him to help me arrange a meeting with the President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, so we established contact. Later, in Moscow, I helped him several more times, as a result of which he personally went to see the Russian Foreign Minister. Primakov asked me out. So in 1998, I joined FIDE where I still work today.

MJ: That's more than a quarter of a century!
At first, I worked as an assistant to the FIDE president, then in 1999-2000 I worked in Lausanne at the FIDE secretariat, I was in touch with the IOC, with Juan Antonio Samaranch himself, the president of the IOC. Largely due to my efforts, the IOC recognized FIDE as an international sports federation (previously it was just a sports organization), and chess as a sport. In 2009, we opened a FIDE arm in Russia, and I became its director. Since 2018, I have been working as an advisor to the President of FIDE A. Dvorkovich.



Learning this language has opened up new horizons for me. I managed to get to know the Asian mentality through Vietnamese

MJ: Have you ever worked with Vietnamese again?
It accompanies me through life in an amazing way. On the very first day of my work in Lausanne, the secretariat receives a call from Paris. A colleague switched the call to me, I'm listening to a man, and he's explaining something, switching from French to English, and I realize that he's Vietnamese. I started talking to him in Vietnamese. There's a pause on the other end of the line, and the man is in shock: he's calling Lausanne to discuss an issue, and the answer is in Vietnamese, just imagine that!
Vietnamese helped me a few more times because we traveled to Vietnam where chess is very developed.
Learning this language has opened up new horizons for me. I managed to get to know the Asian mentality through Vietnamese, which helped me a lot in FIDE, because the federation pays a lot of attention to relations with Asia.
I believe that I am still working in foreign affairs — after all, our federation has 200 member countries! Strictly speaking, I never left diplomacy, it's just that now it is sports diplomacy for me.



Khoi: "Vietnam has such two-ambassador couples, as far as I know. Most importantly, Lan and I reached this high together: we started by entering MGIMO where we studied together."



Ambassador of Vietnam to China.
Then, for a year and a half, I held the position of deputy Foreign Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, as well as the head of the State Committee for Affairs of the Compatriots Abroad.
In 2021, I was appointed an ambassador of the SRV to Russia, as well as to Azerbaijan, Armenia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

MJ: Mrs Lahn, is your most recent appointment one of the SRV ambassador to Switzerland?
Lan: Yeah, I spent four years there. It was an unforgettable time.
After graduating from MGIMO in 1991,







I worked for a couple of years as an employee of the Institute of International Relations (IIR) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, in 1995 I received a master's degree in diplomacy and commerce, having studied at the Australian National University. Upon returning home, I was a lecturer, then the head of the department, and finally the dean of the faculty of Europe and America of the IIR. In 2005, I started my diplomatic career – I left for Washington, where until 2009 I served as a first secretary and then an adviser at the SRV embassy. Having returned to Hanoi, I was

Balgabaev: "I was lucky to witness Khoi courting his future wife Lan. I saw the early stages of their romance."

the head of the branch of the Department of Europe, and then the Deputy Director General of the Department of Europe of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for several years. From 2014 to 2017, I was the Ambassador of Vietnam to Mexica and to Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Belize as well. From 2017 to 2019, I served as the Deputy Director General of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Provinces of Vietnam of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And from 2019 to 2023 I was the Ambassador of Vietnam to the Swiss Confederation and the Principality of Liechtenstein.

MJ: Mr. Khoi, when you came to Moscow in 2021 as an ambassador, did you have the opportunity to visit your alma mater?

Khoi: I sure did!

Balgabaev: Just a few months after his arrival, we organized a meeting of Mr. Ambassador and Anatoly Torkunov, Rector of MGIMO.

MJ: Did he remember you?

Lan: Of course, he didn't! It was us who remembered him: when we were studying in the late 1980s, he worked as the dean of the International Relations Department and then as the first vice-rector of MGIMO.

Balgabaev: Mr Torkunov prepared copies of the personal files of Mr. Ambassador and his wife, including those of their records of credit.

Khoi: He gave us these copies as a souvenir. And then he spoke about the directions MGIMO was developing in, about new educational programs, the









Khoi: "When the Rector himself visited our embassy, we discussed the new directions of education, as well as coming celebration of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Vietnam."

RISA Convention, the directions of work of the ASEAN Center, about the educational and scientific contacts with Vietnamese universities and research centers. We discussed the possibilities of expanding cooperation in the educational, scientific and cultural fields.

A. Torkunov reminded us that Vietnamese students were one of the first foreign ones at MGIMO – since 1959, more than 400 Vietnamese have graduated from the university, and the Vietnamese language has been taught there since 1954. The MGIMO Vietnamese community is traditionally one of the most active foreign student clubs. The Day of Vietnam, organized by the community together with the embassy and the ASEAN Center, is held every year. The Vietnamese MGIMO Alumni Association is one of the biggest ones abroad.

Sometime later the rector himself visited our embassy. We discussed the new directions of education, in particular those related to the programs in the field of culture, art and the "experience economy." The topic that stood out was that of the interaction of the Vietnamese Embassy with the State Tretyakov Gallery within the framework of the new joint master's program of MGIMO and the Tretyakov Gallery - " Museum and Gallery Management."

2025 marked the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Vietnam. As part of the celebration of this anniversary, the Russian Foreign Ministry hosted an exhibition of archival documents and rare photographs that was dedicated to the history of the development of our bilateral relations. Russian Foreign Minister S. Lavrov was present at its opening. And in late April MGIMO hosted the 10th Day of Vietnam, within the framework of which the scientific conference "Russia and Vietnam: Past and Future" was held.

TATARINOV: “BY CHOOSING VIETNAMESE, I CHOSE MY DESTINY.”

Andrei Tatarinov, a prominent diplomat who served as Russia's ambassador to Vietnam, New Zealand and Singapore, believes that by choosing Vietnamese when he entered MGIMO, he chose his destiny.

MJ: How did this happen?

My story was unusual. Actually, I really wanted to learn Swedish. The matter is that when I was a schoolboy, I was on a holiday in a pioneer camp on the Black Sea, and in the same squad as the guys from Sweden. We became great friends, we even fought with pillows at the nap time. At MGIMO, they told me: “Okay, we'll take your request into consideration.”

After entering the university, I attend a language assignment meeting, everything is going fine, and then my turn comes.: “You start with English, and we'll assign you the second language in the second year.” I felt a little uneasy: what if it would not be Swedish? The next day, I plucked up the courage and went straight to the dean's office. “Unfortunately, the Swedish group is fully staffed,” the dean said.

Then it turned out that all the European languages had been taken. I thought, I wish it wasn't Chinese! In 1968, the relations between Russia and China could not have been worse. At last, the dean said, “There is a vacant place in the Vietnamese group.” This was at the height of the Vietnam War, in newspapers they wrote about the recent offensive of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam forces of the, mass rallies were held throughout the Soviet Union in support of the heroic Vietnamese people. So, I agreed almost without hesitation. I came home, and my mother got really nervous: there's a war there! I answered proudly: “You don't understand, it's important: Vietnam is our friend! Vietnam is fighting, Vietnam will win.”

MJ: How did your study of Vietnamese go?

At first, everything was so-so. At some stage I even thought, maybe once the first year is over, I will be able to ask for another language? However, my ambition, the straight-A student complex kicked in — the competition in the group was high.



Hanoi. 2004. Singing famous Soviet songs with the Vietnamese

On hearing that I got the Vietnamese language, my mother said: “There's a war there!” I answered proudly: “You don't understand: Vietnam is our friend! Vietnam is fighting, Vietnam will win!”

This was when the most interesting part began. In 1970, the country celebrated the centenary of Vladimir Lenin, the founder of the USSR. An international construction team was formed to erect the Lenin Memorial in the homeland of the leader, in Ulyanovsk (formerly Simbirsk). There was a Vietnamese brigade there, and I was assigned to be their interpreter, with me having only studied Vietnamese for three semesters! That’s fine, they told me, the main thing is that they understand you. That's how my formation began. The problem was that I hardly knew the spoken language, at MGIMO we focused on political vocabulary, in the first semester we even crammed the Constitution of Vietnam. Therefore, in the dining room, I drew, say, an axe on a napkin, or a saw, or a trowel, or a plumb line, with other construction tools, and the Vietnamese wrote me a translation on the same napkin. They were very sympathetic to me and tried to help me as much as possible. Our days were packed: we worked from nine to six, and then we attended some meetings with Soviet youth, or soirées, or concerts. We became friends, but most importantly, I was already quite fluent in Vietnamese.

MJ: When did you first come to Vietnam?

In September 1972, I left for my pre-graduate internship at the embassy, just after the resumption of the American bombing of North Vietnam. In general, this was just as my mother had feared. Still, we, the young and rather reckless ones, were not afraid, we did not even run to the bomb shelter at night, but climbed to the roof of our house, and where we watched the Vietnamese shoot down American B-52 flying fortresses with Soviet missiles. I came from there determined to graduate from MGIMO as soon as possible and return to Hanoi. And in September 1973, I left for Vietnam as a full-time employee of the embassy.

MJ: What was the main outcome of that business trip?



Singapore. 2015. Inspection of the guard of honor before presentation of credentials

First of all, I have fully mastered the basics of the diplomatic service — not theoretically, but in practice. Secondly, I was lucky to interpret all the conversations of Ambassador Boris Chaplin. Not only did it allow me to significantly improve my Vietnamese but also it was a great honor for me: I interpreted all the associates of the leader of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, (but for himself: he died in 1969), such as Le Duan, Pham Van Dong and other top leaders of that time.

I developed professionally mostly due to my good teachers. I would like to start by mentioning Evgeny Glazunov, who knew almost the entire party and government elite of Vietnam in person. What I learned from Glazunov was not so much the Vietnamese language, but the embassy workflow, the ability to communicate with very different people and make the team fulfill its tasks effectively. But the highlight of that trip, for sure, was the liberation of Saigon in April 1975 and the reunification of Vietnam.

The second time I went to Hanoi was on November 3, 1982, a week before the death of Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev. It was a huge challenge for us — the embassy was flooded with mountains of wreaths and flowers, dozens of delegations came with endless condolences — we were exhausted.

I had a lot of personal contacts In Vietnam, and I could even talk one-on-one with senior leaders, the conversations being open and frank.

That business trip lasted six years. This was a very intense time: to start with, there was a change of the top Soviet leadership, Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. In the USSR, Perestroika began, and in Vietnam they started promoting the policy of renewal, *doi-moi*. We set out for the gradual normalization of Soviet-Chinese relations, which came as a pain to the Vietnamese: after the 1979 aggression, their attitude towards China was negative. If the first business trip was important to me as a Vietnamese interpreter, it was due to the second one that I became a diplomat with some good analytical expertise.

MJ: One can say that you came back to a different country.

Yes, Perestroika lifted restrictions off many processes, and glasnost began. I went through a change too. I left Vietnam behind and ended up in the secretariat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was an invaluable staff school. I began to understand the intricacies of the MFA central office, the way decisions are made, the way papers are handled, and who reads the letters received from the embassies. Nonethless, those were difficult years of ministerial leapfrog, and I fled from it, and in May 1992 I left as a counsellor-envoy to Bangkok. I was deputy to Ambassador Bostorin who trusted me a lot, and in his absence, I remained charge d'affaires and already felt the burden of responsibility of the head of the foreign representation in its fullness.

MJ: In 2001, you became an ambassador and went to Hanoi.

I was ambassador to Vietnam for a relatively short time — until November 2004, due to family reasons, I had to leave earlier than planned. The ambassadorial years were a very difficult period for me. On the one hand, in April 2001, the first visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin took place, and the Declaration on Strategic Partnership was signed, which became a significant step forward in relations and, in a sense, made it up for the costs of the 1990s. On the other hand, Hanoi and Moscow interpreted that somewhat differently: debugging relations at a new stage was tough, and it was not easy for me as an ambassador either.

The ambassadorial years in Hanoi were a very difficult period for me. In 2001, the first visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin took place, and the Declaration on Strategic Partnership was signed.

When I returned to Moscow, I was assigned to head the Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for relations with all the countries of Southeast Asia and Oceania, with the core activity still being around Vietnam. This was already the beginning of Sergey Lavrov's ministerial stage. I accompanied him on trips to all countries of the region. Then he went as ambassador to New Zealand.

It was my choice. I wanted to experience something completely different: I've lost the sharpness of my vision of Southeast Asia.

Fortunately, the ministry's leadership met me halfway, and I went to Wellington, where I also gained invaluable experience. New Zealand is a completely different country, being part of the British system. This is a very beautiful and unusual land. It was a very favorable time for the relations between Russia and New Zealand: in particular, we launched the negotiation process for a Free Trade Agreement with the then Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, which later transformed into the current EAEU.



Hanoi. 2001. Presentation of credentials to the President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Simultaneously, negotiations were held with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. It's a pity that we didn't have time to complete all the approvals in Wellington, otherwise New Zealand, and not Vietnam, could have become the first country to conclude an agreement with us in this format.

And in 2012, I returned to Moscow, it was my 65th birthday, and I had to think

about a decent end to my career. I left as ambassador to Singapore.

MJ: Was this your choice too?
No, this was an option suggested by the management. Singapore is a peculiar country: it is small in size, smaller than Moscow, with a population of 5.5 million people. But by all other respects, it is a full-fledged state.



Moscow. 2007. Crown Prince of Thailand Maha Vachiralongkorn, King Rama X since 2016, came to visit Russia

MJ: Were you in time to meet Kuan Yew, the mastermind behind the Singapore miracle?
No, I was not, he died in February, and I arrived in April. But I've had the opportunity to witness Singapore's wonders firsthand for several years, both real and imaginary ones. Singapore's phenomenon can indeed be called unique: after all, when Lee Kuan Yew became prime minister in 1959, the per capita income was 500 dollars, and when he left in 1990, it was 55 thousand. Turning a former British colony and naval base into a state with quality of life is indeed a miracle!
I spent six years Singapore. I had wanted to limit it to five, but at the beginning of 2020, the covid pandemic struck. It was, as they say, a whole different ball game. For the first year, the authorities fought the disease in a very efficient way. It's a small country, and it's easier to control people. If you go out without a mask, the first person you meet will take a picture of you with their phone, then call the appropriate authority, and the police will take you and fine you in some 10 meters.
So, thank God, that cup passed me by there. However, a week after my arrival in Moscow, I went down with covid myself!

I walked hand in hand with Vietnam through almost my whole life. I had the opportunity to learn from the founding fathers of our Vietnamese studies

MJ: We celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Vietnamese department.
Your career is an amazing story of a Vietnamist, turning out to be very interesting and intense.
I walked hand in hand with Vietnam through almost my whole life. I have been lucky enough to meet many Vietnamese legend leaders, and I have many friends among my Vietnamese counterparts who often send me their regards through the current Ambassador in Hanoi. While working in other countries, I have always maintained good relations with the ambassadors of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, with Vietnamese always helping me. When I returned to Moscow in 2021 and retired after 48 years of diplomatic service, I received a flattering offer from Svetlana Glazunova, daughter of Evgeny Glazunov. I was to head the jury of the annual All-Russian Vietnamese Translation Competition. It is actively supported by both the Embassy of Vietnam and the Vietnamese business community operating in Russia. I am convinced that this initiative also contributes to strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership between Russia and Vietnam. And I am very pleased that there is still a small part of me in this contribution.



PANTELEEV: “I AM PROUD TO BELONG TO THE VIETNAMIST COMMUNITY!”

Having come in Moscow 45 years ago from Abakan (Republic of Khakassia) to enter MGIMO, Evgeny Panteleev, like any graduate “from the countryside“, believed that he had little chance. He thinks he's lucky. He enrolled, and then was assigned got the Vietnamese language.
Today, Evgeny Panteleev, a 1985 MGIMO graduate, an experienced diplomat and a responsible employee of the Russian Foreign Ministry, is confident that this is fate. Since then, he has never regretted that he studied Vietnamese and did Vietnam studies.

MJ: What was your learning of Vietnamese like?
Vietnamese is a tonal language, and it is believed that students who have a musical ear can learn to speak it faster, because to learn a word, it is important to determine its intonation of pronunciation. Six different keys when pronouncing a single word endow it with six different meanings. That's why we were taught popular Vietnamese poems and songs, many of them dedicated to the struggle for independence.
There is a remarkable story connected with one of the songs.
Once I went to my hometown for the holidays, and I decided to visit my younger brother at a pioneer camp there. At that time, the construction department of the Moscow Power Engineering Institute was conducting work in our area, and the pioneers invited students to their party. There was a Vietnamese among the guests. So, the teachers at the pioneer camp who knew me came up with the idea: “Since you're learning this language, can we surprise the Vietnamese by showing solidarity with his people?” They decided to perform a song that I learned in language classes at MGIMO. I sang the verse, and my brother learned the chorus, which is very simple: “Vietnam is Ho Chi Minh City!”
When we sang, the Vietnamese was rendered speechless. Imagine that: in the Russian countryside, where there are no compatriots of his, they suddenly sing him a patriotic song in his native language. It was obvious that he got emotional, and there were tears in his eyes... The audience for sure did respond with a flurry of applause as well.

MJ: When did you realize that things were going well and you were mastering the language?
It was probably when I started working with delegations. Vietnamese was in high demand. In those years, groups of Communist Party leaders came to us from Vietnam “for rest and treatment,” and in order to understand what to treat them for, we were instructed to accompany guests for examination at the clinic. Medical terms and names of tropical diseases are still engraved in my memory. As a result, by the time we graduated from MGIMO, we were prepared for work.
Our language group, by the way, included foreigners — Miroslav Gaevsky, the future Polish Ambassador to Vietnam, Erno Bohar, the future Hungarian ambassador, and German Joerg Toymer, the representative of Deutsche Bank in Hanoi.

MJ: When did you first come to Vietnam?
I went on my first business trip in 1984, even before graduation. We operated as junior diplomatic staff. Upon graduation, we were given a study leave to go to Moscow, defend our diploma, and then return to our duty station. So last year marked 40 years since I joined the Foreign Ministry.
I was sent to South Vietnam, to the Consulate General of the USSR in the city of Vung Tau. At the beginning, it was a bit difficult, there were a lot of overlaps — they speak a different dialect there which differs from the classical northern one studied at MGIMO. But I came all so advanced!
My older friend squinted at me and said: “Here's your assignment: you need to go to the market with the caretaker to buy some nails. Will you manage to do it?” No big deal, I chuckled to myself, I know what “nail” is in Vietnamese.
We arrive at the market, and the property manager says, “Ask if they have a tenner?” I ask the seller a question in a literate Northern dialect, and he doesn't understand, he says something, but I don't understand him either. As well as he could, the property manager explained non-verbally what we had come for ... When I returned to my workplace, discouraged, my older friend said understandingly, “Don't worry, you'll get the hang of it. Here, read the newspaper, there are short stories with simple phrases, and listen to the radio, too.” Indeed, everything got better soon, and it went uphill afterwards.





MJ: Was there anything that helped you get to understand the Vietnamese and their lives better?
There were a few things that did! I'll tell you about the nyok mom fish sauce. It all started with soccer. In Vung Tau, where a large Soviet team worked at the Vietsovpetro oil production joint venture, sports life was in full swing. The Colony's national football team often traveled to the provinces of South Vietnam to play matches with local teams. And so, after playing in Binh Thuan province, we say goodbye to the hospitable hosts, and they present us with a case of fish sauce in memory of the trip. By all accounts, Binh Thuan Province produces the best nyok mam in Vietnam.

Last year marked 40 years since I joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I went to South Vietnam on my first business trip

It is important to explain the preparation process to you. Small anchovies are salted and placed in large quantities under a press in wooden containers that are buried in the ground. Under the scorching sun, the whole mass goes off. Then the concentrate of this product is decanted and bottled. No one uses fish sauce in concentrated form, it turns out to be too tart a liquid with a specific flavor. In Vietnamese cuisine, the sauce is used while cooking or (previously diluted in water and lemon juice) as a seasoning, in which they dip, for example, pancakes á la Saigon.
Rare cases of the concentrate's use, according to our Vietnamese friends, were registered during the war with the Americans and the South Vietnamese regime: the partisans used fish sauce as a remedy for colds and viral diseases. When a fighter's temperature rose, he lay down on one mat, he was covered with another, and they gave him a hundred grams of concentrated fish sauce beforehand to warm him up from the inside.
The fact is that in addition to fish protein, the sauce contains a huge amount of minerals, which causes the body to receive a strong mineral-protein shock, which sharply warms a person from the inside. This helped the partisan recover overnight and continue to fulfill his military duty with renewed vigor the next day.
We accepted this gift with pleasure. Soon



Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. 1987. The Vietsovpetro national team before their match with local football players.

Those who remained faithful to Vietnamese studies gathered for the meeting dedicated to the anniversary of the department, which has trained about 700 specialists over 70 years.



I had a chance to try the recipe on myself. I got sick, and I felt like I had gone down with a virus. I poured a hundred grams of nyok mama from the donated bottle and drank it… And then my heart started pounding like crazy, I was all hot. I laid down flat, covered myself with a blanket… Mt body received such a shock that I had never experienced before or since in my life. But the next morning, the virus… did not go away, the remedy did not help. Apparently, it only works on Vietnamese.

MJ: How many business trips did you go on to Vietnam, all in all?

There were two long-term ones, for a total of almost a decade. And between them, I work at the MFA central office, in the Management of the Socialist Countries. The second time I went to our embassy in Hanoi, I worked from 1991 to 1996. At the Consulate General, I was mainly engaged in consular practice, and at the embassy I had advanced diplomatic functions: we worked in various areas, communicated with local departments and the diplomatic corps, prepared all kinds of diplomatic documents and operational messages. This work was creative and extremely responsible.

MJ: How much did your language skill improve?

After completing my second business trip, I was invited to translate at a high and top levels in 2010 and 2015, as well as in 2024. I am grateful to my Vietnamese teachers: they taught us fundamentally, and the knowledge was laid down for many years.

MJ: Was it difficult to switch to Ukraine after Vietnam?

I started studying Ukrainian thinking that having learned Vietnamese, I would not find it difficult, it's almost like Russian! But a local teacher quickly convinced me that this was a common misconception. Yes, of course, some words match, but there are a lot of “false friends“: you start inserting similar words, and they sound as if they were correct, but they turn out to be wrong. Language is both a different mentality and a different culture. God created so many nations and dialects for a reason, and to be truly negotiable, you need to understand your partner's language and be able to find the right approach to it.

The five years of work in Kiev have been very interesting. Firstly, of course, because I was lucky enough to work as a deputy to Ambassador Viktor Chernomyrdin, the former Prime Minister of Russia. He was a very wise man who knew life in its integrity, and thoroughly understood both the interests of his country and those of one that accepted him, and he was also creative. I remember when a high-profile political assassination took place in Kiev, and journalists really wanted to get a comment from the Russian ambassador. It was possible to ignore them, or alternatively, driving out of the embassy gates, drive past them, so that later they would say: “The Russian ambassador did not comment.” But Chernomyrdin was not one of those who missed such opportunities, he understood that his opinion was expected. He asked me to stop the car, rolled down the window and, under the flash of blitzes, rapped this out: “What kind of country is this where they kill people right in court?” It is clear what the main news was in Kiev that evening.

To his next vivid statement the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine reacted painfully, and Minister Ogryzko hinted that the Ukrainian side might consider declaring the Russian ambassador “persona non grata.” A couple of weeks later, the minister was removed from office, but Chernomyrdin remained. Was this an accident? No, it wasn’t! Before the elections, the deputies of the Rada Parliament criticized the minister right for the fact that he was unable to find common ground with such an authoritative figure as Chernomyrdin.



2009. Kyiv, Ukraine. The Embassy of the Russian Federation. Ambassador V. Chernomyrdin and senior diplomats. E. Panteleev is on the far right.

At the embassy, I had advanced diplomatic functions. This was creative and extremely responsible work.

MJ: When you served as Consul General of Russia in Italy, did Vietnamese come in handy in any way?

The Vietnamese community manifests itself all around the world! In 2018, an international conference on Libya was held in Palermo, and our country was represented by a delegation headed by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev. And Sergey Sobolev, a Vietnamese citizen, worked in his office at a key position. We tried to work as hard as we could, and then there was MGIMO solidarity, which helped us resolve issues more effectively during the visit.

If we take the mission as a whole, then the Vietnamese's training, the habit of being active and initiative, and the diverse experience accumulated were fully useful.

The understanding of energy issues gained back in Vung Tau made it possible for me to assist the Russian oil refinery ISAB-LUKOIL near Syracuse.

MJ: What do you want to wish your language department on its 70th anniversary?

The department and its prominent teacher Svetlana Glazunova did well deciding to hold a meeting of Vietnamese dedicated to the anniversary. This is for the first time in history! Since 1954, about 700 specialists have been trained, however, unfortunately, only several dozen came to the meet-up, which is understandable: many are no longer there, many people have changed profession and even the field of activity. But those who remained faithful to Vietnamese studies, including our foreign friends, communicated sincerely even via videoconference, informally, with warm memories, tales and jokes, with a feeling of genuine gratitude to the teachers and the department.

GLAZUNOVA: “I LIKE TO SHARE MY KNOWLEDGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE.”

Svetlana Glazunova's entire life is connected with the Vietnamese language.
“I am a second-generation Vietnamist. My father, Evgeny Glazunov, a well-known expert on Vietnam, graduated from MGIMO in 1963, worked at the Soviet embassy in Hanoi, and, for many years, headed the Russian-Vietnamese Friendship Society. For him, Vietnam was, as one might say, a second homeland. I visited it for the first time in my very early childhood, at the age of 3-5 years. I was very happy there. I wanted to come in Vietnam again, so after graduating from high school, I looked for a university where they launched a Vietnamese group that year. This was MGIMO.
Today Svetlana Glazunova, a 1996 MGIMO graduate, is a senior lecturer at the Chair of Vietnamese Language.

MJ: Are you celebrating your 30th anniversary of teaching this year?
Relations with socialist countries in the 1990s were almost completely destroyed, including those with Vietnam, and when I became a Vietnamese teacher in 1996, students were terrified of the prospect of studying Vietnamese, clutching their heads, so I had to spend their first six months there trying to tell them that everything was fine with them, that Vietnam was a promising country, that the language is great, the people are nice. Today, when students are assigned it, they realize the need to master it.

MJ: In the 1990s, they built wild capitalism in Russia, and the goal of any young man was to earn his first million dollars, so what was the point of studying?
When I was a student, for me there was no such question. After my third academic year, I went to Vietnam on an internship for 8 months and missed a great deal of what happened after the collapse of the Soviet Union. And when you look at what's happening from the outside instead of from the inside, you see everything in a completely different way.
I came to Vietnam to study, so first of all I communicated with local students. And just like other ordinary Vietnamese people, they did not really understand what was happening in Russia, and treated me very well: peace, friendship, hooray!
Since I was also my father's daughter (and for Vietnamese, understanding whose child you are is very important), I met with his friends, many of whom held fairly high positions, but they did not discuss the state of Russian economy with me, a 20-year-old girl. Apart from that, Vietnam started its own process of renewal in 1986. It began to form a market-oriented economy, more reminiscent of the Chinese version than ours. In politics, the power was at the hands of the Communist Party.

Vietnamese is a tonal language. It is necessary to learn to hear and distinguish six tones. By changing the pattern of your voice, you radically change the meaning of the word.

MJ: That's what they have in common with China.
China is Vietnam's main economic partner, and so is America. Unfortunately, according to various sources, our trade turnover with Vietnam is around billion dollars, and those with China and the United States are hundreds of billions. It is no coincidence that in 2023 they raised their relations with America to a level similar to that of their relations with Russia: a comprehensive strategic partnership.

MJ: Why is that?
When our meticulous undergraduate students asked this question at one of the conferences held by the ASEAN Center at MGIMO, an employee of the Russian Foreign Ministry said: “Vietnam is an independent state. It is pursuing a policy that it considers necessary.”
At another conference of the Center, a Vietnamese minister was invited, and a student of ours asked: “How does Vietnam manage to balance between major powers in a situation of confrontation?” And the minister replied: “Vietnam is not balancing, it is building balanced relations.” Although it is obvious that economic dependence on the United States and China is serious.

MJ: No matter how much you love Vietnam, the language is difficult. How well did you master it?
As a child, I didn't know anything about Vietnamese but for counting from one to ten. I was good at it because I wanted to learn it, and we also had wonderful teachers. I liked the Vietnamese language, I enjoyed learning it. And starting from the third year they began to prepare me for teaching, saw the making of me and began to gradually let me teach to students.

MJ: Why is tonality so important?
By changing the pattern of the voice, you radically change the meaning of the word. This is very unusual to us, but it is quite possible to master it, it is a rare thing when one fails completely. It's just that it takes more time for some, leas time for others. I remember a student who tried very hard, studied for hours every day, but nothing worked out, I was afraid that he would lose his courage completely. But he went to a country where he was put on “protocol duty“: he had to answer phone calls. You know, sometimes I'm afraid to talk to Vietnamese people on the phone, and he talked for hours. And you know what? He started improving. Interpretation helps a lot. My dad had been attracted to it since the second year. For example, he got me a job at a private Vietnamese company, I was to interpret for the CEO who did not know Russian at all. At first, I mostly gesticulated, but when I returned from an 8-month internship, the Vietnamese woman said, “Thank God you started talking at a normal speed.”



MJ: You have been working at the department for 30 years. What an enviable consistency!
To say that it has been interesting for me to work at the chair for all these years is an understatement! The chair is my family.

The department is my family, my home, and I love it very much. So many generations of Vietnamists have been my students once.

So many generations of Vietnamists have been my students once.
I like to enter the classroom, to work there, to share what I have accumulated with young people, and to tell them something.
I've been working at the department all my adult life! MGIMO is my home, and I love it very much. I've taught a bit at other universities, and I have a lot to compare it with. No other university treats lecturers better than MGIMO does. Our lives are in full swing, full of events, every day there is some kind of event, students and I run from one conference to another. All this is incredibly interesting, all of this is another contribution to this treasury of knowledge.

TOANG: “WHEN I DRIVE PAST MGIMO, MY HEART BEATS FASTER!”

Pham Quoc Toang, a MGIMO graduate, CEO of the company that manages the Hanoi-Moscow multifunctional complex, believes that he owes his successful career to his MGIMO education. “The university gave me excellent basic knowledge and a broad outlook, this was some fantastic training which helped me learn to feel confident in any situation. Not every MGIMO graduate works in the field of his major, but he can always enter another field and succeed.”

After graduating from MGIMO more than thirty years ago, in 1994, Toang stayed in Russia and settled down, he now has two grown-up sons who were born in Russia and consider themselves Muscovites.

MJ: How did you enter MGIMO?

This happened by chance. In 1988, I, a first-year student at the Law Institute in Hanoi, was chosen to study in the USSR along with other top first-year students from various universities.

I was born and raised in a village a hundred kilometers from Hanoi into a simplest family. My Mom was a peasant, my Dad first fought against the French in the late 1950s and began working as a civil servant in the post-war era. Later he went on to build Vietnam's first athlete training center. My older brother went to the frontline to fight for his homeland against the Americans in 1969, the year I was born, and died three years later. My second brother became a civil engineer and participated in the construction of the first Vietnamese hydroelectric power station, which the USSR helped to build, after his graduation.

The attitude towards Russians in Vietnam has always been great, we considered the USSR to be our elder brother who helped us a lot both during the war and after it, as our country was in ruins. Therefore, it was considered a great honor and privilege to go to the Soviet Union to study. I started learning Russian in high school and immediately fell in love with it and Russian culture.

The first days in Moscow were unusual — we found ourselves in another world, because we had never seen such tall buildings or wide streets with lots of cars driving along them before. The food was completely different, but the main thing was that there was a lot of it! In Vietnam, we were starving — we didn’t eat anything but rice, and there wasn't much of it. At MGIMO, they took us to the canteen, gave us food stamps, it was paradise.

Then they took us to the store and gave us money so that we could buy winter clothes, since Russia is a cold country for the Vietnamese.

After settling into the dormitory, we went around the city straight away to see with our own eyes the places we knew just from the photographs in Russian textbooks:

When Russians help you, it's selfless, kind, with no tricks involved, you are calm and confident that you will not be deceived.

the Kremlin, Red Square, VDNH, Kalinin Avenue. The subway ride cost only five kopecks!

My academic group was truly international: besides me and my Vietnamese friends, there were Mongols, Afghans, Cambodians, and Laotians in it. We were very lucky to have a Russian language teacher, Lyudmila Sedunova, who was attentive and loving.

MJ: Did you continue your law studies?

No, they made me switch to the School of International Economic Relations — the state needed international economists more than lawyers. I studied at the Department of Transport, and I found world economy, finance, transport, and so on to be the most interest disciplines. But I truly loved legal subjects, for sure. They were also taught at the SIER, though not in depth. These were the foundations of constitutional, international, private, commercial and other branches of law.

MJ: And what turn did your career take after MGIMO?

In the mid-1990s, the situation in Vietnam was a difficult one. When we graduated, they told us straight in the face that we had to look for jobs on our own. And there was terrible unemployment in Vietnam, so we stayed in Moscow, and I was lucky to start working at a joint venture that exported any kind of equipment from Russia: automotive, petroleum, pharmaceutical, because there was none of this in Vietnam. And then I married my classmate, and we had our first child.

I worked in this joint venture for 10 years, and then I was invited to work at an interesting cooperation project between Hanoi and Moscow which was a multifunctional complex named “Hanoi-Moscow“. We did it from scratch together with the Moscow government: we selected a site, released land for construction, etc. The complex includes a hotel, apartments, a business center and a shopping center. This is one of the largest business development platforms. I started out as an ordinary employee and gradually rose to the post of CEO of the company that manages this facility.

MJ: How would you rate the Russian-Vietnamese relationship?

I believe that our relations have reached a high level, they are very good and trusting.



The Vietnamese appreciate the old friends who helped them in the most difficult times. The Soviet Union was this kind of a friend, and so is Russia now. Such relations will last long.

When the Russian help you, it's selfless, kind, and with no tricks involved. When you are friends with them, you are calm and confident that you will not be deceived. This is not the case, for example, with some Western countries, and it is more difficult to build sincere communication with them.

MJ: There is the “Vietnamese economic miracle.” What are its origins?

First of all, I don’t think that we went through shock therapy of political events that could shake the foundations of the state, the way you did. The Vietnamese have such a mentality that we don't like to express our opinions openly, we don't need big political gestures, such as rallies and demonstrations. We want peace and stability, and thanks to this, our economic transformations have been gradual and thorough.

Russia is our second homeland, we are already settled here. My sons don't want to live anywhere else but Moscow.

MJ: Do you regret having lived in Russia for thirty-five years?

No, of course I don’t. Russia is our second homeland. My sons don't want to live anywhere else but Moscow. The eldest is already 30, he graduated from Drexel University of Philadelphia, trained as a civil engineer, and came back here: I can't do it, he says, I want to go home to Russia! My little son, a student of the Financial Academy, associates his future with Russia as well.

We feel comfortable and confident here. We are proud to be MGIMO graduates, and here we got a start when we were very young and have succeeded in life. That's why we always say that this is our institute. When I drive past the MGIMO building, my heart beats faster every time, because we spent our best years here!

CHA MI: “IT'S SO COOL THAT YOU'RE VIETNAMESE!”

Vu Tkhu Cha Mi looks Vietnamese, but at heart she is Russian. “I was born and have lived most of my life in Russia. But I still felt uncomfortable at the ordinary St. Petersburg school where I studied. When I enrolled at MGIMO, I saw a completely different attitude: “It's great that you're Vietnamese!” To tell the truth, I didn't have any Vietnamese friends before going to university, so when I was invited to an HTA meeting in my freshman year, I didn't want to go at first. But then I gave it a thought and went because I had a goal: I wanted the Vietnamese to feel at home at MGIMO.”
Today, Vu Tkhu Cha Mi, a 2015 graduate and head of the international department at the office of the Association of Lawyers of Russia, believes that her work as chairman of the MGIMO Vietnamese HTA gave her organizational skills that came in handy in her future work.

MJ: Why did you decide to enter MGIMO?
At school, I liked learning languages, English and French, but I didn't want to become a philologist. I was attracted by the opportunity to use language to manage the situation — it seemed boring to just translate things. In fact, I decided to complicate my life by choosing international law: on the one hand, I did this to learn about my rights, and on the other hand, to learn how to defend them.

MJ: Did you have Russian citizenship?
No, at one time I thought that after getting a degree from MGIMO, I would return to Vietnam and become a diplomat. But today I have Russian citizenship, and I got it after graduating from university, because I realized that Russia is my home, and I think in Russian.

MJ: How did your international law studies go?
For sure, I took interest in languages, English and French. I liked Vitaly Kabatov’s lectures, he taught us Roman Law, and Professor Yuri Leibo’s Theory of State and Law classes.
When I spoke in class, the teachers were often surprised by my command of Russian. I once took an exam in European law, Ekaterina Torkunova was the examiner, When she asked my about my Russian skills, and I said that I was from St. Petersburg, she replied: “We immediately realized that you were not a Muscovite, most likely from St. Petersburg. Your speech is different.” Ambassador Vorobyov taught us constitutional law, and when I told him that I was from St. Petersburg, he was jokingly surprised: “A St. Petersburg Vietnamese, is this even a thing?” Everyone was afraid of Maxim Anatolyevich Isaev, and I had to retake his exam, too. “Why do you speak Russian so well?” he asked. “I was born and raised in St. Petersburg.” “Well, then proceed with the second question!”

Everything I learned at MGIMO came in handy. I wanted to work with languages and law, and now I communicate professionally with foreign lawyers.

But they didn't cut me any slack. Both my bachelor's and master's diplomas are with honors.
While studying for my master's degree, I interned at the Association of Lawyers of Russia (ALR), and was engaged in organizational activities. Today, I am the head of the Department of International Development of the Office of the Association of Lawyers of Russia, I am in operational support. I accompany the leadership of the association during their working visits, receive foreign delegations, act as a speaker and moderator of sessions at international forums.

MJ: What did this job give you professionally?
I have gained a lot of experience in protocol work, and I am doing what I studied at MGIMO for. I wanted to work with languages and law, and now I communicate on professional topics with foreign lawyers. I was entrusted with preparing the forum declarations in English, which are signed by the heads of delegations, and then I translate them into Russian. When I see a legal text in English, I can immediately start working with it.
A few years ago, the initiative to create its own arbitration center was born in BRICS. I hope that I will do this, because this is my field: I studied international arbitration in depth while studying for my master’s degree.

MJ: What are the prospects for Russian-Vietnamese legal cooperation?
Currently, as one of the founders of the BRICS Legal Forum, ALR is working to integrate the legal communities of the new partner countries of the association, including the Association of Lawyers of Vietnam, into the implementation of joint BRICS initiatives in the legal field. As for education, the Vietnamese authorities expressed the opinion that the training of legal personnel in Russia is preferable to, for example, that in the United States or Great Britain, since our countries have similar legal systems, taking into account the history of the formation of Russian-Vietnamese relations. Therefore, upon returning to their homeland, Vietnamese graduates of Russian universities better understand how legal mechanisms work in Vietnam, and what and how they should improve.



YEVGENY TARLE, PATRIOT AND LIBERAL STATESMAN

This we celebrate 150 years since the birth of Evgeny Tarle, a great Russian historian and one of the founding fathers of MGIMO

Evgeny Tarle was an extraordinary man — he was extremely consistent and committed to his life principles: having fallen in love with a girl he met in his youth, he converted to Orthodoxy for her, and they lived together for more than 60 years, that is, his whole life... He didn't like cinema as an art, so he had never even been to a cinema. But, as he fell in love with Pushkin in childhood, he remained faithful to the author throughout his life, considering him to be the most wonderful gift Russian literature ever gave us.

Tarle was born on October 27, 1874 in Kiev, into a Jewish family. His fascination with history began after he met a famous historian Professor F. Uspensky. On his recommendation, Tarle was accepted into the Imperial Novorossiysk University.

At the age of 20, he was baptized according to the Orthodox rite in Saint Sophia Cathedral, which allowed him to marry the love of his life, Olga Mikhailova. But Tarle never hid his origin. His famous phrase went: "... I am not French, but Jewish, and my last name is pronounced with the stress on the first syllable – Tarle."



Tarle was an extraordinary man — extremely consistent and committed to his life principles: having fallen in love with a girl he met in his youth, he converted to Orthodoxy for her, and they lived together for more than 60 years.

Starting in 1903, he taught as a privatdozent at St. Petersburg University.

He was wary of the October Revolution of 1917, but did not leave the country, and the new authorities, considering him to be their supporter, did not bother him for the time being. Convinced of the strength of Soviet power, Tarle began to look for ways to coexist with it.

He became a professor at Moscow University, where he was elected a corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and in 1927, a full member of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union. He was allowed to travel abroad.

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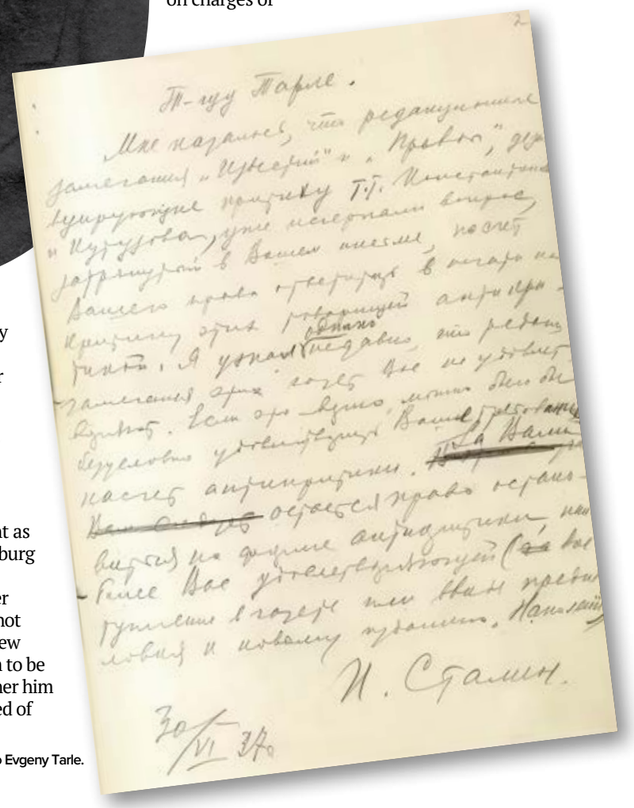
However, the period of Stalinist purges began soon, and Tarle was arrested on charges of

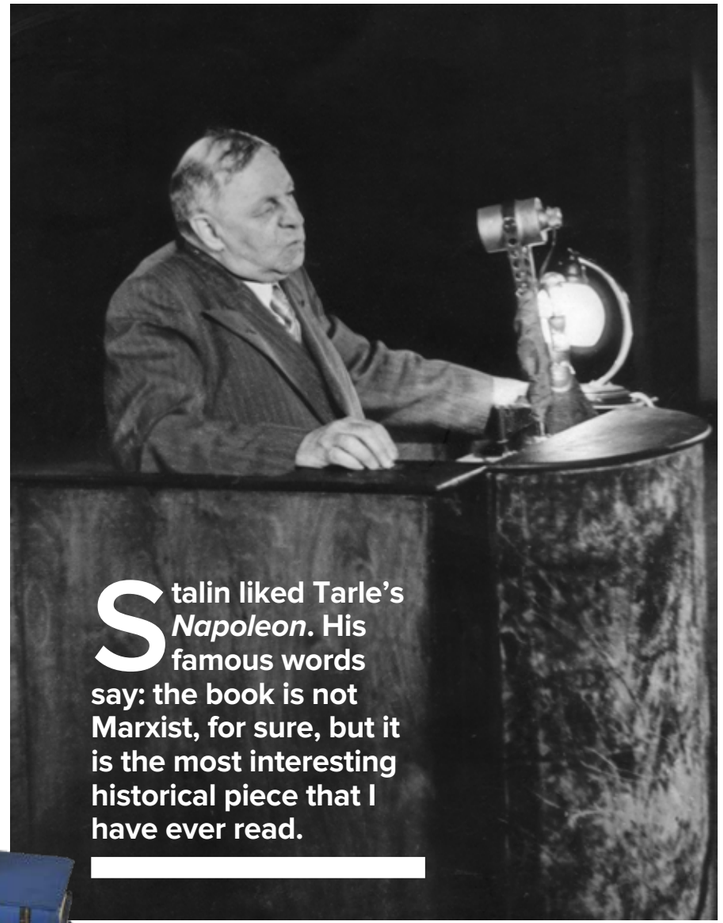


Joseph Stalin's letter to Evgeny Tarle.



a counterrevolutionary monarchist conspiracy to overthrow the Soviet regime. The case was fabricated by the state Security Service. The investigation lasted a year, the charges serious enough to get him executed by fusillading, but the sentence turned out to be lenient: Tarle was expelled from the Academy of Sciences and sent into exile to Alma Ata, Kazakhstan. He got lucky: his former student was an authority there, and he created gentle conditions for Tarle and even allowed him to teach.

How can we explain such a turn of events? The most popular explanation is that Stalin had his own plans for the scientist. He thought strategically: at that time, there was an important shift due to the emergence of his concept of the victory of socialism in one country, and this shift had to be ideologically and historically justified. The dogmatic internationalist approach was not suitable, so it was necessary to switch to a national-patriotic vision, and therefore to the study



Stalin liked Tarle's *Napoleon*. His famous words say: the book is not Marxist, for sure, but it is the most interesting historical piece that I have ever read.



of national history. And such statesmen (albeit bourgeois) like Tarle could come in handy. A special resolution of the Politburo was passed on this topic, which forced one to look at the history and preparation of the reform of historical education from a national and patriotic point of view.

There was another important consideration to note. With the Nazis coming to power in Germany, the anticipation of a war was in the air, with it being not a class war, but a national war for the existence of Russia. For the first time in history, the Bolsheviks had to recruit Russians, and for that, they needed old school historians.

Tarle got back to teaching and scientific work. His apartment was given back to him, it being a luxurious apartment that had previously belonged to the tsarist prime minister Sergei Witte, but his position was precarious: he was not reinstated at the academy and remained banned from going abroad.

Things changed in 1936, when Tarle's *Napoleon* monograph was published. Stalin liked it. His famous words say: the book is not Marxist, for sure, but it is the most interesting historical piece that I have ever read.



And it is at this stage that the strange and interesting plot of The Leader and the Court Historian arises: Stalin played a critically important role in the life and work of the scientist. If it hadn't been for him, Tarle might have been sentenced to death long before the war.

No other book by a Soviet historian had ever had such success abroad. From that point forward, Tarle was allowed not to be a Marxist. He was seen as a particularly valuable non-partisan specialist who was allowed one thing what other people could not get away with, that is, to be "ideologically inaccurate." Tarle traveled the country with lectures in his own car where he wrote historical works.

In 1937, Tarle was stripped of his criminal record and reinstated at the Academy of Sciences. The next seven years were the most fruitful ones in his work as a historian. Despite his own admission that he loves Russian history the most, Tarle's main research topic gradually became the history of international relations. The fact is that Stalin conceived the idea of publishing a





Tarle was not afraid of death. He wrote to his wife: “For me, death is the fulfillment of my dream of rest.”

Marxist version of the history of diplomacy and, even broader, a Library of Foreign Policy. The first volume was published in early 1941, and then Tarle had his first and only meeting with Stalin who invited him to talk about the second volume.

Proximity to the leader producer a large number of Tarle’s enemies and those who envied him, and some devastating reviews of *Napoleon* were published in newspapers. Stalin was displeased, and Tarle received a personal note from him with words of approval, so thar the newspapers had to give their reviews a rebuttal. For a two-volume book on the Crimean War, Tarle received the First Degree Stalin Prize. Moreover, he had already worked on specific policies, joining the commission that worked on the prospects for the post-war world order. As a professional historian, he understood the importance of science for the political process and considered it his duty to participate in this work.



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Tarle's populariser style was his trademark. He knew how to tell a story in such a way that it was a more interesting read than a fiction novel. Any high school student can read his history books, not only learning from them, but also enjoying them. And the way Tarle was able to use and interpret historical was remarkable. In order to illustrate the mindset of Napoleonic era French society, he cited an episode from Dumas. Tarle wrote how the state of the minds of the Parisians changed depending on the was the headlines of the Paris newspapers changed as Napoleon advanced towards the French capital. It started with the “Corsican monster” landing from the island of Elba, then the tone softened, and finally it went: “His Imperial Majesty enters loyal Paris!” This historical anecdote subtly conveyed the spirit of the era, the state of politics, and the quality of the media back then.

Tarle's great merit lies in the fact that he introduced universal history into the system of historical knowledge. After all, Russian history used to prevail in universities and schools. Tarle established the importance and prestige of world history through his writings, using the example of France. Tarle's name is associated with the development of the history of diplomacy. In his writings, he showed the importance of diplomacy at various stages of it development, primarily its “golden age“, which was the 19th century. His brilliant book on Talleyrand demonstrated the role of the diplomat's personality in the diplomatic service.

In general, Tarle based his work on the principle of continuity of Russian history, believing that it should not be divided into two fundamentally incompatible parts in 1917. He was a statesman, a staunch supporter and even an apologist for “united and indivisible Russia,” and, among all, he spoke out against Finland's secession, calling it a mistake which the Red Army soldiers paid with their blood for.

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Few people were familiar with Tarle's creative process. For example, he never used a typewriter, and never dictated anything to the secretary, all of his works being written with a fountain pen. He was a hard worker: he sat down at the table at 7 in the morning and worked until late at night. His students at the Moscow State University studied the history of the Great French Revolution, getting through huge sheets of paper on which Tarle painted its events literally day by day. For him, it was always the story of people, he created vivid images of the past, and the people he wrote about felt modern-day. For him, there were no dead people in history.…

He himself was not afraid of death. Tarle wrote to his wife: “For me, death is the fulfillment of a dream of rest.” He did not seek administrative positions, and he wrote all his essays without any co-authors.



E. Tarle's main goal as a scientist was to push the boundaries of what was permitted in history as a science. It is no coincidence that he played a special role in the creation and formation of MGIMO, where he assembled a stellar staff of future academics. His unfailing devotion to the achievements of other scientists was a trait of genuine and exalted talent.

Towards the end of his life, his fate took another turn. In June 1953, three months after Stalin's death, Tarle was dismissed from Leningrad University, to which he had devoted almost 50 years of his life.

However, he remains one of the founding fathers of MGIMO, a man who talked to the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov, discussing what the new Faculty of International Relations of the Moscow State University, and then an independent university would look like.

Throughout his life, Tarle understood the importance of science for the current political process. He was a member of the commission that worked out the prospects for the world order during the final years of the war.

He also became the founder of the method of teaching the history of international relations as a discipline in the USSR.

“I read *Napoleon* as a student or a postgraduate student,” MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov. “I found it very interesting, and it became part of my library. After a while, I reread both it and *Talleyrand*, and was amazed at the way Tarle wrote, appearing to be our contemporary. Tarle is a historian that will always be remembered, being non-opportunistic and objective. Those who were Tarle’s students at MGIMO talk about his lectures with extraordinary admiration. During his lecture hours, the lecture hall was completely packed. That’s how informative and fascinating his classes were.”

The legacy of Evgeny Tarle is relevant today, and these are not just his historical writings. A brilliant polymath, and intellectual, and an old-school historian, he was a liberal, and at the same time, a patriotic statesman, as well a citizen of big virtue.



IVAN UDALTSOV, FIRST RECTOR OF MGIMO

It's been 140 years since the birth of Ivan Udaltsov, an outstanding scientist, the first rector of MGIMO, an outstanding scientist, the initiator of the creation and the first dean of the School of International Relations of the Moscow State University. A year later, in 1944, this school became MGIMO, with I. Udaltsov as its first rector.

Ivan Udaltsov was born in Moscow in 1885, being the son of an impoverished nobleman and doctor. Having graduated from school with honors, he enrolled at the Law Faculty of Moscow University, but could not be content with studying just "legal antiquities", cramming codes of law with their formulas and procedural casuistry. The profession of a judge did not appeal to the inquisitive student. He was drawn to a more firsthand studying of national life, so he began to attend lectures and seminars at the Faculty of History. When the economics department opened at the Law Faculty, he shifted his focus to Economics.

The main feature of Udaltsov as a scientist was his constant demand to be guided by the principle of historicism





Udaltsov joined the revolutionary activities, provided his apartment for storing illegal literature, organizing appearances for underground activists, and meetings of social Democrats – at one of them he met the Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin. For this, he was arrested by the tsarist police and expelled from the university. He left for Germany where he decided to complete his education.

A few years later, Udaltsov returned to his homeland, passed his final exams at the university, but received only a temporary diploma certificate due to "political unreliability." Nevertheless, Udaltsov managed to become an assistant attorney at the Moscow Judicial Chamber.

In 1914, with the outbreak of the First World War, Ivan was recruited and sent to the frontline. There he continued as a revolutionary, which led to the Bolsheviks electing him chairman of the regimental committee and the Council of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies after the February Revolution of 1917. In 1918, Udaltsov was discharged from the army and returned to Moscow, where he began his scientific and pedagogical work. He was the rector of Moscow State University, working with postgraduate students. He was a lecturer and a scientist for almost 40 years, until his death in 1958.

The main feature of I. Udaltsov as a scientist was his constant demand to be guided by the principle of historicism, for example, he condemned the "method of dogmatic study of the economic system of Karl Marx." He urged to be guided by the economic theory of the past and modern practice and could not imagine





Udaltsov: “You are MGIMO students, the only university of its kind in the USSR. You have the most honorable and responsible task. You are future diplomats!”



the theoretical history without knowledge of the basics of economy.

Udaltsov was an excellent mentor, he never limited himself to just reading the thesis, but used to say instead: “I want to see and hear the person himself in order to get a full understanding of what we are discussing, a real understanding of his deep responsibility, in order to correctly assess his work.”

During the 1951 discussion on the draft political economy textbook, more than fifty speakers spoke after the main report, and only one of them expressed deep dissatisfaction with it. It was Udaltsov. His comments were direct, frank, and pur et dur, and he did not hesitate to criticize the venerable academic. His conviction of the correctness of what he was saying made a strong impression on the audience.

Having done a lot for the creation of MGIMO, I. Udaltsov was its rector for a very short time — just a few months. He was replaced by Nikolai Stepanov.

You will receive the most extensive (if not brilliant) education in various humanities. To this end, the best forces available in the Union have been invited to teach them to you. Each of you will be obliged to master at least two foreign languages. We hope that you will not give us any reason for disappointment after the impression you made at the interview.”

I. Udaltsov passed away in 1958. “It happened so unexpectedly that for a long time it was hard to believe that he was gone,” recalled Economics professor M. Osadko. “I couldn't believe it because, having been the dean of the Faculty of Economics of the Moscow State University for many years, he became its symbol. A man of culture, an intellectual in the



But the first graduates remembered the instructions of the first rector for a long time. Spartak Beglov, who later became a leading figure in Soviet international journalism, wrote in his diary: “October 2, 1944. Today is the first day of classes. We all gathered in a large auditorium of the School of International Relations of the Moscow State University, which opened a year ago. Ivan Udaltsov addresses us with a welcoming speech: “You are students of the only university of its kind in the USSR. You have the most honorable and responsible task. You are future diplomats. As your teachers, our task is to make cultured, educated and worthy representatives of your state out of you.

80 years ago, Udaltsov was not only the initiator of the creation of MGIMO, but founded it on important academic traditions, as well as his vast experience in university construction.

deep understanding of this word, Udaltsov was a principled, charming man, and a sensitive senior comrade. The students and teachers loved him and respected him for his high humanity.”

Many years have passed since Udaltsov’s death, but his legacy lives on in the MSU community. University students have created a construction team named after I. Udaltsov, and one of the streets of Southwest Moscow bears his name. MGIMO students and graduates also remember him for the fact that 80 years ago he not only initiated the creation of MGIMO, but also founded it on important academic traditions, as well as his vast experience in university construction.









Photos by **I. Drobyshev**

NIZHNY'S HORIZONS FOR MGIMO

Experts in international relations have always been highly valued within the country. These days they are in great demand in different parts of Russia, as they are vital to the development of cooperation with foreign countries. The Nizhny Novgorod Oblast is no exception. Today the Nizhny Novgorod Oblast offers young MGIMO graduates not just a wide range of professional opportunities, but also a high-quality environment for life and development.

Interview by Igor Drobyshev

STAROSTIN: “I WANT NIZHNY NOVGOROD TO BECOME MY HOME”

Dmitry Starostin, a 2009 MGIMO graduate, was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Nizhny Novgorod Region for International Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations in 2024. At the age of 38, he became the deputy head of one of the leading Russia regions.

15 years of diplomatic work helped him reach this high: Starostin worked at the Russian embassies in Italy, France and the United States. In 2023, at the rank of adviser, he returned to Moscow from Washington and took up the post of head of the Department of State Protocol, one of the most important ones of the Russian Foreign Ministry.

Dmitry believes that he owes his civil service career to MGIMO. He expresses a special gratitude to the rector of the University, Anatoly Torkunov. “I am immensely grateful to him for the university we have, for all things MGIMO – to me it's so much more than lectures, seminars and language classes — it's a whole life!”

MJ: Last year marked the anniversary of MGIMO's fellow students and graduates, Rector Torkunov and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.
Their friendship is one to envy. They have always believed in the values of student fraternity and – and still do so to this day. This is a true friendship based not only on a personal relationship, but also on professional mutual enrichment. Moreover, this unique duo is one of the driving forces behind the Russian Foreign Ministry. Thanks to Torkunov and Lavrov, so many talented people have joined the Ministry and devoted their entire lives to serving Russia and its foreign policy interests. So many ideas were introduced into Russian foreign policy. These two generate so much energy.



I would like to seize this opportunity to announce that we are planning to draft a cooperation agreement between the government of the Nizhny Novgorod Region and MGIMO, and we would very much like to expand cooperation at all levels.

MJ: We did a story on you in 2018, back when you were working in Paris. How has your life been since?
In 2019, I left Paris to become first secretary of the First European Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, the one where I started at and which sent me to Italy. After working there for about a year, I moved to Washington.
The Department of State Protocol which I joined upon returning from the United States, was, in my opinion, a logical continuation of my previous work: for example, the connections and skills I gained in Europe, such as the ones needed for organizing events of both the most basic and presidential levels, came in quite handy. I headed the Information and Representation Department. My duties included holding important events for the diplomatic corps, familiarizing foreign diplomats, primarily ambassadors, with Russia's most outstanding achievements in various fields: economics, business, culture, and sports. These were exclusive events, such as visits to the Irina Viner Gymnastics Palace in Luzhniki, the *Russia* exhibition at VDNH, the Historical Museum, and regional events. This is an incredibly energizing and creative job: you get to know the heads of diplomatic missions and their staff, and you are constantly communicating with people. The main thing, however, is that you start getting to know your Homeland better! From my experience as a member of the diplomatic corps in other countries, I can say with confidence that being to be an ambassador or an employee of a foreign diplomatic mission in Moscow is to be very lucky. I have never seen such a complete immersion in local reality anywhere else.

I am immensely grateful to our Rector for the university we have, for all things MGIMO – to me, it's my whole life

MJ: What made you leave your astonish MFA career for a position of a regional civil servant?
Maybe I'm the type of person who is naturally prone to looking for professional challenges? Some try to avoid such challenges and play it safe — I don't see anything wrong with that, everyone has their own path and choice. When our governor Gleb Nikitin invited me to take this position, I thought it was a great honor and was elated!
It gave me the opportunity to put my previous experience to practice in one of the most developed and positively ambitious regions. You must know that in many respects the Nizhny Novgorod Region is the leader among all Russian federal entities. For example, it ranks second in the investment climate rating.

MJ: What task did the governor set for you?
To expand international cooperation, give it an additional impetus, and promote the region on new markets. It was for this purpose that the Government established my position.
Before my arrival, there was an International Relations Department here, and it was always quite active. Nizhny Novgorod hosted many international events, forums, and conferences. Later the department was transformed into the Ministry of International and Interregional Relations. This added such important tasks such as the relocation of foreign citizens to the region. One of the key tasks of my team is to harmonize this process.



MJ: What about the famous Nizhny Novgorod fair? Is it under your authority?
It would be more accurate to say that this is an essential part of our common work. The government team organizes various events on this site, for example, the CIPR conference, the main business event on the digital economy and technology in Russia. Thanks to the efforts of my team, one hundred international representatives from foreign companies of China, India, Cuba, and the Middle East took part in it. Their total number reached 10,000. This forum makes strategically important government decisions,

We have seriously intensified ties with China. A number of agreements on cooperation projects have been concluded, we rely on deep cooperation, and trade is expanding



discusses initiatives in the field of IT industry development, and identifies ways to achieve the country's technological sovereignty in the systemically important areas of the economy.
For the region, the fair is a huge part of its history. By the way, those Nizhny Novgorod residents whom I was lucky enough to get to know seem to be imbued with the spirit of the merchant class. This is very important to take into account when understanding why our region is one of the country's leaders in terms of business.
The governor charges us with his energy and approach that is most focused on results, speeding up processes and overcoming bureaucracy. Taking all this into account, you surely need to set some additional requirements for yourself, and ask yourself some new questions.

MJ: Could you give an example?
What good are international activities for the residents of the region? Does the result depend on whether a reception of foreign delegation was grand and beautiful?

MJ: And what are some constructive things that have been done in a little over a year?
First of all, we have seriously intensified our relations with China. We have concluded a number of cooperations agreements between enterprises, we rely on deep cooperation and step up on trade. The Chinese are interested in the possibilities of the *Kulibin* special economic zone, a Nizhny Novgorod site for high-tech industries. The region offers Chinese investors not just infrastructure, but a comprehensive approach, from engineering training and support to staffing and tax preferences. We have good cooperation prospects in science and education, as well as in IT. The *Neymark* IT campus is becoming the center of attraction for such projects in our region. We work with the special economic zones of KEZAD (Abu Dhabi) and Jebel Ali (Dubai). This are doing it first of all to promote Nizhny Novgorod exporters in the Emirates and beyond.
Sometimes, successful ideas come spontaneously, you never know exactly which one will hit a home rub. When we went to Cuba to take part in the FIHAV Havana trade fair and negotiate with our partners, we came up with the Nizhny Novgorod-Cuba school IT Olympiad. The first stage was held online, and the



final one took place in Nizhny Novgorod. The project has gone international, with 10.5 thousand schoolchildren from 51 countries taking part in it. Several dozen finalists from different parts of the world came to Nizhny Novgorod for the in-person final stage. The results of were summed up at the CIPR conference. There are some good joint projects with Brazil, India, Serbia and other countries.

MJ: Nizhny Novgorod region is a unique region. What is this land famous for?
There are numerous things. *Gorky Automobile Plant (GAZ)* is one of the key enterprises symbolic for the region. *GAZelle* manufactures light commercial vehicles, including passenger, cargo, and cargo trucks.
Our enterprise is one of the oldest ones in the shipbuilding industry. *Krasnoe Sormovo*, was founded in 1849. And the Central Design Bureau named after R.

According to many indicators, the Nizhny Novgorod Region is the leader among all Russian federal entities. For example, it ranks second in the investment climate rating.

E. Alekseev designs unique hydrofoil vessels. The Nizhny Novgorod Region is known for chemical industry enterprises, and one of the oldest centers of Russian metallurgy, the *Vyksa Metallurgical Plant*, also operates here. These days Nizhny Novgorod Region represents not just industry and trade, but also cutting-edge technologies, culture, education, medicine, sports and tourism, for sure. By the end of 2024, over 4.7 million tourists visited the region — this a great figure!
The unique symbols of the Nizhny Novgorod region are folk crafts, the main of them being, perhaps, the Khokhloma of the city of Semenov, as well as *Gorodetsky* painting, *Gorodetsky* gingerbread, *Kazak* filigree.
An important symbol of the Nizhny Novgorod region is the Volga River itself. The walls of the Nizhny Novgorod Kremlin overlook of one of the main natural attractions of the city — *the Strelka*. The Oka and Volga rivers merge here. There is a lot of delicious fish in the Volga, and it was here where I tried bleak for the first time — it reminds you of a small herring, and it is just mouth-watering. What is more, Nizhny Novgorod is the capital of sunsets. They need to be seen live, because no camera can capture this beauty of nature.

THE FIVE SENSES OF MARKETING

Interview by **Masha Kuznetsova**
Photos by **Yuri Lukin**

Maria Pylaeva, a 2025 MGIMO graduate, remembers how she read Arthur Haley's *Hotel* for her English home reading class while studying. But she never thought that after a while it would become her dream.: "I really want to open my own hotel, a boutique hotel where I could embody all those canons of hospitality that we were taught at the MGIMO Tourism and the Hospitality Industry master's program at the School of Business.

MJ: I'm sure if you reread *Hotel* as a professional, you'll find a lot of useful things. But how did the big change happen? You went to MGIMO to become an international journalist, didn't you?
Yes, it was a deliberate choice. But my situation was an interesting one. Although I did not apply to any other Russian university — only to MGIMO — in my final year at school, I nevertheless took some French universities' entrance test. And I passed them at three universities, including the Sorbonne University!

But my mother told me, "Maybe you should try taking MGIMO entrance exams after all? If you don't, you'll go abroad without getting any Russian educational experience."

MJ: Have you really given up on the idea of going to France?
Yes, I have. It was probably due to the competitiveness that saw me throughout school. Anyway, I came from Nizhny Novgorod where I was born and raised, to Moscow, just to test my abilities. And I got a tuition-free spot!
Now for the big change. Last year, I worked as a tour guide at the Russia National Center, an exhibition of the country's achievements in science, culture, technology, ecology and education. There you can see Russia's greatest achievements and everything it is proud of with your own eyes. I have accompanied foreign delegations and conducted tours for ambassadors working in Moscow. I even did so for Steven Seagal!
And when my colleagues found out that I was a bride, they suggested: "Masha, let's have your wedding here at the exhibition, there is such a tradition!"
My fellow student Pavel and I were got many gifts by the exhibition partners for our wedding, including a trip to Kamchatka. The last was unforgettable!
But my passion for tourism predates it. After the pandemic, it was as if I had broken free. I traveled a lot around Russia, I was on Sakhalin, Karelia, Kaliningrad, Lake Baikal, and the Russian North. To catch up on things, so to speak. From there I brought back reports and travel notes.
Gradually, my passion developed into something that I would like to see as my profession: travel journalism. This is journalism and not travel blogging which is the work of non-professional freelancers. My bachelor's thesis was



The competitive spirit that accompanied me all through school won out: I went to enter MGIMO just to test my strength. And it passed!





titled Travel Media Business Model. In it, I analyzed economics, management, and business processes.

MJ: Now it's clear why you didn't go on working in the media, but switched to tourism and hospitality instead.
In 2023, I enrolled at the Master's program in Tourism, and it was interesting to study there, so these two years just flew by. Apart from studying, I did a lot of exciting practice. I would like to mention the "Arctic Dialogue: New formats of international cooperation" international youth winter school. I worked in a group that researched international Arctic tourism, including scientific one. Tourism is a soft power, and one of the tools for building relations between states. The winter school once again made it possible to make sure that tourism at MGIMO is an absolutely organic synthesis.
At the scientific and practical conference of the Institute for the Development of Creative Industries, I took part in the section called "Creative clusters and spaces, the development of the infrastructure of creative industries and its impact on the creative economy of the country." Creativity in tourism is also an organic and important element.
I also did my internship at the Russian Geographical Society, and that's where I stayed: I've been working at the Media Department for three years, dealing with the topic of tourism and travel.

MJ: What made you look at your career choice differently?
It happened by "forced," so to say. The supervisor of my master's thesis, Vazgen Avetisyan, virtually made me fall in love with marketing.

MJ: Is that possible? The topic is a boring one.
It turned out that this was not the case. Vazgen explained that the main target audience for which we are developing the tourist area is not tourists, but residents. The tourist will leave, but the resident will stay. It is this aspect of hospitality that he taught us. He also recommended looking into the topic of tourist loyalty. This is a key factor in the development of inbound tourism that contributes to the growth of economic efficiency and the sustainability of the tourist flow. So I wrote a paper on it.

MJ: What conclusions did you come to?
Retaining a "frequenter," a loyal customer is cheaper than attracting a new one. And it is necessary to create a product that will help turn tourists from "primary" into permanent ones. We have been thinking for a long time of what kind of product this could be, and since our country is the largest one in the world both in terms of territory and the number of federal entities (there are 89 ones, and each is unique and interesting in its own way!), it is very difficult to come to a common denominator, so to speak. And we came up with the concept of "authenticity," which can unite all regions.
What is its essence? It includes the "five S" — five senses. That is, the "product" of a tourist area should be expressed through vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste. If it's vision, then it's the beauty and breadth of Russian nature, its amazing landscapes. If it's sound, we're talking about the great legacy of our brilliant composers. The taste and smell are Russian gastronomy. As for touch, we show authentic Russian architecture, wooden temples built without a single nail, rural log cabins.
And here is where loyalty is important — commitment and/or attachment to the product of the tourist territory and/or to the brand of the tourist territory. And the highest degree of loyalty in this case is patriotism.

The main target audience for which we are developing the tourist area is not tourists, but residents. The tourist will leave, but the resident will stay.

MJ: Patriotism? How unexpected. How did you come to such an extraordinary conclusion?
Loyalty is an attitude to a place, and patriotism is literally love for your homeland, for the country you were born in. But you can also be a patriot through being loyal. This means love and affection for the territory you've chosen, regardless of the circumstances. There are several types of loyalty, for example, normative loyalty,





when a person goes on a pilgrimage out of a sense of duty.

MJ: Do you mean *the Hajj*?
Yes. There is behavioral loyalty, which is when there are two cafes next to each other, but you have a loyalty card from one of them, so you will go there. Affective loyalty: you chose this place because something inside you attracts you to it. And patriotism in this case is when you always never hesitate to not choose this particular product or tourist area with no sense of duty being involved.

MJ: Can you give an example of such patriotism?
I know a French woman named Cecile Rogg. She calls herself "the most Russian Frenchwoman." She has lived in Moscow for 30 years, she loves Russia with all her heart, this is her home, and she is a patriot of our country. However, she was forced to leave due to some circumstances. But she is waiting for the first opportunity to fly back to Moscow.

MJ: How does she explain her patriotism?
I've talked to many French people who love Russia, and everyone says that they find themselves surrounded by warmth, hospitality, and comfort, and they feel at home. Cecile has visited dozens of countries, and she has never felt like this anywhere else. You can't touch this loyalty, you can only feel it.

We have been thinking for a long time about what a travel product we can "sell" might be. And soon came up with the concept of "authenticity."

I am analyzing Russian-French relations, and my Nizhny Novgorod Ballad project was dedicated to it – here I used a French pun: une balade is a walk, and une ballade is a ballad, a piece of music. The project later developed into French audio routes around Moscow. By the way, Cecile, voiced one of them for us.
This is a mobile application, an audio guide, which is basically a walk around the city. You answer the questions, and if the answer is correct, you get the geolocation of the next object where you are going. This is how you go through all the stops at the route, getting to see the sights of Nizhny Novgorod, but à la française. And for Moscow, the same quest is "Moscow Ballad".

MJ: Now to the main thing. You graduated from the Master's Tourism program and dream of creating your own boutique hotel. And where will you get the funds for the implementation of a startup from?
This is the most important question. But at the moment, the problem is not how to find the money, but where to gain managerial experience and useful connections. I'd like to work for hire first.

MJ: But it takes at least five years to complete all the positions, from the smallest to the management, and really learn all the ins and outs of the hotel business. Your age allows you to do it, though.
I agree with you on that. As for money, the Ministry of Economic Development is interested in developing the tourism infrastructure. During the pandemic, a number of measures were taken in the interests of hoteliers: various benefits, grants. The industry is now well supported. I think my experience in creating business models will help me in this project. I am sure that I can successfully apply it in Moscow, which I love with all my soul. My husband is a true Muscovite, Moscow is already my hometown, and I want to make it better.



SVECHIN: “MARCHENKO IS A VERY SMART PERSON, AND I LIKE SMART PEOPLE”

It is the MGIMO graduate Grigory Marchenko that Nikolai Svechin, a Nizhny Novgorod writer, calls one of his dearest friends: “He is a very smart man, and I like smart people.”

Writer Nikolai Svechin is sitting at home, eating cold sterlet and washing it down with vodka: “This suits writing about detective Lykov the best.” Svechin has already written 36 (!) novels about the adventures


Grigory Marchenko

of Alexei Lykov, who solved crimes throughout the Russian Empire — from Warsaw to Central Asia – a century ago.

Sometimes Nikolai takes this set (sterlet and vodka) with him to go write in the forest. At home he has not been able to sit down and start the creative process for three months now — he has to attend events promoting his books. “It's my responsibility,” he sighs. “But I'm nearing 70, and I have to hurry — I want to turn the Lykov story which has already turned into a saga, into 40 books. And finish it. It is in the woods, in the open air where I write well: I sit down on a tree stump, turn on my laptop and write.”

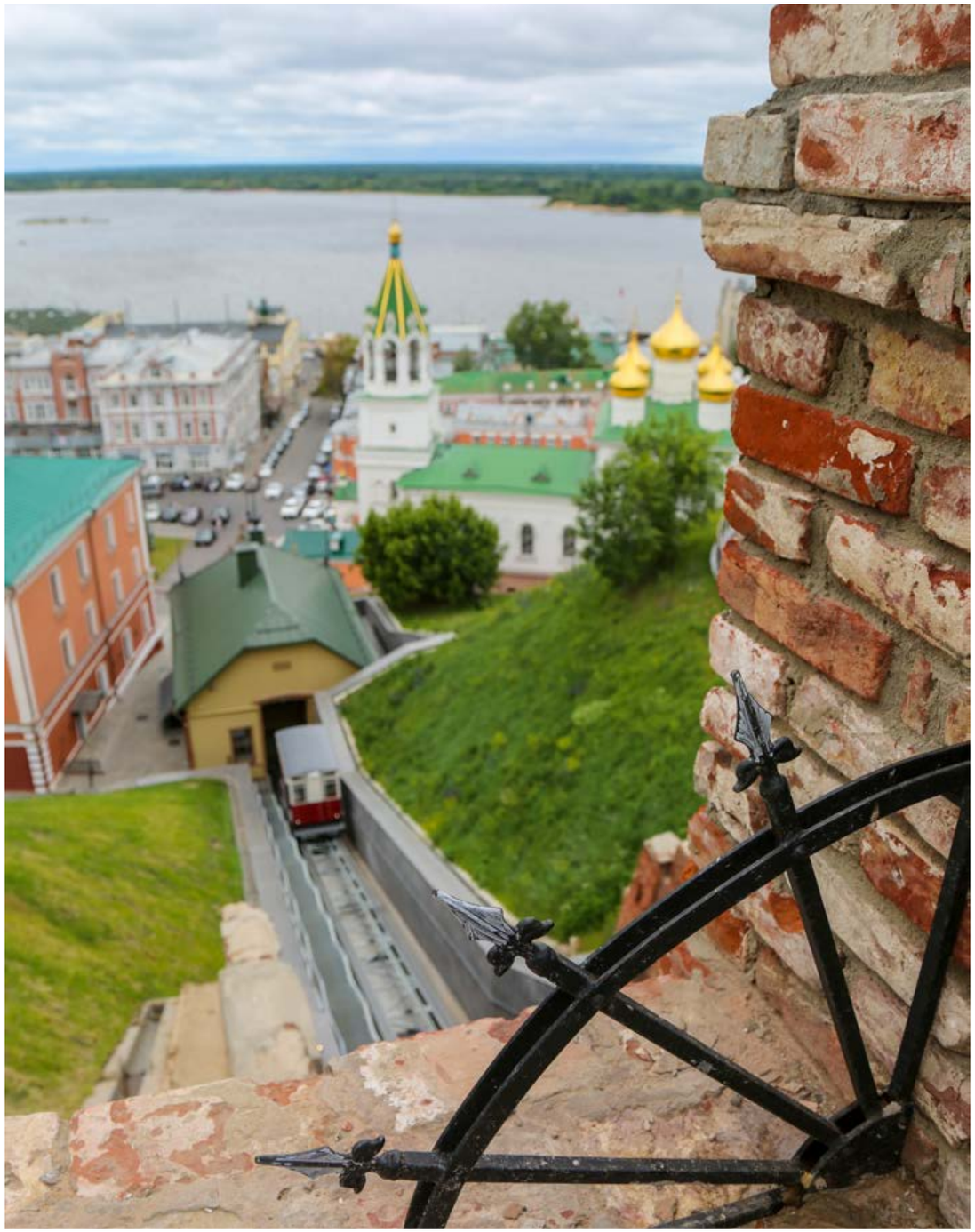
Svechin likes smart people, although smart people are rare. Still, it's quite possible for a writer to have his character surrounded by smart people. So Svechin turned Marchenko (consentually, for sure) into one of the characters of his novel “*The Icy Wind of Suomi*” – the one about a high-profile crime which took place a century ago.

The writer met Grigory Marchenko, the former chairman of the National Bank of Kazakhstan, after having written “*The Case of Semipalatinsk*.”

He sent his main character, Detective Lykov, to the city of Semipalatinsk, Central Asia, where the so-called Big Game took place, i.e. a geopolitical rivalry between the British and Russian empires for regional supremacy. At the beginning of the century, the area already witnessed the flourishment of Chinese espionage and the work of German intelligence….

The plot is typical for Svechin. A police chief is stabbed to death. The criminal was found, but Lykov suspects that a fake figure was planted in the investigation. In fact, the tsarist official was eliminated by agents of the British residency. The detective undertakes to conduct a secret investigation, and catches a real killer in quiet Semipalatinsk (modern Kazakhstan).


Nikolai Svechin



Marchenko read the book and liked the history of it. He wanted to meet Svechin and contacted him through a friend of the writer, who, in his turn, said, among all: “He has a gift for you in the form of vintage century-old cognac.”

“I realized that Bolot would not give an empty praise, and so I went. Partially, of course, because of the cognac. I arrive, and a very tall man comes out carrying something in his hands: cognac in the form of a casket with the year 1916 on it. “We will not drink,” Marchenko said. “Take this with you to Russia.”

***

Grigory Marchenko turned out to be a very interesting person. In 1984, he graduated from MGIMO with honors, and made a successful career in finance in Kazakhstan. He was even considered for the position of Managing Director of the IMF.

Svechin liked Marchenko, and Marchenko saw a true friend in Svechin. “There is no utilitarianism in our relationship,” says Nikolai. “We're friends precisely not because we need each other, but because we find each other interesting.”

A writer has a privilege: he can include any close person or friend in his book as a character, or anyone he dislikes as a villain. Marchenko turned out to be interesting as a person who can set the right tone for a future book with his intellect.



In “*The Icy Wind of Suomi*“, which was published in 2023, detective Lykov went to the Grand Duchy of Finland, which was part of the Russian Empire at the beginning of the XX century. He did so in August 1913 against the backdrop of most Russian elite being alarmed at the face of a world war. Was the country ready for it?

The cashier of a large St. Petersburg bank, a Finn by nationality, stole a large sum of money and fled to Finland. Lykov, who arrived in Helsingfors (now Helsinki), had a task: to find the thief and return the money. The investigation quickly reached a dead end. In Finland, Russian laws were virtually non-applicable, and imperial decrees meant nothing to the local police.

The painstaking investigative work began. And here, State Councilor Grigory Marchenko, a representative of the Ministry of Finance in the Grand Duchy of Finland, came to the fore – “a smart and competent man, and most importantly, he gets along well with the local bankers.”

This is followed by a description of the financier, in which we recognize the real life Marchenko: “A thin man of very large stature — at least six feet tall. His hair and beard were completely white, but his eyes oozed energy.”

Svechin likes smart people, so he turned Marchenko into one of the characters of his novel.

Lykov turned to Marchenko for help. He assumed that the stolen money was in a safe deposit box in one of the Finnish banks.

“It makes sense,” Marchenko agreed. “Do you want me to look for them?”

He tugged at his white beard thoughtfully, and finally said:

“There are only ten banks in the Grand Duchy, which simplifies the task. If the police send them a request, they will open all the cells and look into them. But the police don't want to do that, do they? "

“No, they don’t,” Lykov confirmed.

“If I ask them to do this, secretly and unofficially, then five banks will immediately meet me halfway. Three more will put on an act, but will do it still. The national one will refuse flatly, the director being a Russophobe... If I ask them to, they will do it quickly... It's not the first year that I've represented our Ministry of Finance here. I've bailed out the bankers in St. Petersburg many times. He defended, helped, and advised. These bigwigs need me, and they'll need me more than once. Let them work it out. "

And so the flywheel of connections and acquaintances began to spin. After some time, the financier contacted Lykov.:

“I found what I had promised. "

“Is that so?” Where is the treasure then? "

“In the Northern Joint-Stock Bank... Do hurry!”

However, the Finnish police, instead of helping and promptly issuing permission to check the safe deposit box, warned the criminals. The money was gone.

Soon they managed to pick up their scent. This time, a blitzkrieg was carried out with no police involved, and Lykov took possession of the entire amount. He sent an encrypted telegram to the Police Department, and took a wad of rubles from the confiscated one.

“Wait, but why me?” Marchenko began to protest when the detective placed a stack of banknotes in front of him.

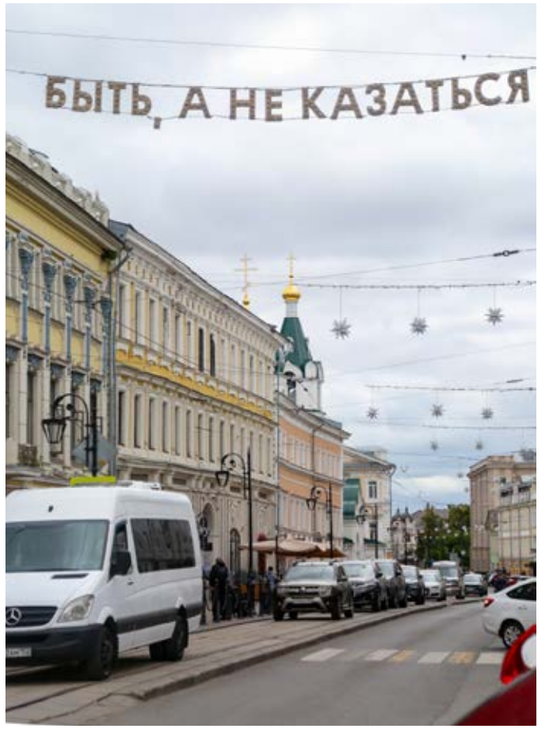
“You pointed to the Northern Bank. "

“But you didn't find any money there!”

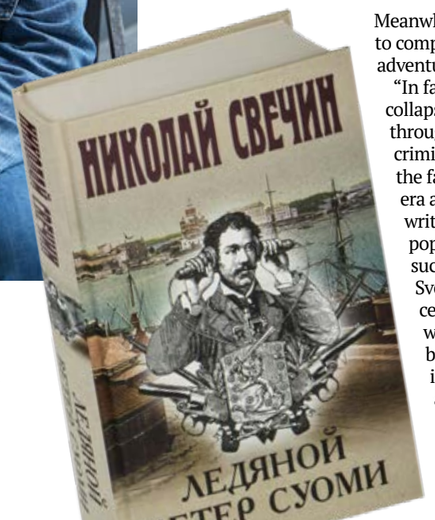
“I picked up their scent from your tip. And this led me to success. You have helped me with the investigation many times. So take it...



Having written out the literary image of his friend, Nikolai Svechin saw Marchenko in a different light: “I was once again convinced that this is a special person.“..



This is the story of the collapse of the Russian Empire through the eyes of a criminal detective, a story in which the fates of people who lived in that era are intertwined.



Meanwhile, Svechin's selfless work to complete the saga of Lykov's adventures continues.

“In fact, this is the story of the collapse of the Russian Empire through the eyes of one man, a criminal detective, a story in which the fates of people who lived in that era are intertwined. No one has written anything like this yet.... My popularity, of course, is explained such works being in trend,” Svechin maintains, displaying a certain amount of self-irony. “It will pass one day, but there will be casts, sections from that era in the form of texts I am not ashamed of.” MJ









SPORTS DIPLOMACY CLUB

Photos by **Igor Lileev, Tikhon Malevanny**

In 2020, the Sports Diplomacy Center was established at MGIMO. It gave a start to the Global Sports: Legal Regulation, Positioning, and Communications professional retraining program which is part of a wide range of MGIMO training programs in sports, tourism and leisure.

Over the years, 133 people have graduated from the program — these are heads of sports organizations and federations that are designed to strengthen Russia's position in international sports organizations and increase the global competitiveness of Russian sports.

The graduates of the fifth anniversary year are 32 federation heads and experts — basketball, hockey, rugby, athletics, speed skating, baseball and softball, surfing, triathlon and other sports.



While communicating, the classmates came up with the idea of creating a club of alumni athletes. Dmitry Bychkov, president of the Russian Rock Climbing Federation, became its driving force.

"In fact, the idea belongs to Alexander Katushev, director of the Russian Olympic Athletes Support Fund, — says Bychkov. — It is done so that that the training is regular, because the situation in global sports is constantly changing. Well, everyone has their own achievements, ideas that can be shared."

Bychkov called Katushev: "We are ready to hold an event at the Climbing Center, invite our graduates, and extend our relationship. Graduates came from different schools and sports. We provided them with instructors and taught them some basic skills. And then we talked to them together with Alexey Kryukov, director of MGIMO Alumni Association. Katushev said: let's create a club and establish a sports branch of MGIMO Association."

An idea was born: let's create a graduate sports club and establish a sports branch of MGIMO Association.

"The creation of the alumni Athletes Club is a very important initiative," said Emil Aslanov, Deputy Director of the Russian Rugby Federation and President of the Student Rugby League. "Sports experts should have a platform for horizontal communication, exchange of opinions, ideas, and build a consolidated position on many issues, especially those on the international agenda."

Then, a graduation ceremony was held at MGIMO for graduates of the Global Sports: Legal Regulation, Positioning, and Communications program, implemented by MGIMO Sports Diplomacy Center and MGIMO School of Business in cooperation with the Russian Olympians Support Fund commissioned by the ROC.

MGIMO Rector and academician Anatoly Torkunov noted that ten years ago, MGIMO Foundation and MGIMO signed a cooperation agreement to establish MGIMO Sports Diplomacy Center. In total, about 600 people have graduated from joint educational programs.

"Many of our outstanding athletes and federation leaders have graduated from the program," A. Torkunov said. They became a significant addition to the list of MGIMO graduates. It would be nice to create a sports program alumni club so that it becomes part of our alumni association, which is considered the strongest and most extensive one, at least in our country. This is also evidenced by MGIMO World Alumni meetings that we regularly hold."

The rector emphasized that he considers MGIMO Association to be a powerful supporting tool "for keeping touch with practice and life. We get a lot from our graduates, including the necessary advice. It enriches our university. New programs and new graduates are what keep MGIMO young."

"Today, sports is increasingly becoming a politics tool," Mikhail Filippov, Vice President of the ROC, said in his speech, "therefore, our country needs not just sports federations functionaries, but sports diplomats who speak foreign languages, have strong negotiation skills and are able to find non-standard solutions to complex issues."

"I sincerely believe that your replenishment of the ranks of sports functionaries, especially with the help of such a global brand as MGIMO, will contribute to the implementation of the tasks of sports diplomacy," Alexander Nikitin, Deputy Minister of Sports of the Russian Federation, said when addressing the graduates.

"MGIMO has created a unique professional communication platform," said graduate Victoria Proshkina, Vice President of the Russian Surfing Federation, "an entire ecosystem of interaction between colleagues from many sports, teachers and experts from various fields. We are grateful to MGIMO for the fact that along with Russian art, literature and music, sports is becoming the very "soft power" that is able to unite and build bridges between countries and continents."





MJ: What did you learn from Belousov?
He was also the supervisor of my thesis. I learned the ability to defend my point of view, to argue it in a dispute, to understand the practical value of research, to see my calculations as beneficial for state policy, state corporations, the population, and for some of my own financial decisions. However, one of the main lessons I learned from Belousov was probably the requirement to count. Because economics is scientific accounting. Later my mentors often asked me: "Have you counted everything?" In other words, any economic issue, be it an economic policy recommendation or a prognosis, must be considered. You have to be honest with yourself and the public when making hypotheses or assumptions.

MJ: So, as a mathematician, you take formulas, add numbers, and then you count?
This is when the formulas are already there, but you often need to create a new model, to come up with a new approach, and then in one calculated prognosis you have to combine several levels of economic outlook: macroeconomic, sectoral, and social ones. I have mastered this unique competence.

MJ: Later you gained vast analytical, including that in banking. What is the challenge that an analyst may face today?
For example, you may be required to come up with an automated way to control some kind of a system – be it a smart home, a smart city, or a smart infrastructure where an algorithm takes over some part of the control.

THE NEW CONTENT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Interview by **M. Kuzmin**
Photos courtesy of **E. Pogrebnyak**

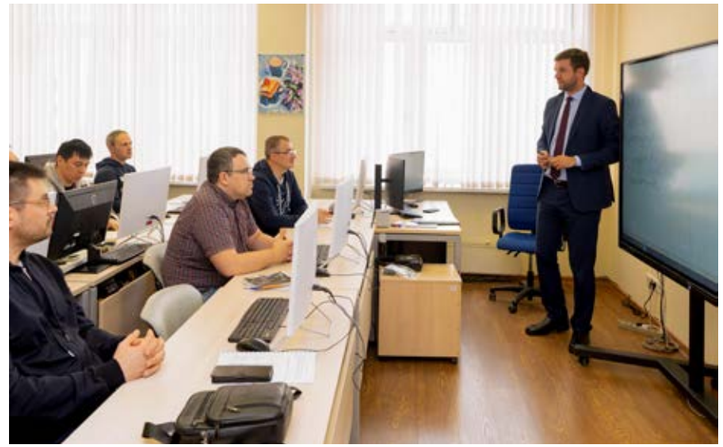
Evgeny Pogrebnyak, the new vice-rector of MGIMO, has been working at the university since 2018. He was first invited to launch the School of Finance and Economics from scratch, then, to head the Digital Department. In 2025, he became MGIMO's Vice-rector for Digital Transformation.
Pogrebnyak graduated from Moscow State University, then worked at one of the leading analytical centers where he managed to work under the leadership of a prominent economist, the current Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Andrei Belousov.

MJ: How did you come to work at MGIMO?
I have always taught a little, read some disciplines at the School of International Economic Relations, as well as at the Odintsovo branch of MGIMO – these in business informatics and IT architecture which I have always been interested in. And then my colleagues proposed not only to raise the teaching of a separate course to the proper level, but to head the entire school of finance and economics. I agreed, seeing in this both a challenge and a change of my domain of work — the transition from banking to the academic field which has completely different assessment criteria, challenges, and limitations.

MJ: What is one peculiarity of financial economics?
The School of Finance and Economics has been labelled *boutique faculty*. Just as a boutique business is a very specialized small company, so the SFE is a specialized department with only 300 students. However, the academic saturation is high: four bachelor programs and three master programs. They have their own departments, some specializing in finance and economics, the others in business informatics, and there is a cluster of creative industries as well. We add them to the classical knowledge provided by MGIMO, that is languages and regional studies. It seems to me that here we meet the expectations of employers and students: you are not just an international economist, but also an IT specialist who not only knows the subject area well, but is also ready to participate in the upcoming automation in the global large financial sector. This is the main advantage of finance and economics.
As for the Digital Department, it offers programming and digital skills training based on our own modules for all second-year students.

MJ: What are the tasks of the Vice-rector for Digital Transformation?
They could be divided into several directions. Firstly, it is to support the efficiency of educational process systems and their development. Secondly, we need to expand the use of AI services and data analysis in university management, as well as increase the level of technological developments, both standard and adapted for us, as well as our own AI-based services and software tools, so that we can develop our teaching competencies.
Finally, it is the control, through an automated assessment system, of the quality and relevance of electronic educational materials posted on our electronic platform.

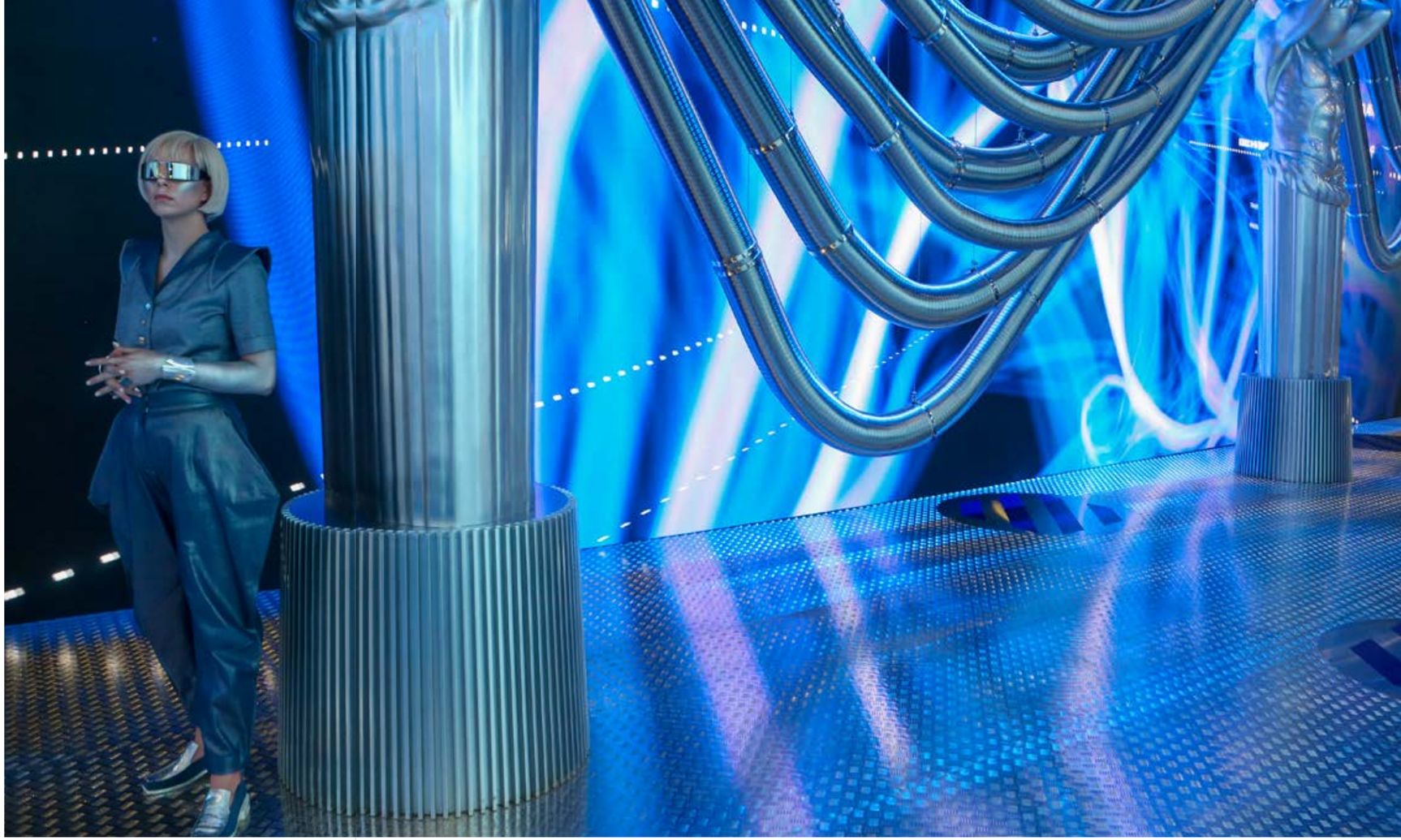
MJ: What kind of "product" does MGIMO's management want to see released?



Today, the contribution that you can make to the development of a country, a company or a specific person is at the intersection of competencies.

A graduate of MGIMO, a multidisciplinary university with an international focus, should become not only an international economist, but also a bit of a data engineer, a computer specialist, and an expert in sociology and psychology. Today, the contribution that you can make to the development of a country, a company or a specific person is at the intersection of competencies and knowledge not only in the field of international relations, but also in some industry, the domain of state regulation. This result depends on the ability to model the process, that is, to display it in the form of data, its digital representation, as well as the ability to quickly change it.
Earlier the ability to write a coherent text was highly appreciated, and now it is much more important, firstly, to identify the problem, secondly, to develop its solution, i.e. to come up with some new software product, and finally, to test it. That is, today it is necessary to teach students not so quite to write text but to create solutions, and they are often not quite textual, this is problem-oriented analytics. We test a student's skill in prioritizing the problem and evaluate specific final solutions.
And here is where I see even a serious challenge. What are we teaching? Are we trying to pass on our knowledge ("Here's a textbook for you, answer the question with the help of this and that chapter")? Or to instill skills making a person able to work in great uncertainty, under stress, with insufficient information, and develop solutions that meet the interests of the team, the company, society, and his own?
Labor market conditions are changing rapidly, and the strength of solid liberal arts schools, one of them being MGIMO, probably lies in the fact that fundamental knowledge allows them to compete for a long time. And if the programs are also enriched with modern skills and allow students to experience an early "encounter with an imperfect world", that is business and industry, the training turns out to be of truly high quality.











SPIEF: THE NEW WORLD ORDER IS LIKE THE SUNRISE

Photos by **I. Drobyshev, N. Khludkov, O. Posukhova**

The St. Petersburg International Economic Forum 2025 (SPIEF) was held under the slogan “Shared values are the foundation for growth in a multipolar world.” The Kingdom of Bahrain received the honorary status of the guest country of the forum. And MGIMO traditionally hosted a friends’ party at *the Maria Hotel*.














The number of those who consider it important to come to this meeting is growing from year to year, and this evidences the growth MGIMO fraternity. “It is thanks in large part to you,” MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov addressed the guests of the meeting, “that the university is a very vibrant, rapidly developing one, which offers new programs annually and welcomes new faces and ideas every year. Today is just the first day of the forum, and we have already signed five new agreements. Everyone comes up new ideas and development plans. MGIMO is becoming increasingly immersed in modern technologies, scientific and technical knowledge. And I am sure this is extremely important: the main trend in university development today is a combination of humanitarian, socio-economic, and engineering education. We will have engineering clusters in Odintsovo (Moscow region) and Tashkent (Uzbekistan). In September, we will open a branch in Astana (Kazakhstan). Today, our Vietnamese friends from Hanoi University are here with us, we recently signed a cooperation

Torkunov: “Digital technology education and humanitarian socio-economic education should run in parallel.”

agreement in the presence of the President of Vietnam and the Secretary General of the Vietnamese Communist Party, and this agreement involves the establishment of our branch in Hanoi.”

Rector Torkunov recalled that in 2024 MGIMO celebrated its 80th anniversary and became the first university in post-Soviet Russia to be awarded the state award of the Order of Alexander Nevsky under a presidential decree: “Alexander Nevsky is the patron saint of Russian diplomacy.”

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As always, the MGIMO Rector participated in a number of panel discussions held at the forum.

Within the framework of the SPIEF youth section, a discussion was held on the following topic: “The younger generation: a driver or a hostage of global trends?”

Anatoly Torkunov focused on the











Our university is a very vibrant, rapidly developing one, which offers new programs annually and welcomes new faces and ideas every year.

future of humanitarian education in the context of the rapid development of digital technologies. “Without humanitarian training, without knowledge of art, the development of modern technologies is impossible. I am an expert on Korea, and I know very well that in South Korea, large companies encourage their top managers to engage in creative work, to become interested in painting, theater, and music. They believe that the development of technology requires innovative creative thinking, and this is impossible without humanitarian knowledge: a person just stops developing. Therefore, it seems to me that these processes should run in parallel — digital technology training and humanitarian socio-economic education. The subtle process of merging natural science engineering education and humanities education is a global process. Humanities students all around the world receive more natural science knowledge… Only such a synthesis can make an expert who is

able to work in a complex international and information environment, filter fake information, meaningfully apply AI and build long-term strategies in international relations, foreign trade and public service. Comprehensive self-development is the path to true leadership in any field, from diplomacy to high technology."

Opening the discussion "The International Climate Agenda. New leaders," Anatoly Torkunov noted that these days, new leaders and new global trends are appearing on the global climate agenda, and the role of developing countries in the green transition is growing. There is a transition to multipolar climate leadership, where new players are taking responsibility for shaping a fair and sustainable international agenda. Russia, China and the Eurasian Economic Union are actively promoting low-carbon development and carbon neutrality using innovative technologies, regulatory mechanisms and "green" financial instruments. Climate change is coming to the fore today as one of the most important and most pressing global issues. Despite the fact that many are still skeptical of the anthropogenic nature of climate change, its consequences are becoming more and more obvious. The Arctic is particularly vulnerable: the destruction of infrastructure and the loss of up to 29% of hydrocarbon production in the North are directly related to the melting of permafrost. The frequency and scale of natural disasters, such as forest fires, floods, and droughts, are increasing. It is obvious that environmental challenges know no borders and require a global collective response that would be free from politicization. "Environmental issues know no national borders, and it is necessary to solve problems through the efforts of the entire international community. It is important not to politicize these issues and to act collectively. Climate change is not an abstraction, but a real challenge. We can argue about the reasons, but we cannot ignore the consequences, because our children and grandchildren will feel them at their most," the rector reminded.





Torkunov: "Climate change is not an abstraction, but a real challenge. It is important not to politicize these issues and to act collectively."

Igor Yurgens, Director of the MGIMO Center for Sustainable Development, noted that Russia has been committed



to carbon neutrality since 2006, encouraging businesses to reduce emissions through carbon taxes, and spoke about Russia's systemic transition to a low-carbon economy as an integral part of a global climate strategy underpinned by economic incentives, international commitments, and domestic modernization needs.

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On the margins of the SPIEF, MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov signed a number of important documents. The Memorandum of Understanding with the energy giant Rosatom State Corporation is aimed at developing long-term cooperation in solving strategic tasks of the nuclear industry, ensuring energy security, expanding international cooperation in the development of low-carbon generation and mechanical engineering, implementing environmental projects, as well as providing targeted training using innovative pedagogical and information technologies.

The strategic partnership agreement with RDIF is aimed at promoting Russian positions abroad and ensuring technological leadership. In particular, it provides for joining forces to develop student technological entrepreneurship and create innovative products, including those through the MGIMO Ventures accelerator and the MGIMO Business Incubator. “The RDIF is an essential element of international investment cooperation and economic diplomacy," said Anatoly Torkunov. “Earlier, RDIF and MGIMO, together with Tsinghua University, signed a trilateral agreement. Today we have signed another trilateral agreement, this time with the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay.” “By combining RDIF's international experience and MGIMO's expert potential, we are creating a solid foundation for systematic, strategic work to build Russia's intellectual capital and promote national interests on the global stage,” said Kirill Dmitriev, CEO of RDIF.

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Traditionally, Igor Sechin, the head of the largest oil producing company Rosneft, spoked at the Energy Panel, presenting a report on the state of the global energy market and the role of Russia and global trends in the oil sector.

The main conclusion is that the demand for oil and petroleum products is growing — and not only due to the desire of countries to strengthen energy security. Data centers for data processing and artificial intelligence centers are increasingly consuming electricity. Moreover, this demand will become the main sustainable driver of growth. The consumption of one such data center will reach 1,000 terawatt-hours by 2030, which is comparable to Japan's current energy consumption.

In the mid-term, the prospects for Rosneft are positive: oil prices are rising, especially after the conflict between Israel and Iran, oil supplies from Iran to China are under threat, and oil from Russia is becoming a possible alternative.

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The SPIEF climaxed with a plenary session with the participation of Russian President Vladimir Putin. President of the Republic of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto, representative of the King of Bahrain Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Deputy Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Ding Xuexiang and Vice President of South Africa Paul Mashatile also took the stage.

The consumption of a large data center will reach 1,000 terawatt-hours by 2030, which is comparable to Japan's current energy consumption.

The discussion was moderated by Nadim Daoud Koteish, a journalist from the Sky News Arabia television channel.

Vladimir Putin delivered a key report. “If at the beginning of the 21st century the BRICS countries made up a fifth of the global economy,” he said, in particular, “today it is already 40 percent. And it is obvious that this share will only grow, above all, due to the dynamic states of the Global South. A fundamentally new model of development is needed, built not on the rules of neocolonialism, when the so-called golden billion siphons resources from other states in the interests of a narrow circle of so-called elites. We must ensure that all these changes affect the quality of life of people in our countries, as well as science, education, technology, and infrastructure. Strategic areas and directions need stable, long-term capital inflows… To ensure this, we need to create an open and fair platform for global growth. It will combine investment mechanisms and technological standards, financial and logistics services, trading instruments and other solutions. I will repeat this: the task is not to modernize the old mechanisms of the era of globalization… It is necessary to propose a new model of development, free from political manipulation, taking into account the national interests of States. The mutual trade turnover of the BRICS countries has already exceeded a trillion dollars and will continue to grow. The wider the range of states involved in the formation and development of such a platform is, the more benefits it will bring to everyone who understands their responsibility to future generations.”





President of the Republic of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto suggested that the audience should speculate on which path to take to achieve this goal: "Pure socialism—well, we've seen it, it doesn't work, it's a utopia... And pure capitalism leads to inequality, to the fact that only a small proportion of the population enjoys benefits and wealth. We will not choose the extremes. We want to rely on creativity, a creative approach that is characteristic of capitalism, we must use the initiative that is characteristic of capitalism. But we need the state to play an important role in order to fight poverty, hunger, and protect the weak. We respect all countries, and our foreign policy is a very simple one. It is literally embodied in one single phrase: "A thousand friends is not enough, one enemy is too many." We want to be friends with everyone."

Putin: "Russia and China are not forming a new world order, we are just formalizing it. A new world order arises naturally. It's like the sunrise."

Putin listened attentively and could not help but react to Nodim Koteich who said: "The Russian Federation and China are forming a new world order." "I even wrote it down," he told the moderator. — But Russia and China are not forming a new world order, we are just shaping it. A new world order arises naturally. It's like the sunrise. And we ... are clearing the way for this process so that it is more balanced and meets the interests of the vast majority of countries."

Well, since trade turnover within BRICS has already reached a trillion, it means that we are going in the right direction. "My South African colleague said," Putin remarked with a smile, "that vodka supplies to the Republic of South Africa have already started. You know, this is a very right and serious step. Because if you drink vodka, as we say, you have to have something to eat. This will probably be followed by supplies of meat or grain. For example, together with our friends from Bahrain, we are going to create a whole hub for the supply of wheat from Russia. I'm not even talking about hydrocarbons. It goes without saying."

Putin: "The task is not to modernize the old mechanisms of the era of globalization. We need to propose a new model"

"Of course," Koteich agreed, "more vodka will help the world and bring it to a better state!"

"In any case, it will be a more fun world to live in," the Russian president joined in. — This is crystal clear."



Text by Igor Drobyshev
Photos by Igor Drobyshev,
based on material by *Gorodskaya Zebra*

ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND MASHA OF THE BOLSHOI

Alexander Ovechkin was not always Alexander the Great. When I met him in 2003, he was Sasha Ovechkin, a young Dynamo player who overseas scouts were hunting for. They were doing so for a reason, Sasha was the world's most promising young hockey player.
As a journalist, I couldn't miss such a chance. Having realized that this was the future Wayne Gretzky, I had two big interviews with the 18-year-old. One for *the Penguin* the men's magazine that I wrote for at the time. A year later, I came up with an idea for *the Gorodskaya Zebra*: to bring together two young Muscovites who would never meet, unless made to: hockey player Alexander Ovechkin and ballerina Masha Alexandrova.
I saw it coming! 20 years later, Ovechkin broke Gretsky's record, becoming the greatest hockey player ever, and Masha Alexandrova conquered *Bolshoi* as a prima ballerina and is now the rector of the Sevastopol Choreography Academy.

Generally speaking, the idea was even better: Sasha's dad, Mikhail Ovechkin, complained in a tête-á-tête that it was difficult for Sasha to find a good match — he was a catch, and always approached by the "wrong ones."

One day I was watching "Who wants to become a millionaire?" and I saw Masha Alexandrova, a young ballerina. She answered the questions in an offbeat fashion, quite teasingly. I thought she was very smart for her age — she was just 20. What if we introduce her to Sasha Ovechkin and wrote about it? Mikhail Ovechkin immediately fell for the idea of setting-up (Sasha's training schedule allowed no other options). Masha liked the idea too.

Sasha: "Girls surely come up, especially after the match. But you can't help thinking if they want to date you for the person you are, and not because of you scoring."



One winter morning, we drove up to the house where Masha was renting an apartment (it was not far from *Bolshoi*), had her get into the Ovechkins' Land Cruiser and drove her to the studio to meet the photographer.

It was not easy to get such different young people to communicate. In the first few minutes, the conversation doesn't flow. A hockey player and a ballerina are at the back seat of a jeep and barely look at each other. Masha is the first to act. She talks about starring in "Who wants to become a millionaire?" She got some "awful" questions — such as what country wallpaper was invented in.

"But it came as no shock," she says. And adds, obviously jokingly, "Because I'm a lady, and ladies don't have to be very smart."

Sasha liked the young ballerina straight away, so he hints:

"Ladies should be with men of means."

He knows what he's talking about — hockey players earn very well. It pays more to do sports than ballet.

"It never hurts to have some money, for sure," Masha responds neutrally. However, her curiosity outweighs the money:



Masha: "In general, my task is to create an image, to communicate it to the viewer. That's how I score. This is my puck."



"Do you get a lot of girls?"

Sasha is careful, like a goalkeeper who cannot miss a shot:

"Girls surely come up, especially after the match. But you can't help thinking if they want to date you for the person you are, and not because of you scoring."

"What a serious boy, well done," Masha praises.

"And what about you?"

Sasha's pass is a masterful one.

"I'm a flirt, so there are misfires. I find myself in hilarious fixes. Still, you can't mess with me!

"What does that mean?"

Sasha get tense.

"A no is no! I prefer not to play people, I immediately put up a wall."

Mikhail Ovechkin is respectful:

"Well, that's right. You are still young. Aren't you just 20?"

"No," Masha says, surprised. "I'm 26."

Mikhail's silent speaks for itself, and I feel his warm and friendly gaze on me.

"Wow," I say, realizing that there will be no more setting up. How could I have messed up the age part?…

There's a puzzled silence in the Land Cruiser, so I say:

"Masha, you and Sasha share a sport…"

"Which one?" she responds briskly. "Stationary running?"

Everyone laughs.

"No, figure skating."

Both are silent.

"I don't think we have anything in common," Masha shrugs. "I don't skate, and he doesn't do ballet."

Sasha agrees:

“When I watch TV at the base and they show ballet, I switch it off immediately.”

“I'm not interested in hockey either,” Masha replies, but after giving it a proper thought, she adds, “There's one thing we have in common: we both have a partner.”

“I have five of them!” Sasha perks up. “And I can hit the enemy properly.”

Masha looks at him seriously, as if she was a teacher eyeing a mischievous student.

“You can't move suddenly in ballet, it's an art, you can only hit someone by accident. It's all about love.

Masha: “Ballet is not just a job, it is my cross that I must carry with dignity. Family is another cross, and so is love. All these “processions” shape you.”



Sasha thinks about it. Love... In his ballet, the main thing is the puck which he must bring to the gates, to score a goal. This is his task.

“Masha, what is your task in ballet?”

“To stay alive.”

“Are you kidding now?”

“The art of ballet is traumatic, and injuries happen often, because you don’t know how the body will behave. We had a show yesterday. I insured a performer. I came to the theatre hall, and ten minutes in they called me on stage because something happened to the girl's leg, she couldn't stand up in her pointe shoes. It’s like failing to put on one’s skates for you. And me, the way I was, my hair in a ponytail, just a girl from the audience, became an actress in a matter of minutes. The audience did not realize it. The face was different, but the dress was the same. I've heard about this happening many times. But I didn't expect it to happen to me. In general, my task is to create an image, to communicate it to the viewer. That's how I score. This is my puck.

I pick it up:

“That’s Sasha! Scoring the most and becoming the top scorer.

Masha asks:

“What is a “scorer“?”

“The head of the pucks,” Sasha says, pleased. “It's nice to be winning the best snipers' debate. Still, gold for the whole team is worth more than any goalscoring.

“And how many people are there in the team?”

“We are twenty-two.”

“A gold medal for each of you?”

“Yes, one for everyone. They also got to the coaches, to massage therapists, and to the skate sharpening master.”

“The master comes first.” Masha nods understandingly.”

“If you fail to sharpen them thoroughly, the hockey player doesn’t not reach the goal, and neither does the puck. However, we don't have sharpening masters in ballet, there's nothing to sharpen. They make pointe shoes here. We run in them.”

Masha takes her pointe shoes out of her bag and gives them to Sasha. He turns them over in his hands, touches the crooked sock:

“Ah! So that's what your feet are standing on! I thought it was the way your fingers flex.”

“No, no, the lower part is a rigid shoe, and the joints are firmly attached to it. The biggest problem is the toe calluses.”

Sasha shows his hands covered in calluses from his gloves.

“Ballet is not just a job, it is my cross that I must carry with dignity. Man was originally born to carry his cross. These are, to give one example, your parents, because you need to lead them through their life with dignity and to have them leave on their last journey. Then, your family. If you love a person and want to spend your life with them, that's also a cross of yours. All these “processions” shape you. Life is given to us not only so that we can live it. We come here for something. Work is another cross. The Bolshoi Theatre is a great challenge. Many international artists, upon entering this stage, cannot reach its high.

Sasha listens to *Bolshoi* dancer being philosophical with some thoughtful bewilderment. A young guy who has been the ‘number one’ in the NHL draft since the age of 17, can’t relate to this fair of talents and stars-to-be and Masha’s outlook.

Sasha: “There are some traditions we have — young players collect sticks and pucks. Still, we are all equals. A team is a team. It doesn't matter how old you are, as long as you strive for a common goal. Otherwise, it's not a team, but a bunch of egoists.”

“It's too early for me to think about crosses.” Sasha shrugs. “I'm only 18, I’m just beginning to live. There is no peak, it is necessary to be constantly improving. Igor Larionov is one living example: he is Olympic champion, and he’s still playing at 42.

Masha looks surprised:

“When does your career end?”

“Depends on your destiny. The average age is 34. ”

“So, we are to retire at the same age.”

For a few seconds the two young people think about their difficult lives a future to match them. Mikhail, Sasha's dad, tries to





lift their gloomy mood.

"How thin you are, Masha, you probably eat nothing, following the regime. Sasha, on the other hand, is a "gobbler", as the team call him. He packs a whole bag of food for the trip: crips, chocolate, all kinds of water.

"I'm still growing, Sasha explains, "My body digests everything."

"Ninety kilograms of weight," Mikhail adds advertising. "All muscles!"

Masha laughs, failing to answer. Finally, he says, smiling:

"I don't follow any regime. It's a myth that a ballerina doesn't eat anything. If she gets to eat, just hold on! When she's working, she doesn't get any energy from food. To be honest, you don't have the time to eat, but you definitely need to drink because otherwise you get dehydrated."

"There, there," Mikhail shakes his head, paternally. "That's why ballerinas fall on stage. I saw it on TV."

Ovechkin keeps his protective gear. The young Dynamo player looks like Spartacus, a Roman gladiator slave. However, instead of a short sword, he has a long stick in his hands.

"I fell on the stage of the Bolshoi Theater just once, this was quite recently. The thing is, I have a very high jump. I am, so to speak, a "jumping girl." Actually, they have a lot of nicknames for me at the theater. They call me the "*Disney girl*," because I'm so full of life, just like a cartoon. Another one is *Crazy Horse*. Here goes. I danced the Spanish bride in S*wan Lake*, the one who jumps like a clockwork doll for a whole minute and a half. Then suddenly my foot slips. I fall onto my back like a log. In my hands, I have a fan. I lie there and wave it. The audience is shocked. I fell from a height of two meters! I don't even remember jumping up and dancing to the end.

"I had the same thing happen to me recently. I was chasing a player, and he elbowed me right in the nose. I fell down, and they scored a goal."

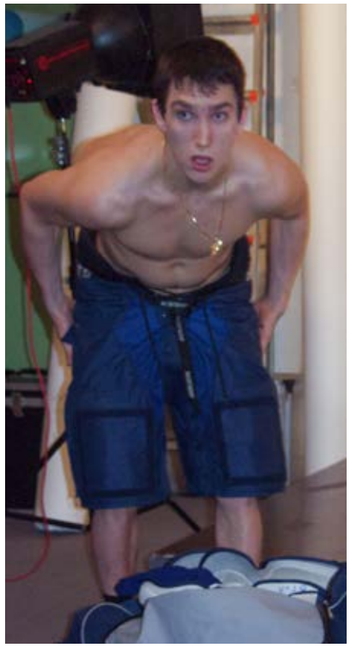
"Did the team scold you?"

"They sure did. In such cases, you come to the bench, and the coach scolds you, the players scold you, you scold yourself. Sometimes I also have these unexplained outbursts. Somehow, for some reason, I started hammering the puck with my hook. It went overboard and fell. The judge was just passing by. I was suspended for delaying the game until the end of the match."

At the same time, one nasty sound engineer played the popular song "Oh you! Poor lamb…" (This is a pun on Sasha's last name, which translates into English as "sheep". — *I.D.*)

Masha laughs.

"It's okay," Sasha says, suppressing his embarrassment. "It's funny, the audience



likes it, and you find it funny, too. Let them laugh, as long as they don't whistle. Don't they whistle at you, Masha?"

"In the theater, especially at a ballet, if the audience mutters just a single word, it's something out of the ordinary. This happens, though. If it is aimed at me, I'll just smile a wider small. What's your team number, Sasha?"

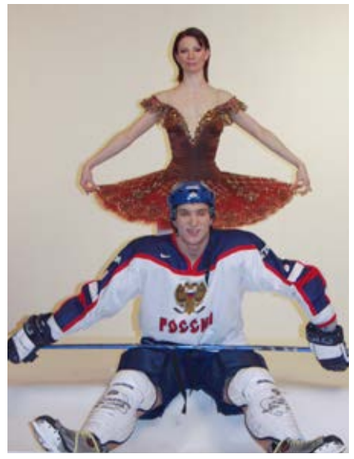
"32."

"Does that mean anything?"

"This is a Dynamo number. In the national team I play number 8."

8 runs in the Ovechkin family. Sasha's mother played it in basketball, winning the Moscow and Montreal Olympics. In ballet, numbers don't mean anything.

Sasha has to go to a training session. This young guy has been NHL's draft number one since the age of 17, with NHL being a fair of talents and stars to be.





Their team is huge. The *Bolshoi Ballet* employs more than two hundred people. You can only stand out if you are a leader.

"I'm a leader," Masha says, "when I'm leading a show. It's my task to keep the audience's energy up. If the audience wants to clap at the end of the performance, then I'm a good leader."

Masha tells us how difficult the path to leadership at *the Bolshoi* is. She graduated from college with honors and won an entrance competition. Then she started all over again, joined the corps de ballet. She started at the bottom and became a leading ballerina.

"What is your next step?" Sasha asks.

"Prima ballerina is the last step."

"How many are there in total?"

"Corps de ballet, aces, soloists (first, second and leading one), and finally, prima ballerinas."

"Is this that what they call you for real? Aces?"

"Yes, they do. And you, Sasha, are an ace in your team?"

"When you get into a team where skilled players play, you're just a kid in a mask."

"I've seen hockey players play without any masks."

"When you turn 18, you become a man and change your iron mask to a plastic one that protects only the upper part of your face. I changed it, and they punched me in the nose four times."

"In ballet, we also change things … For example, you switch from your college to a theater, an adult world."

"Do your elders bully the younger ones?"

"Isn't it commonplace?"

"No, it isn't. There are some traditions we have — young players collect sticks and pucks. Still, we are all equals. A team is a team. It doesn't matter how old you are, as long as you strive for a common goal. Otherwise, it's not a team, but a bunch of egoists."

That's the end of the conversation: we need to speed up. Sasha has to make it to his practice. Mikhail grabs his phone: "We'll be on time!". Masha has a show tomorrow, she spent this week's only day off on shooting.

Sasha keeps his protective gear. He looks like Spartacus, a Roman gladiator slave. However, instead of a short sword, he has a long stick in his hands.

"He's going to stand there with his pants unbuttoned," Masha giggles.

"These aren't pants," Sasha shifts his weight from one skate to another, "but hockey shorts."







Text by **Akorda (the Executive Office of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan), the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia, KazISS and collective data**
Photos **by the Executive Office of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Igor Drobyshev**





ANNIVERSARY GIFT: OPENING OF MGIMO BRANCH IN ASTANA

At the “Sustainable Development and Security in the Eurasian Space conference” which was dedicated to the 80th anniversary of MGIMO the President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, a 1975 graduate, made an important statement: he proposed opening another foreign branch of MGIMO in Astana.



MGIMO remains a breeding ground for highly qualified personnel. "The graduates of our university," Tokayev noted, "include civil servants and public figures, scientists, diplomats, journalists, and entrepreneurs who contribute to addressing the burning issues in politics and economics, science and culture of many countries."

Therefore, the idea of an integral, indivisible Eurasian security can become the conceptual basis of a multipolar, just and sustainable order."

Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev assured MGIMO students that "Kazakhstan is ready to continue contributing to the process of strengthening the integral, indivisible Eurasian security as the conceptual basis of a multipolar, just and sustainable order, implementing a peaceful and balanced foreign policy with strict observance of the purposes and principles of the UN Charter."

Stressing that Kazakhstan and Russia are strategic partners and allies, Tokayev expressed his confidence that in this capacity they "could jointly make a significant contribution to ensuring security and sustainable development in Eurasia.... The International Organization for the Russian Language, created on Kazakhstan's initiative, is intended to further deepen the dialogue and friendship between our peoples."

Tokayev: "Kazakhstan is ready to continue contributing to the process of strengthening the integral, indivisible Eurasian security as the conceptual basis of a multipolar, just and sustainable order"

Speaking about the Russian-Kazakhstani cooperation, Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev noted that "MGIMO graduates continue to make significant contributions to strengthening the Kazakhstani-Russian multifaceted relations through their work, knowledge and experience. Over the past three decades, our countries have built interstate ties based on genuine good neighborliness, alliance, mutual respect and trust."

Education plays a special role in strengthening amiable ties between our



Taking into account the fact that he is the mastermind behind the creation of the International Organization for the Russian Language, the MGIMO delegation went to the capital of Kazakhstan with a special upsurge, feeling a sense of pride in its outstanding graduate. And when the president made this announcement, the audience, consisting of MGIMO graduates and friends of the university, was met with a round of applause.

President Tokayev welcomed "my longtime friends and associates, the talented graduates of our alma mater. I am especially glad that today in the audience we have the representatives of the young generation of international workers who carry on with our good traditions of togetherness and mutual support. Today's event is a tribute to the university's rich history and grand heritage. We also pay tribute to the professionalism and selfless work of the MGIMO faculty."



Tokayev: "I welcome my longtime friends and associates, the talented graduates of our alma mater. Today's event is a tribute to the university's rich history and grand heritage."















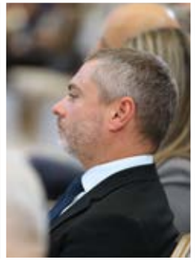












Tokayev: “MGIMO graduates continue to make significant contributions to strengthening the Kazakhstani-Russian multifaceted relations through their work, knowledge and experience.”



















peoples. “More than 60,000 students from Kazakhstan are currently studying in Russia. Our country ranks first by this indicator. Kazakhstani students are also numerous in the USA, Great Britain, Germany, France, China, and Japan. But the largest number of them attend Russian universities. This clearly indicates the continuing demand for Russian education. We are currently working on the mutual opening of joint Kazakh-Russian schools, cultural centers, and universities… Education is a petri dish for mutually beneficial productive cooperation. I am convinced that the MGIMO branch will make a significant contribution to strengthening friendship and partnership between our countries.”

Tokayev suggested that MGIMO create its branch in Astana, and make it one of the best out of all in Kazakhstan

The President then touched upon the “step-by-step implementation” of large-scale reforms aimed at modernizing Kazakhstan. A fundamental innovation of the political reforms was the consolidation of the provision on limiting the presidential mandate to a single seven-year term in the Kazakhstani constitution. “There is no such norm in any country of the so-called post-Soviet space or even beyond its borders. In my opinion, one seven-year presidential term is sufficient for the establishment of the election platform and the implementation of a reform, coming from the fact that a president is still a government official hired by the people, and not a shadow of Allah or an anointed of God. I am convinced that a dictatorship of law and order should reign in our country, as this is the only way to ensure proper conditions for further implementation of reforms, as well as attracting investments into the economy of Kazakhstan. Law and order are the foundation for building a just Kazakhstan.”

Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev once again congratulated everyone on the 80th anniversary of MGIMO. “When we





Torkunov: "MGIMO continues to be an open international university, with the number of international students steadily growing. Today, we have students from 67 countries. I am very pleased to state that the Kazakhstani student community is the largest one."

to make it one of the best out of all the universities here."

Torkunov stressed that MGIMO continues to be an open international university, with the number of international students steadily growing. "Today we have students from 67 countries. I am very pleased to state that the Kazakhstani student community is the largest one and has more than 110 members. In general, since the early 1990s, 630 Kazakhstani citizens have graduated from MGIMO, many of them working in various development fields – the economy, culture, and politics of Kazakhstan."

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Mikhail Galuzin read out the message of the conference of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. In particular, it reads: "Our alma mater has trained hundreds of highly professional international specialists from Kazakhstan. Many of them have made and continue to make an invaluable contribution to the further modernization of their country, and in fact contribute to the strengthening of the Russian-Kazakhstani strategic partnership and alliance."

Once the conference was closed, the representatives of the university and academic community of Moscoe and the participants of the conference attended a show of the masters of arts of Kazakhstan at the Astana Opera. The MGIMO national anthem was performed in a unique concert performance.

say that MGIMO is an international brand, there is no exaggeration here ... Kazakhstani MGIMO graduates play a special role in politics and economy, they make a significant contribution to Kazakhstan's foreign policy and international activities."

Vladimir Medinsky, Assistant to the President of Russia and MGIMO graduate, read out a greeting from Vladimir Putin. It read, inter alia: "The free and informal communication between the representatives of government authorities, scientists, entrepreneurs and public figures of our two countries without a doubt provides a good opportunity to discuss the many aspects of the situation in Eurasia, as well as the various areas of multilateral cooperation and integration cooperation on the continent."

MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov thanked President Tokayev for the initiative to hold the conference and the invitation to Astana. "It's a wonderful city, where we held a brilliant World Alumni Forum a few years ago, this meeting is memorable to everyone, so returning here is like returning to a beloved place."

The Rector thanked the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies (KazISS) and its Director Yerkin Tukumov who co-organized the conference. "It is especially important for MGIMO to get immersed in the atmosphere of the university community of Kazakhstan, because we face the very important task of creating a MGIMO branch in Astana, and we want



“OPEN DOORS” OLYMPIAD

MGIMO University, a member of the Global Universities Association and participant in the Priority 2030 program, actively engaged in the 2024 “Open Doors: Russian Scholarship Project” international Olympiad for graduate students. This Olympiad offers a unique opportunity for talented international applicants from Uzbekistan, China, Colombia, Indonesia, and Ethiopia to pursue postgraduate studies at MGIMO on a fully funded basis, utilizing quotas provided by the Russian Federation government.

The success of the Olympiad is underscored by the seven international students admitted to various postgraduate programs at MGIMO based on their 2024 performances. This demonstrates the program's effectiveness in attracting and supporting exceptional talent from around the globe, aligning with MGIMO's commitment to fostering international collaboration and academic excellence within the framework of the Priority 2030 initiative. The “Open Doors” Olympiad serves as a vital component of MGIMO's strategy to build a diverse and globally competitive student body.

The rigorous competition in the “Open Doors” Olympiad saw *Mateo Rojas Samper*, a young man from Colombia, and *Risolat Tashmatova*, a girl from Uzbekistan, emerged as victors, securing their place in the graduate program. Their experience highlights the competitive selection process and the pathway to postgraduate study at MGIMO for high-achieving international students.

The achievement of participants like *Mateo* and *Risolat* exemplifies the high caliber of international scholars drawn to MGIMO through this prestigious program.

Samper: “I pursue a diplomatic career, which makes MGIMO an ideal choice”



MJ: Which university did you previously graduate from?
Academically, I hold two Master's degrees: one in Politics Economics and Philosophy from the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, and another in the historical analysis of the modern world from the University of Huelva in Spain. Outside of my studies, I enjoy writing poetry and playing the saxophone. I'd describe myself as an optimistic person with a deep desire to understand the complexities and the meaning of life.

MJ: Why did you choose to participate in the “Open Doors” Olympiad?
I saw the Olympiad as a chance to challenge myself and assess my capabilities. Beyond that, the opportunity to study at a leading university tuition-free was incredibly appealing. It opened up exciting new avenues for both my academic pursuits and future career.

MJ: What led you to choose MGIMO for your graduate studies?
My passion for research, coupled with my ambition to pursue a diplomatic career in Colombia, made MGIMO an ideal choice. The postgraduate program offers an unparalleled opportunity to combine rigorous academic pursuits with practical experience in a supportive environment. I particularly value the chance to learn from distinguished professors and collaborate with colleagues who possess extensive knowledge and experience in international relations.

MJ: Why did you select the “International Relations, Global and Regional Studies” specialization?
I've always been fascinated by international politics and global interconnectedness. I believe a thorough understanding of these dynamics is crucial for a successful diplomatic career. The regional focus of the program allows for a deeper understanding of cultural and political contexts—essential for effective international engagement.

MJ: What are your initial impressions of the MGIMO program?
My experience so far has been exceptionally positive. The atmosphere is incredibly stimulating, and I feel strongly supported by both faculty and fellow students. The coursework is engaging and intellectually rich, and the exchange of ideas with my international colleagues is profoundly enriching. Furthermore, the opportunity to work at the Colombian Embassy in Russia allows me to seamlessly integrate theory and practice, furthering my research goals. I'm eager to continue learning and exploring the research opportunities available at MGIMO.



Tashmatova: “An inspiring academic journey at MGIMO unlocks a world of professional possibilities”

MJ: Tell us about yourself and your previous education?
I have been studying economics for nine years now so this discipline has become an integral part of my life. From an early age, I dreamt of studying abroad, which motivated me to actively learn foreign languages and explore scholarships and academic mobility programs.
My journey began with the Türkiye Bursları scholarship program, which gave me the opportunity to pursue my undergraduate studies at Dokuz Eylül University in Izmir. I graduated with honors, and the next step was a Master’s degree at Yıldız Technical University in Istanbul, where I studied economics within the framework of the neoclassical paradigm.
However, after my first year there, my interests shifted toward heterodox schools of economic thought. This led me to join the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master’s Degree EPOG+ program. I had the opportunity to study at the Berlin School of Economics and Law, Sorbonne University, University Paris Cité, and the University of Technology of Compiègne.

MJ: Why did you decide to participate in the “Open Doors” Olympiad?
Participating in the Olympiad was both a professional interest and a personal challenge. This program opened a new, unconventional path into the academic world, and studying in a different country offered the opportunity to see economics from a



fresh perspective. I noticed that methods for studying, analyzing, and predicting economic processes differ from country to country due to various historical and cultural backgrounds, academic traditions, economic policies, and research practices. My goal is to draw on these diverse academic traditions and analytical tools to develop a more comprehensive understanding of economics.
Also, I am particularly interested in analysing Central Asian economies. I think the Russian academia provides an ideal setting for this thanks to the experts who possess deep regional knowledge and a keen understanding of its socio-economic complexities.

MJ: Why MGIMO?
MGIMO enjoys a strong reputation in Uzbekistan, which is home to its first overseas campus, MGIMO-Tashkent. Studying here is not only a logical next step in my academic journey but also an opportunity to develop professionally in a good research environment—learning from leading Russian scholars, taking part in interdisciplinary colloquia, and receiving support for my research activities.

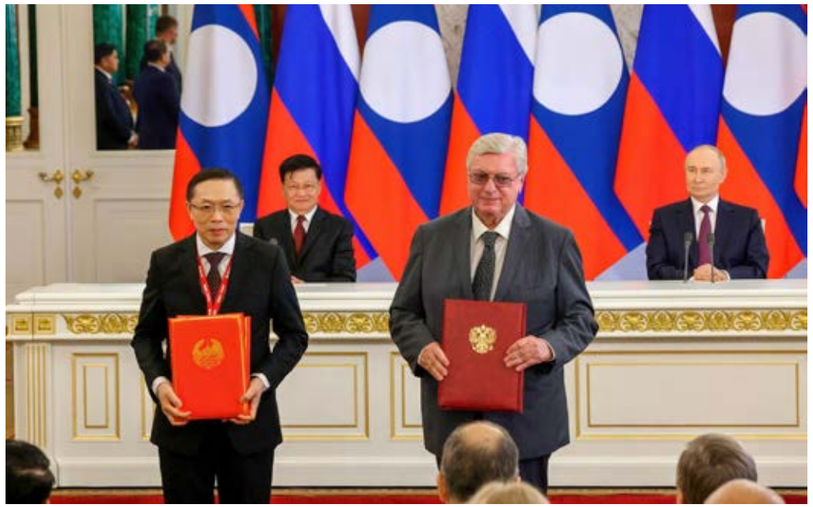
MGIMO enjoys a strong reputation in Uzbekistan, which is home to its first overseas campus, MGIMO-Tashkent.

MJ: Which courses did you find most interesting and useful?
PhD studies at MGIMO differ significantly from my master's experience. With far less coursework, the program initially felt unusual, yet this structure allows greater focus on research. The courses are quite engaging, each contributing valuable knowledge to both academic and professional development. Their primary aim is to build core research skills: formulating research questions, mastering methodologies, designing studies, and preparing as well as publishing academic articles.
The true test of these competencies comes through their application in one's own research, a process steered by the research supervisor, who provides guidance, shares expertise, and supports the development of a meaningful study. Under the supervision of Professor Mikhail Stolbov, I am applying these skills in my research on dollarization.

MJ: What goals have you set for yourself?
My primary goal is to successfully defend my PhD thesis and gain in-depth knowledge in my field. Equally important to me is gaining experience in academic research and teaching, mastering modern research methods, and publishing the results of my study in scientific journals. The next couple of years will help me clarify my future professional goals and prepare for the next step in my career.

MJ: What tips or words of encouragement would you offer to participants of the 'Open Doors" Olympiad?
Believe in yourself and embrace new challenges! Give your all at every stage—and launch an inspiring academic journey at MGIMO that unlocks a world of professional possibilities.

MGIMO News



An exchange of Memoranda of Understanding between MGIMO and the National University of Laos, as well as the Institute of Foreign Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, took place in the Kremlin. The agreements aim to foster expert and academic collaboration between the institutions. The memoranda were exchanged by MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov and H.E. Mr. Siphandone Oybouabouddy, Ambassador of the Lao PDR to the Russian Federation, in the presence of Russian President Vladimir Putin and President of the Lao PDR Thongloun Sisoulith. The memoranda provide for the establishment of regular contacts and collaboration through working visits, scholars and researchers exchange, and expertise and analytics sharing on international and regional issues. Particular emphasis will be placed on the training and professional development of diplomats and government officials in the field of international relations.

A high-level delegation from the Lao PDR headed by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Lao PDR Saleumxay Kommasith, a MGIMO graduate, visited the University. MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov welcomed the delegation. The meeting took place as part of the Lao PDR President Thongloun Sisoulith official visit to Russia. The parties discussed prospects for developing educational and academic cooperation. MGIMO Rector spoke about current areas of the university's work, noting the importance of developing Russia-Laos relations, as well as ASEAN track cooperation as one of the most significant vectors of Russia's foreign policy. Dr. Torkunov highly appreciated the ASEAN Centre activities, which facilitates MGIMO contacts with the Lao side. Rector presented university's new projects, including plans to open a MGIMO branch at Hanoi State University and a MGIMO campus in Astana. He also noted that today MGIMO pays additional attention to research related to digital technologies and artificial intelligence. Deputy Prime Minister, in turn, expressed his highest gratitude to the university leadership for their assistance in training Lao civil servants and diplomatic staff, and commended the quality of teaching, proudly noting that most of the delegation consists of MGIMO graduates of different years. Two MoUs were signed between MGIMO and the National University of Laos, as well as the Institute of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Laos.







MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov welcomed the Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to the Russian Federation, H.E. Mr. Toufik Djouama. During the meeting, the Rector spoke about key areas of MGIMO activities, including MGIMO campuses in Odintsovo, Tashkent, and Astana; the history and substance of MGIMO's relations with leading educational and scientific institutions in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa; and the opportunities available for international students to study at MGIMO. The guest was briefed on the results of the visit by the Russian delegation, which included MGIMO staff, to Algeria, and the Institute's main areas of activity, as well as opportunities for scientific collaboration. In his turn, Ambassador Djouama thanked Rector Torkunov for the comprehensive development of educational and scientific initiatives and proposed signing agreements between MGIMO and leading Algerian universities.







The Ambassador of Brazil, H.E. Mr. Sérgio Rodrigues dos Santos, visited MGIMO. The Ambassador was welcomed by the Rector of MGIMO Anatoly Torkunov. The parties discussed academic cooperation within the BRICS framework, including in the fields of law, the study of the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture, and through the United Nations Association of Russia and the Ibero-American Center. The Brazilian side noted the high level of cultural studies training among MGIMO students and their interest in the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture. In turn, Rector Torkunov proposed to Mr. dos Santos the organization of regular Russian-Brazilian expert meetings on a wide range of issues, including environment protection, climate, digital technologies, finance, and others.

ASEAN Centre staff met with the delegation of the Association for Russian-Lao Socio-Economic Development. The meeting was attended by ASEAN Centre Leading Expert Dr. Victor Sumsky, Deputy Director Dr. Valeria Vershinina, Experts Dr. Nikita Kuklin, Ms. Kira Tabunova, and Ms. Olesia Pokusaeva. The Lao side was represented by the President of Association Ms. Panee Huangphachanh and Deputy Presidents Dr. Siviengphet Phetvorasack and Mr. Naovalath Kikeo. During the meeting, the parties discussed the current state of Russian-Lao relations and exchanged information on upcoming events of the ASEAN Centre and the Association, as well as promising areas of bilateral cooperation. The Association was created to facilitate the communication between Russian and Lao business circles, investors and companies, as well as to promote educational and personnel exchanges.





The Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Seyed Abbas Araghchi, visited MGIMO. His Excellency met with MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov. In his welcome speech, Torkunov emphasized the recent growing interest among MGIMO students in Oriental languages in general and Persian in particular, including studying it as an additional third language. Minister Araghchi and Rector Torkunov discussed prospects for developing cooperation in education, student exchanges, and language internships, as well as organizing dual-degree programs in the energy sector. The Iranian foreign minister noted that studying Russian is a priority for future Iranian diplomats planning to work in Russia and Central Asia. The foreign minister dedicated his lecture to Tehran's foreign policy agenda amidst changing conditions. Minister Araghchi pointed to the convergence of Iran and Russia's stances on many issues of the current international agenda. The foreign minister presented his analysis of prospects for interaction in the energy sphere and emphasized that the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant became a symbol of modern Russia-Iran relations. Prospects for the International North-South Transport Corridor were also mentioned.



MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov welcomed H.E. Mr. Ahmed Abdulrahman Mahmood Ismaeel Alsaati, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The parties discussed prospects for cooperation in the educational sphere and student exchanges and joint master's programs in particular, as well as the participation of students and faculty in major forums and educational events in Russia and Bahrain. Following the meeting, the honored guest delivered a lecture to MGIMO students on the topic "Partnership between Russia and Bahrain in the Modern World: Challenges and Prospects." The speaker outlined the key milestones in the history of relations between the two countries, noting that September 29, 2025, marked the 35th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Bahrain. Special emphasis was put on bilateral contacts in economy and trade, IT and new technologies, medicine and pharmacology, and youth policy. The lecture was held in an open dialogue format, with students actively asking questions, including in Arabic.







Mr. Hamdy Shaaban Abdelhalim Mohammed, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt, visited MGIMO. He was welcomed by MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov. During the meeting the parties discussed the prospects of deepening bilateral cooperation, developing trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian ties. The parties agreed to sign a cooperation agreement between MGIMO and the Institute for Diplomatic Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt. They also reached the agreement on enhancing academic cooperation and exploring the launching of joint network programs, as well as expanding the enrollment of Egyptian citizens in MGIMO pre-university preparatory courses and in its bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs.

MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov met with Rania Mashlab, Head of the Regional Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. The parties discussed the development of cooperation on humanitarian and educational projects, as well as issues regarding human rights protection. R. Mashlab highlighted the successful cooperation with MGIMO within the framework of the BRICS Project Lab implemented by the Student Scientific Society. The International Committee of the Red Cross was also represented by Ruth Hetherington, Head of Humanitarian Affairs Department of the Regional Delegation, and Advisor Meri Petrosian. From the MGIMO side, the meeting was attended by Vice-Rector for Students' Development and International Affairs Stanislav Surovtsev.



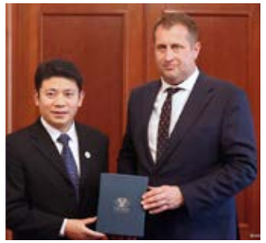
MGIMO and the TV BRICS International Media Network signed a cooperation agreement. The signing took place at MGIMO. The agreement, signed by Rector Anatoly Torkunov and TV BRICS Chairman Ivan Polyakov, provides for increased cooperation in international education, science, and communications, as well as promotion of Russia's image and achievements in the media landscape of BRICS+ countries, and developing their international standing. The partners agreed to jointly develop information projects and organize scientific conferences, seminars, and roundtable discussions, strengthening collaboration between expert and analytical centers of BRICS+ countries. This includes organizing meetings with leading experts and expertise exchange alongside the participation of practitioners in educational and cultural programs at MGIMO. Special attention will be given to promoting the Russian language and Russian education abroad. The TV BRICS International Media Network was established in 2017, following the BRICS summit in Xiamen, China. This initiative, supported by the leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, aims to "establish cooperation in the media sector, including exploring the feasibility of a joint television channel to disseminate objective information regarding BRICS activities." TV BRICS is headquartered in Moscow, Russia. The mission of TV BRICS is to create a unified information space for BRICS and to disseminate objective information on humanitarian and economic activities of the BRICS members and partners.





MGIMO hosted a delegation from the Capital University of Physical Education and Sports (CUPES, PRC), headed by CUPES Vice-President Ding Chuanwei. The guests were welcomed by Vice-Rector Artem Malgin, Director of School of Business Angelika Mirzoeva, and Director of the MGIMO Alumni Association Aleksey Kryukov. During the meeting, the parties discussed the prospects of expanding academic and scientific cooperation, including the launch of joint Master's and MBA programs, academic exchange, joint research projects, and internships. A Memorandum of Understanding between MGIMO and CUPES was signed, which was aimed at fostering partnership in the spheres of education, science, and culture. The document establishes agreements on the creation of joint educational programs, the exchange of students and faculty, as well as the organization of scientific events. The visit marked a continuation of the growing collaboration between the universities. CUPES successfully hosted in Beijing Russian students of the professional retraining program "Global Sport: Legal Regulation, Positioning, Communications," implemented by the MGIMO Center for Sports Diplomacy in cooperation with the Russian Olympians Foundation, commissioned by the Russian Olympic Committee.





A «Meeting with Russian Universities» was held at the Russian Cultural Center in Beijing. MGIMO International Office team, consisting of assistant to the vice-rector Elizaveta Rudenko and senior public relations specialist Daria Chentsova, visited Beijing and took part in «China Education Expo» — major university exhibition attracting prestigious higher schools from all around the globe. In 2025, 300 educational institutions from 38 countries took part in it. The Russian national pavilion under the auspices of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education brought together 20 leading universities and, according to the organizers, was among the most visited ones. The most active visitors to the exhibition received memorable prizes from the new line of MGIMO branded merchandise. Chinese schoolchildren particularly liked the notebooks featuring quotes from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Among the visitors to the MGIMO stand were many students studying the Russian language and interested in the international agenda. Both prospective students and their parents shared their thoughts on the importance of the strategic partnership between Russia and China, as well as the friendship between our peoples.





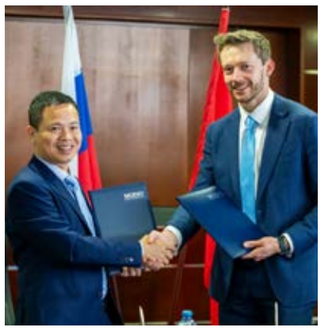


At the MGIMO, a BRICS Festival for schoolchildren was held, bringing together more than 700 pupils. The event was organised with the support of the TV BRICS International Media Network, which acted as co-organizer and international information partner. "MGIMO traditionally plays an important role in strengthening ties between Russia and the BRICS countries by training qualified international specialists. Events such as today's festival help schoolchildren make an informed choice about their future profession and understand that studying the languages and cultures of other countries opens up broad prospects for them," noted Igor Putintsev, a MGIMO Vice-Rector. The festival hosted interactive thematic quizzes, where participants learnt about the activities of the group and the media landscape of the BRICS countries. A Special Representative of TV BRICS spoke about the work of the multilingual newsroom and the promotion of the group's agenda through modern digital formats. The cultural part of the programme featured traditional dances, songs and poetry from the participating countries. MGIMO students performed the Arab dance Dabka, an Indian song in the Assamese language, modern Chinese poetry, and a song. The performances concluded with a Russian dance accompanied by Tchaikovsky music.

A closed meeting was held between the Minister of External Affairs of India, Subramanyam Jaishankar, and the heads of leading Russian research centers and institutes of the Russian Academy of Sciences. MGIMO was represented at the meeting by Dr Maxim Suchkov, Director of the Institute for International Studies. The participants of the discussion spoke on Indian foreign policy issues, the role of Russia, the USA, and China in the modern world, topics related to bilateral relations, and other current issues on the international agenda.



Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Vu, Vice-President and Director of the Institute of Training and Applied Research of Ho Chi Minh City University of Foreign Languages and Information Technology (HUFLIT) paid a visit to MGIMO. Dr. Andrey Baykov, Vice-Rector and Dr. Ekaterina Koldunova, Director of the ASEAN Centre welcomed the guest. The meeting resulted in an MoU signing between MGIMO and HUFLIT. The first step of inter-university collaboration was a joint session within 10th Vietnam Day (April 2024). The session was dedicated to the prospects of cooperation between Vietnam and Russia in science and technology. The MoU will stimulate exchange of experience in using new technologies in teaching foreign languages for students, as well as in other areas of joint interest. The final part of the visit was devoted to a round-table discussion on the pros and cons of using AI in the language training. Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Vu also visited MGIMO Neuromarketing Laboratory and ASEAN Centre.





MGIMO welcomed a delegation from the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations (VUFO) headed by Mr. Dong Huy Cuong, VUFO Vice President. Dr. Ekaterina Koldunova, ASEAN Centre's Director, greeted Vietnamese guests. She told the guests about the ASEAN Centre's activities, its publications and key events devoted to Vietnam. Vietnamese colleagues expressed their readiness to expand cooperation with MGIMO and invited Centre's experts to participate in the 2nd Vietnam-Russia People's Forum to be held in St. Petersburg this year. During the meeting ASEAN Centre's staff also presented opportunities for Vietnamese students and VUFO young personnel to study abroad at the Master Degree Programme "Political Economy of ASEAN-Russia Strategic Partnership".



The 6th Meeting of Network of ASEAN-Russia Think Tanks (NARTT) took place in Vientiane (Lao PDR). The meeting was organized by the Institute of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IFA) jointly with the ASEAN Centre at MGIMO. Representatives from ASEAN countries and Russia discussed key issues of regional security, cooperation in information technology, digitalization, energy security, and humanitarian contacts, and outlined key areas for future cooperation between Russia and ASEAN on these issues. Scholars of think tanks from Brunei, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines participated in the event. During the two-day meeting, Dr. Victor Sumsky, ASEAN Centre's Senior Expert, delivered a report on the prospects for strategic partnership between Russia and ASEAN, while Ms. Olesia Pokusaeva moderated sessions on digital technologies and energy.





MGIMO hosted ASEAN Week – an annual series of events organized by the MGIMO Southeast Asia Students' Club with the support of the ASEAN Centre.
At the opening ceremony of ASEAN Week 2025, MGIMO Vice-Rector Dr. Andrey Baykov, Ambassador of Malaysia to Russia H.E. Cheong Loon Lai, Russia's Permanent Representative to ASEAN H.E. Evgeny Zagaynov, Ambassador of the Philippines to Russia H.E. Igor Bailen, and Deputy Director of the Asia-Pacific Cooperation Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs H.E. Andrey Lyamin addressed the participants with welcoming remarks. A roundtable discussion, "ASEAN 2025-2026: Outcomes of the Malaysia's Chairmanship and Prospects for the Philippines' Chairmanship," was also held. The first day of ASEAN Week concluded with a vibrant cultural evening, featuring creative performances by students from ASEAN countries and students studying Southeast Asian languages. The second day featured an informative expert discussion, "Doing Business in Southeast Asia." The third day's program included a practice-oriented workshop "Being a Russian Journalist in Southeast Asia," by Mr. Evgeny Belenkiy, as well as a Lao tea ceremony by LaosTea master Ms. Daria Biryukova, during which participants learned not only the intricacies of brewing and serving tea but also the different methods of harvesting tea leaves and the influence of geography on the taste of the final product. On the fourth day, a roundtable discussion on "The Legal Foundations of ASEAN" organized in cooperation with the Center for Asian Legal Studies of the MSU School of Law was held. Participants learned about the legal aspects of regulating ASEAN activities. Students from the MSU School of Law also presented their papers at the round-table discussion. The ASEAN Week was concluded with Laos Day, featuring a roundtable discussion on "Luang Prabang as a Leading Urban Tourism Destination in Laos" and a cultural evening of Laos Day, which treated the audience to a multitude of colorful performances from Lao students and students studying the Lao language.





As a part of the VI Russian-Thai Roundtable on Education for Gifted Children, an extended working session took place in MGIMO University, dedicated to sharing experience in teaching mathematics, sciences, engineering, and arts. The event brought together participants in both onsite and online formats. Mr. Sasiwat Wongsinsawat, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Russian Federation, delivered welcoming remarks, highlighting the importance of educational ties between the two countries. Dr. Andrey Baykov, MGIMO Vice-Rector, emphasized the significance of developing academic contacts in the field of training talented youth and spoke about MGIMO's important role in strengthening Russian school education. Dr. Krissanapong Kirtikara, Chairman of the Princess Maha Chakri Award Foundation, shared the experience of Thai educational institutions working with gifted children, and also discussed the history of natural sciences education development in Thailand and the achievements of Thai schoolchildren in this field. Dr. Ekaterina Koldunova, Director of the ASEAN Centre, presented a report on collaborative efforts between Thailand and Russia in social science education.

The ASEAN Centre at MGIMO University celebrated its fifteenth anniversary. The ASEAN Centre was established in 2010 in accordance with the agreements recorded in the Memorandum signed by the then Secretary General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Dr. Surin Pitsuwan and the Rector of MGIMO Prof. Anatoly Torkunov. According to this document, the Centre's mission is to spread information about the ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Partnership, to facilitate development of economic linkages, cultural, scientific and educational exchanges as well as people-to-people contacts between Russia and the ASEAN member countries, to carry out and support research on issues related to ASEAN and its member states.

The Centre has organised more than 30 international conferences attended by politicians, diplomats, researchers and students from all over the world and devoted to various aspects of bilateral and multilateral relations between Russia and the ASEAN countries. The ASEAN Centre organized and was an information partner for 20 exhibitions, including such exhibitions of artworks by artists from the Russian Academy of Arts as "In the Land of the Emerald Buddha," "Expedition Diary," and "All the Colors of Asia." In addition, the ASEAN Centre held more than 15 competitions and give-aways, the winners of which won valuable prizes, namely:



publications of the Centre, and some even received the opportunity to travel to the capitals of Russia and the ASEAN countries. Over the years, the number of monographs, chapters in collective monographs, articles, and conference proceedings authored by the staff of the ASEAN Centre has exceeded 220 publications. The activities of the ASEAN Centre are inextricably linked with the MGIMO student community. Over the past 10 years, the ASEAN Centre has organised over 140 lectures, seminars and workshops by invited speakers from both ASEAN countries and various Russian scientific and political institutions.

The ASEAN Centre and diplomats of the MFA of Thailand's Department of European Affairs conducted a round table discussion focused on the current issues of Southeast Asian and Asia Pacific development. The round table discussions focused on the global transformations' projections in Southeast Asia, Russian foreign policy in Asia and Russia's bilateral relations with key partners, including Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand. Participants concluded that the exchange of opinions took place in a friendly atmosphere and contributed to better understanding of Russia's and Thailand's strategic interests in the international arena.



MGIMO hosted the Indonesia Day jointly organized by the ASEAN Centre and the Embassy of Indonesia in Moscow. The event was dedicated to the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Russia and Indonesia. This year Dr. Sofia Alisjahbana, Rector of the Universitas Bakrie, was a distinguished guest.

Dr. Anatoly Torkunov, MGIMO Rector, welcomed the guests. He noted that University is proud for its Indonesia Studies and the growing number of Indonesians among MGIMO foreign students. The opening ceremony ended up with the exchange of the MoUs between MGIMO and the Universitas Bakrie. Both sides intend to deepen cooperation, promote academic and students exchange and implement joint research projects. Within the Indonesia Day Dr. Sofia Alisjahbana delivered a lecture devoted to the role of educational diplomacy in strengthening cooperation between Indonesia and Russia. During her visit to MGIMO the Rector visited the Museum of Rare Books and MGIMO History Museum. For the first time the academic conference "*Indonesia in the Multipolar World: Regional Leadership, Global Integration and Strategic Partnerships*" included sessions with participation of students and young researchers.



The Indonesia Day ended up with a culture evening prepared by the dance studio "Kirana Nusantara Dance", the Gamelan Dadali Moscow, MGIMO Russian students, majoring in Indonesian language studies and Indonesian students.



The second BRICS+ University Rectors Forum and the Forum of the League of Universities of Brazil, Russia and Belarus took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The forums were hosted by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). More than 150 BRICS+ leading universities representatives took part in the events. MGIMO delegation included Ekaterina Shuvalova, Deputy Vice-Rector, and Prof. Vladimir Shapovalov, Dean of the School of International Business. The forum sessions were dedicated to the linguistic policies of BRICS+ countries, issues of artificial intelligence use, sustainable development, fighting inequality, and formats of cooperation between universities. Shapovalov participated in the session "Cooperation between Russia, Brazil, and Belarus," during which he noted the record increase in trade turnover between Russia and Brazil and emphasized the related need to train specialists competitive in the labor market. A student exchange agreement was signed with the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. A working meeting was held with the University of Campinas (Unicamp), and the cooperation agreement, previously signed online in February earlier this year, was officially handed over. The discussions covered the prospects of student exchange, as well as steps to launch a joint Master's program in Management in English next year. The Brazilian counterparts expressed strong interest in developing academic dialogue on key issues on the international agenda, exchanging students and faculty, and learning best practices in language training.

The President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Burundi, Gélase Daniel Ndabirabe, visited MGIMO. The honored guest was welcomed by Stanislav Surovtsev, a Vice-Rector. The event was organized with the support of the MGIMO International Office and the "Russia — Africa: What's Next?" Youth Forum. During negotiations, the parties discussed the development of relations between MGIMO and universities in Burundi, prospects for cooperation in education and interaction between the youth of both countries. Surovtsev noted that the visit took place at a symbolic time, amid the active Russia-Africa dialogue, which had been reinforced at the 2023 "Russia — Africa" Summit in Saint Petersburg and within ongoing preparations for the 2026 summit. The guest was also briefed on the activities of the "Russia — Africa: What's Next?" forum in forging an equitable and open dialogue between the youth of Russia and African countries. Ndabirabe delivered a lecture to MGIMO students, where he emphasized the importance of studying international relations and languages to strengthen cooperation between countries.

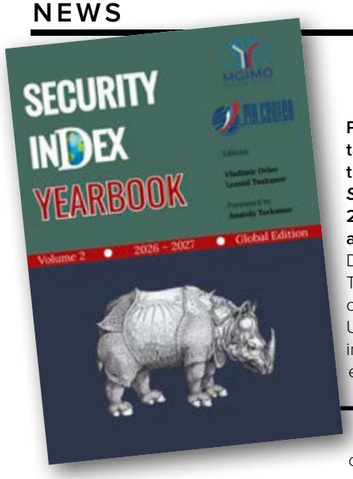




The BRICS Legal Studies School 2025 was hosted at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (Brazil), co-organized by MGIMO International Law School. The summer school gathered professors, graduate and undergraduate students from leading universities of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, as well as a number of countries interested in collaboration with BRICS universities.



The school's academic agenda included a detailed study of the legal systems of the BRICS countries through the lens of comparative law, as well as an examination of the legal positions of BRICS nations on issues such as the legal regulation of artificial intelligence, international trade law, and the legal framework for combating climate change. For MGIMO students, participation in the school was an excellent opportunity to develop professional communication skills in an intercultural environment, including in English and Portuguese, in which their high level of proficiency was noted by the school's organizers. The students also went on an Ouro Preto tour, which is the former capital of Minas Gerais and a UNESCO World Heritage site.



PIR Center, a major think tank based in MGIMO, held the *global premiere* of the *Security Index* Yearbook 2026-2027, a comprehensive analytical product. The Digital Edition of the Volume Two was prepared as part of PIR Center and MGIMO University consortium and includes articles by renowned experts in international security, ministers (such as Belarusian Foreign Minister Maxim Ryzhenkov), deputy ministers (including Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov), ambassadors, and former world leaders. The Yearbook covers a broad range of global security and arms control issues (including international information security and the military application of AI technologies), as well as the dynamics of Russia's relations with key global political powers (China, the United States, leading Middle Eastern powers, etc.). Volume 2 devotes special attention to Africa, examining relations with the region through the lens of high technology and *resource wars*.

MGIMO team took part in the «Study in Russia!» educational exhibition in Astana. The exhibition featured 48 universities from various cities across Russia. Over the course of two days, it was visited by more than 4,000 people. The high level of interest and engagement from attendees confirmed that Russian education remains in high demand among applicants from Kazakhstan. The MGIMO booth served as a focal point for aspiring international relations specialists. University representatives held a series of consultations, informing prospective applicants about educational programs, admission requirements, and the opportunities available to university graduates. Particular interest among applicants and parents was aroused by the educational trajectories «Tourism» and «Business Informatics».





The Fourth Forum of Russia-India Heads of Think Tanks, organized by MGIMO and the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), was held in New Delhi. Welcome address at the opening of the Forum was delivered by Denis Alipov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to India and Mayank Singh, Joint Secretary, Eurasia Division, India's Ministry of External Affairs. Ambassador Alipov highlighted the depth and multifaceted nature of Russian-Indian cooperation based on long-standing friendship, trust, and mutual interest. He emphasized the need to fully realize the potential of the bilateral strategic partnership, which marks its 25th anniversary, and elaborated on its key role as a stabilizing factor in the international arena. The first session of the forum was dedicated to geopolitical turbulence and multipolarity, and the perspectives of Russian and Indian researchers. The second session focused in the analysis of prospects for ensuring stability and prosperity in Eurasia. The third session was dedicated to the Indo-Pacific and maritime security. The experts exchanged views on the future of the Asia-Pacific region and discussed opportunities for cooperation in solving traditional and emerging maritime security challenges.





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