

**MICHELLE
ENGLISH:**

Greetings. I'm Michelle English, and on behalf of the MIT Center for International Studies, welcome you to today's Starr Forum. Before we get started, I'd like to mention that we have many upcoming Starr Forums and events planned. If you haven't already, please sign up to get our email announcements.

In typical fashion, today's talk will conclude with a Q&A with the audience. For those asking questions, please line up behind the mics. And we ask that you can be considerate of time and others who want to ask questions, and limit yourself to just one question. Also, we want to make sure, for time's sake, that no personal statements are made as well, and that you would also please identify yourself and your affiliation before asking your question.

And please note, if you haven't already, that the MIT Press Bookstore is with us today selling *The Compatriots*. If you haven't already, please purchase yours today, and join the authors onstage after the talk to get your book signed. It's 20% off.

Today's Starr Forum is also a part of the Focus on Russia lecture series, co-directed by MIT Professor of History, Elizabeth Wood, and MIT Scholar and Senior Advisor at the MIT Security Studies Program, Carol Saivetz. Dr. Saivetz will be moderating the Q&A, and Professor Wood will be introducing our guest speakers. Please join me now in welcoming Professor Wood to the podium.

[APPLAUSE]

**ELIZABETH
WOOD:**

So I'll be very brief. I first met Andrei Soldatov at a conference on Harvard-- on intelligence at Harvard last year. They were touring this [INAUDIBLE]. I'm very excited. They are long-- Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan are longtime specialists on-- let's call it the dark side of Russian politics.

They are both investigative journalists, specialists in security studies. They have-- co-founders and editors of, again, Agentura.Ru, which is a Russian website on this topic. They've co-authored a number of books, including the one, *The New Nobility-- The Restoration of Russia's Security State, and the Enduring Legacy of the KGB*. It's one of those top reads in the field.

Their second book, also very good, is *The Red Web-- The Struggle Between Russia's Digital Dictators and the New Online Revolutionaries*, and then this most recent book, *The Compatriots-- The Brutal and Chaotic History of Russia's Exiles, Émigrés, and Agents Abroad*. And as Michelle's said, there will be copies for sale at the conclusion of their talk.

So special thanks to Michelle English and Laura Kerwin who organized this, to John Tirman and Richard Samuels for heading up the Center for International Studies and keeping these things going. There's other things that have been on the monitor for talks, so definitely sign up for other Starr Forum talks if you haven't. And without further ado, Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan. Thank you for coming. Let's welcome them.

[APPLAUSE]

**ANDREI
SOLDATOV:**

Thank you very much for having us and for inviting us to talk about our new book. First, I wanted to say a few words, who we are, just to explain things. So we are Moscow-based investigative journalists. We started-- both of us, we started doing journalism almost simultaneously in 1996. And at first, we started with something which is quite normal for newcomers, like reports in the city activities [? summit, ?] city journalism, our crime department. I covered the IT technologists.

But in 1999, we decided to move into the area of Security Services and counter-terrorism for-- basically, for two reasons, because we got the Second Chechen War. And we got terrorist attacks all over the country, including Moscow, and in September '02, apartment bombings we got in Moscow, and also because we got the new president-- because the new leader of the country came in straight from the Russian, and before that, Soviet Security Services, Vladimir Putin.

So in 2000, we decided to launch our website, Agentura.Ru, for-- to be honest, for a very practical reason, because we were extremely young journalists, and we didn't have any sources inside. So we needed to find a way to get sources in the Security Services, and we decided to apply a technological approach. And we decided to model our website on the American example.

There is a great project, Secrecy Project of the Federation of American Scientists run by Steve Aftergood, who is-- he's doing a great job, [? bombards ?] in the US government to be of Freedom of Information Act requests, declassifying things, and actually-- and publishing them

online. We tried to do the same. Very soon, we understood that Russia is not actually the United States. You cannot do that kind of thing.

So we-- actually, we decided to use a traditional journalistic approach. And since 2000, we-- as journalists, we worked for several Russian publications, *Segodnya*, *Izvestia*, *Moscow News*, *Ekho Moskvy*, *Novaya Gazeta*. And we covered several terrorist attacks in Moscow and in Russia, and the hostage-taking of the theater in Moscow in 2002, the hostage-taking of a school in Beslan in 2004. We also covered several wars, including the war in Lebanon in 2006 and the tensions in Gaza in the same year, and in the West Bank.

By 2010, we understood what we wanted to-- to sum up what we actually investigated for-- background for almost 10 years. And we wanted to write a book about the FSB, the Russian Security Services. We understood it was absolutely impossible already in 2010 to get our book published in Russian. So thanks to some help of our friends, which is journalists, and American journalists, [? where ?] helped us to draft a proposal and to find an American publisher.

And since 2010, we've been doing this in a very peculiar manner. So we write our books in English. They first publish them in English in the United States and in UK, and then we wait for a year and a half-- usually it takes a year and a half-- to get our books translated back into Russian. And this is a way for us to get to our audience.

It sounds very crazy. So you are sitting in Moscow. You're a Moscow-based journalist, and you write something in a foreign language, hoping that one day it could get back to your audience, translated into your native language by someone else. But this is a way how we operate these days. And we did in this manner the first book, *The New Nobility*, which was about the FSB, but mostly about domestic operations, though we have several chapters about things like assassinations abroad.

And the second book was about the Kremlin's wars on the internet, *The Red Web*, and it came up in 2015, with the additional chapter we added in 2017. The cover ends, "the US meddle--" oh, it's "the Russian meddling--" excuse me-- "in the US election."

And, finally, we decided two years ago that probably it's time to do a book about-- not about security and not about technology, but about people. And we got the new book about the Russian emigration, about the political component of the Russian emigration. And now, I wanted to give a floor to Irina to explain why we decided to do this book.

[APPLAUSE]

IRINA BOROCHAN: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

And thank you very much for having us here. And I have to say that when we decided to write a new book on the Russian emigration and the Kremlin, it was extremely difficult decision for us because we have been writing for years on Security Services, war zone, politics, conflicts. But we were as far from the emigration as you even could imagine because nobody from our families emigrated-- no-- even including uncles, many aunties, and cousins.

At the same time, the Russian diaspora is the third largest in the world. And Russians fled country in big numbers for more than 100 years. And there was a lot of reasons for that, that the tsars' crazy politics toward Jews, then the Russian Second World War-- then the First World War, then the Russian Revolution, the Second World War, and, of course, anti-Semitic campaign in the Soviet Union.

All these things forced people out of the country. And according to some estimates, a Russian diaspora abroad is, like, 11 million people now. So 11 million people live-- Russians live abroad, and they are all Russian emigrants.

But why we decided to write *The Compatriots*, being so far from the emigration-- it turned out that the '90s was the only decade when Russia didn't have political emigration. And that was that, in the '90s, as Russia got open borders for the first time in its history, and a lot of people started moving abroad. But they started moving in both directions. Most of them were moving out of the country, but some of them, the descendants of the first wave of emigration and the descendants of the second wave of emigration, some of them came back to capture the new opportunities, the new opportunities in capitalist Russian.

So it was happy times. Everybody traveling-- everybody could travel in any direction, but it turned out that when Putin came into power in 2000, he immediately reintroduced political emigration, and even in 2000, he forced the first group of his political opponents out of the countries. It was a group of Russian oligarchs. He started with people who challenged him openly because they, as they were owners of independent, liberal media-- at least independent from the Kremlin.

But simultaneously, as the Kremlin came to see Russian emigrants as a tool for promoting its

influence abroad, and for this purpose, it's create-- as the Kremlin created a concept of Russkiy Mir, or Russian World, which means-- a quite, at the first glance, quite innocent concept as this is-- according to the Kremlin, this is a worldwide community of Russian-speaking people whose identity are closely connected with Russian culture and with Russian history.

So as a result of, we got two things here. Putin has been pushing-- Putin has been pushing his political opponents out of the country for years, and sometimes literally putting them on the plane to have him out of the country. It happened with a Russian oligarch, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who was initially sent to prison for 10 years, and then, because the Olympic-- because of the first common Olympic Games, Putin was put under some kind of pressure from the West. And he wanted to improve his image, and he freed him and literally put him on a plane to expel from the country forever.

But, of course, after that, Khodorkovsky [? didn't-- ?] when it became clear that Khodorkovsky did not stop his political activity-- he didn't stop his political activity, and he didn't stop to challenge on the Kremlin, as these people like Khodorkovsky found out himself in a quite-- a dubious and dangerous position.

As this, once out of Russia, the political exiles start presenting a challenge to the Kremlin, and the Kremlin takes this challenge very seriously. And the Kremlin started using it against the political exiles, all the methods, like intimidation, spying, and even killings and poisoning. And our book will tell a story of young Russian opposition politician Vladimir Kara-Murza, who now lives in Washington.

But he lobbied against the Kremlin extensively, and he was on the Hill, on Senate and on Congress. And he promoted anti-Kremlin-- he promoted an anti-Kremlin sanctions for years, and he's still doing this. He was poisoned twice when he visited Moscow in 2015 and then in 2017. Fortunately, he survived, and he is still active. It's surprising for me, but he is still traveling to Russia.

But when we started our research for the new book, we thought that the modern Russian intelligence was quite different from the KGB of the '80s, and especially from the Stalin Secret Services. But when we finished our research, we came to a very sad conclusion that the Russian modern Intelligence Services, they are still very much like the KGB, as the KGB of the '80s, or like the KGB branch of the '80s. And they unfortunately are still inherited some

methods from the Stalin Security Services.

You know that Stalin's obsession with political emigration was a defining experience for his Intelligence Services, and you know that Stalin's-- once Stalin expelled his biggest political rival, and also a famous Russian revolutionary, Leon Trotsky. And when he found out that Trotsky didn't stop his-- didn't stop fighting against the Kremlin and against Stalin personally, and he working-- he launched even his own media, called [*The ?*] [*Letter ?*] on the *Opposition* where he published the stories of what's really were going on in the Soviet Union, and he criticized Stalin personally.

After Stalin found out all those things, which was absolutely predictable, he tasked many agents in his Intelligence Services to spy on Trotsky and eventually kill him. But after Trotsky's assassination, Stalin did not stop his obsession with his political opponent, and this political emigrant was so huge that he started-- he tasked his Intelligence Service to spy on Trotsky's followers, Trotskyists.

And my favorite example of this is that, in January '41, as the Moscow Central sent a secret cable to the chief of its intelligence station in New York, what we call [RUSSIAN], and urging him to keep on the struggle against Trotskyists. Imagine, as the Second World War already started. France was invaded, and there was only a few months until German invaded-- attacked Russia.

And Stalin was obsessed of his-- these Trotsky supporter, for these Trotsky followers, Trotskyists. And he spent his resources of his Intelligence Service to spy on them. So unfortunately, this experience defined methods of Soviet intelligence, even after Stalin's death. And, unfortunately, it had a big, lasting impact on the modern Russian intelligence.

ANDREI

Thank you, [INAUDIBLE].

SOLDATOV:

[APPLAUSE]

So let me continue here. As Irina described, our book focuses on one particular topic in the very large issue of the Russian emigration, which is extremely large as a political component. And it's-- geographically, we decided to focus on our book mostly by the limits of the United States.

Why? Because I don't doubt that many political organizations saw the Russian emigration from the White emigration of the first wave, to the 1970s and '80s, actually were based in the United States and, in particular, in New York. Of course, some of them started off in Paris and Belgrade and Berlin, but thanks to the war, they moved to United States, including Trotskyists.

And we wanted also to look at how the Americans treated the political organizations of the émigré, what you wanted from them, how they tried to use them, and how successful it was. But we are journalists, and we are talking about modern things, modern-- the situation right now. And it's been [? almost ?] quite ironic, what you have-- two things simultaneously.

On the one hand, you have the Kremlin, Soviet Kremlin and Putin's Kremlin, pushing political opponents or critics of the Kremlin out of the country, and all this claiming that these people poses-- not pose no threat to the political stability in the country. And you can trace this to expulsion of Alexander Solzhenitsyn or, for instance, this example of [? before, ?] Mikhail Khodorkovsky, or Garry Kasparov, who was given a kind of warning, whether it's better not to get back to Russia.

And at the same time, when once these people found themselves in the West, as the Kremlin gets obsessed with the threat posed by these people. And on the surface, you can see that people forced out of the country, for instance, right now, they are not the most popular opposition politicians in the country. And we still have Alexei Navalny in the country, and he travels abroad, but he mostly based in Moscow. And he is much more popular, way more popular than Khodorkovsky or Garry Kasparov or Vladimir Kara-Murza.

So why is that? Why is the Kremlin is so obsessed by the challenge posed by people who lives abroad? And I think that the explanation of this-- if I can call it paranoia-- is that a lot of people inside the Kremlin and Security Services, they believe that a small bunch of political exiles, if given the chance, could get back to Russia and change the political regime exactly as it had happened in 1917 when a small bunch of communists and Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, got back to Russia and destroyed the mighty Russian Empire with probably the most powerful secret police in the world back then.

And, of course, we know that these approaches are completely historical, that [? they have ?] many reasons which contributed to the destruction of the Russian Empire, not to mention the First World War. And we, of course, we know that not only is the Russian Empire was destroyed, but actually four empires were destroyed because of the war. But we are talking

here about perceptions. And these perceptions defines the Kremlin approach to the political emigration.

But we also-- in our book, we tried to look into the real situation, into the reality. And it's interesting that, given the long period of the Russian emigration, the political organizations of the Russian emigration and their activities here could be seen as a textbook of what could be done from abroad if the culture like Russia, and what could not be done, because since the 1920s, Russian emigration tried almost every trick to try to change the situation in Soviet Russia.

Starts in the 1920s, for instance, they sent undercover agents back to Russia to bomb some facilities and to kill some officials. When Bolshevik officials came to the West, they got killed by the agents of the émigré organizations. Then Soviet Army became involved in a military conflict outside the Russian borders, set in Spain. Russian White emigration sent some soldiers and officers to fight them.

When the war started, we got some of the émigré siding with the enemy and helping the Germans to fight the Red Army. After the war, of course, we have the whole range of activities, from espionage to propaganda. They sent balloons through the borders from Austria with leaflets trying to change the public opinion in the Soviet Union and in the Soviet Bloc and Socialist Bloc.

And it's a very sad story, to be honest, because if you try to assess the effectiveness of all these activities for almost 100 years, you can see that almost nothing worked. It was a history of failures. and we actually-- we achieved almost nothing.

And what was really bad, that the Russian emigration became notoriously incapable of building up political organizations which could unite them and to provide a kind of united front to deal with the Soviet Union. They constantly argued and triggered. They staged a walk-out protest when the Americans tried to get them in one place, and to see it, and develop some solutions.

Finally, when we tried to find at least one thing which actually worked, we found it, and it was, when the Russians acted as individuals, [? when ?] their old books-- books was the only thing which actually worked. So when Solzhenitsyn had his novels smuggled to the West, or when you had Svetlana Alliluyeva, Stalin's daughter, come into the West, and then writing her book about her relationship with her father, that had a tremendous impact on the Western public

opinion and perception in the West about what's going on in the Soviet Union. And it was the only thing which actually worked.

But in 1992, one, when the Soviet Union collapsed, of course, many things completely changed. And one thing never-- one hope, which some Americans had, like George Kennan, never actually realized. It was the hope that, if the Soviet regime would collapse, political organizations of the émigrés could get back to Russia and have a say in the political future of the country.

That, unfortunately, never happened. What happened is, though, that some Russian-- some descendants of the Russian émigrés, Russian-Americans, mostly, they decided to come back, not because of political reasons, but because of obvious reasons. They wanted to make money, and there are great opportunities for that.

The interesting thing here is that, back then, in the 1990s, Russia was desperate because the new Russian government needed to solve two big problems. They needed to open two doors. One door was to help to move money out of Russia to the West. And the second door was to help to move money from the West to Russia.

In both cases, Russian-Americans were instrumental to open these doors, and they got many problems, thanks to that. And in a way, Russian-Americans contributed a lot to the situation in 1990s. But the interesting thing here is that you might start with making money, but in Russia, unfortunately, it always ends up with something really political.

So when Putin came to power, and because he is a trained KGB agent, and he [? used ?] to see everything and everybody in terms of potential recruitment, he used these Russian-Americans to achieve something inside the country and outside. And he scored some spectacular successes. For instance, he used Russian-Americans to subordinate the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, based in New York, to Moscow Church. And it was a very spectacular success.

On the way, the Russian-Americans also helped him to secure support from many descendants of the first wave of Russian emigration-- Russian aristocracy, actually. And it was a very interesting phenomenon. Just imagine, you have descendants of the Russian aristocracy, who actually fled-- had fled Russia out of fear of Bolsheviks and [? Chekhov, ?] and then you have a-- descendants now expressing support for a guy who used to be with the KGB, and actually extremely proud of it.

But that's how-- what we have now is a situation. They have lots of people inside of the Russians' communities here are very supportive of Kremlin's activities inside the country and also outside, including the annexation of Crimea.

The last point I wanted to say is, we are getting back to my point about fear. As Irina said, we have now all kinds of methods used against Russians abroad, including poisoning and killings. And it sent a very strong message, intimidation message, not only to people who live in Russia, but also to people who are living outside. And that makes Russians abroad extremely vulnerable.

And given the fact that the Kremlin invested a lot into building networks of compatriots, we need to understand that he and his people actually see the Russians abroad as a huge recruitment base, which is extremely vulnerable right now because, while many people here understand they could be attacked because we had Litvinenko, Skripal, and several other mysterious cases of the Russians who mysteriously died in the West. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Perhaps sitting down.

CAROL SAIVETZ: Thank you so much.

ANDREI Thank you.

SOLDATOV:

CAROL SAIVETZ: So Elizabeth and I thought that we would take the opportunity to open, or to add--

ELIZABETH That was wonderful.

WOOD:

CAROL SAIVETZ: --the prerogatives of the chair-- let's put it that way-- to ask the first couple of questions. Elizabeth, you want to start? And then--

ELIZABETH Sure. I have many questions.

WOOD:

[LAUGHTER]

CAROL SAIVETZ: Just one.

ELIZABETH Yeah, just one.

WOOD:

[LAUGHTER]

I want to start with a light question. You know, recently, there's been a TV series called *The Americans*, and there's also a new movie about Trotsky. And I'm curious whether-- what your reactions are to either of these or any of these. Maybe you haven't seen them, but--

ANDREI Oh, you mean the Russian--

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH The Russian movie--

WOOD:

ANDREI Oh--

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH --of Trotsky.

WOOD:

ANDREI --the Russian movie about Trotsky.

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH Because there's a lot that one could say about that movie.

WOOD:

ANDREI It's on--

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: And you watched it up online-- Netflix?

ELIZABETH I only watched part of it. I was so--

WOOD:

IRINA BOROCHAN: On Netflix?

ELIZABETH Yeah.

WOOD:

ANDREI It's on Netflix for--

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH So it's a pretty good--

WOOD:

ANDREI --everybody. Everybody can watch it. And I urge you to watch it because it's very interesting.

SOLDATOV: The thing is, about two years ago, when we got in 2017, the Kremlin struggled on how to approach and how to react to the centenary of the Russian Revolution because-- so what Putin tries to do, he tries to be a successor to both things.

He wants to be an embodiment of Russian Empire, and also he wants to be a descendant of the Soviet secret police, which is very difficult to, I mean, combine. So as a result, we got very confusing and mixed picture in 2017, and part of it was this TV series. And one thing can be sure on this-- what you understand when you watch this TV series, that Trotsky was, and Lenin, of course, they were agents of the German General Staff long before the First World War started, like, maybe 10 years before.

And, well, it's completely against history because back when Germany and Russia were actually a lot-- and then quite close. But the idea that Communists and Bolsheviks were actually the agents of some hostile foreign power is one of the main ideas of this TV series. And, of course, we understand the message, but political exiles, if they're helped from abroad, they could pose a substantial threat.

ELIZABETH Yeah.

WOOD:

IRINA BOROCHAN: And that's it.

ELIZABETH We could have a long conversation, but let me ask one more serious question. You've mostly been working on what you call political exiles, emigrants who have left. I'm wondering about the connection between business and politics in the West among people who've emigrated.

WOOD:

Obviously, we have the recent arrests of the two gentlemen who were Giuliani's associates. We've been hearing rumors about the possibility of building nuclear power plants around the world, that would be built in part, perhaps, by Russian émigrés. I'm curious whether there's a

comment you want to make about the ways in which Russian émigrés can get caught up in the Kremlin's agenda. Or do you think they're just acting on their own?

CAROL SAIVETZ: And that was actually the question-- you scooped me.

[LAUGHTER]

ELIZABETH Sorry.

WOOD:

CAROL SAIVETZ: But let me ask the question in a slightly different way, and then--

ELIZABETH Go for it.

WOOD:

CAROL SAIVETZ: --you can go back to your response. There has been a lot of speculation in the West that any number of the Russian émigrés who are here are somehow agents of the Kremlin.

ANDREI Of course not, no, no. [? It's a kook-- ?]

SOLDATOV:

CAROL SAIVETZ: No, but they have proven to be useful in what we would-- we might call the Kremlin's objectives. So I wonder-- it's a take on Elizabeth's question, but it's beyond the business. I mean, are they making contact with the Trump campaign, with the Trump administration? I mean, this has really been, of course, our focus here. But is there more of that than we're even aware of, as some of these people have been either pushed out or have moved out of Russia?

IRINA BOROCHAN: Yeah. Because emigrants, many emigrants, try to find themselves between two countries because usually they speak both languages, and they know very well both cultures. And so they-- many of them want to use the situation for their own profit, so, I mean, I think that was the main motivation behind the activity of those two guys, who are now in prison-- who now arrested. And they emigrate-- they're not Russian emigrants. One emigrated from Ukraine, and another one immigrated--

ANDREI Belarus.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: --from Belarus. But I don't think that they really are a part of-- I think that their political motive,

or their motivation behind their activity was of their own greedy and the huge desire to make money. And they got themselves-- they involved into the political situation because they were greedy. And they found out-- they decided this way to use political situation for this, or for their own profit-- that'll be a good way to-- and they would get away with this. So it's not-- [INAUDIBLE]--

ANDREI It's not that a big conspiracy happening.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: --because it's not a big conspiracy, I think, but it's some kind of typical for some kind of emigrants because, you know, we had-- but also have some examples in our book, emigrants of emigrants who tried to use their Russian origin and to make money in Russia. And even they got close to the Putin, where, as they got very supportive of Putin. They got approval from Putin because it's impossible to make big money without the Kremlin's approval. And they made big money in Russia, so once they got-- they got rich.

CAROL SAIVETZ: [? OK, that's it. ?]

IRINA BOROCHAN: Mhm.

ELIZABETH I have another question about the Russian world. I'm curious-- when Putin began to speak
WOOD: about it, do you think he always had in mind that it could be useful? What do you think is the motivation for this discussion of the Russian World? Is it world power-- make Russia bigger? Is it trying to combine the tsarist and the Soviet past, which I think is something very important to him and very difficult. I agree with you. Is it something else? What's--

ANDREI I think--

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH --behind that whole concept for you?

WOOD:

ANDREI --I think it's evolved with time because, as the very first Congress Putin had, the Congress of
SOLDATOV: Compatriots was in 2000. And back then, Putin didn't, for instance, didn't think about the Russians living in neighboring countries. And now, he's using and exploiting of his idea about, we need to protect Russians in, say, Ukraine, or Kazakhstan, and in the Baltics, and for him, is a very big thing.

But back then, 20 years ago-- 19 years ago, he was not ready to use this point. Actually, when he went to this Congress, and he found that it was full of people who came from former Soviet republics, he got so pissed off that he fired the minister in charge of arranging this Congress because he expected to see only people from the West. He wanted to see people from the United States, especially from Europe.

And back then, he was obsessed with the idea of the Russian emigration in France, and, soon, he arranged to move enough-- some of the remnants of a very big name, since the Russian White emigration back to Russia because he wanted-- back then, his main objective was purely domestic, back when he wanted to destroy the idea of the other Russia.

So what does it mean? It means that, back in the Soviet Union-- and I remember it-- I was a kid when Perestroika started. But I remember that, on television, there was a constant talk that-- of course, the Russian society was in big trouble and that almost every institution in the Soviet Union was compromised, including the Church because of Communists and ideology.

But there are some people, some Russians, some intellectuals, aristocrats, some really good people living somewhere, and they present the other Russia. And if they come back, that could help us to build a new democratic Russia. And that was actually the goal of Yeltsin because Yeltsin started this process. He started inviting people from the West, and he wanted to-- them to help to build this new democratic Russia.

Putin saw this as a challenge. And he didn't want any kind of [? five-territory ?] versions. He needed one united Russia with no versions and no draft. That's why he wanted-- that was his idea behind the first Congress of Compatriots. Of course, and also-- again, it gets into the-- to the point about exploitation of the Russians abroad. Remember, back when we had a very famous Russian writer, Eduard Limonov, and--

ELIZABETH

But explain the [INAUDIBLE].

WOOD:

ANDREI

Yes, he was-- actually, he was a Russian émigré. He emigrated to-- first to, I think, to the

SOLDATOV:

United States-- went to France. And he became very famous when he recent-- when he got back to Russia in the 1990s. And also, he launched his own political party-- very nationalistic. Actually, it was called National Bolshevik Party.

It was a kind of-- I don't know-- performance probably for him, but he pursued a very

nationalistic agenda. And he was the first guy to proclaim the idea that we need to protect the Russians abroad by force. They had his famous slogan. We would have our MiGs, meaning fighter jets--

ELIZABETH Jet fighters?

WOOD:

ANDREI --jet fighters in Riga. That was his slogan. And he was put into jail by Putin.

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH For [? extreming. ?]

WOOD:

ANDREI For extremism-- for expressing these kind of ideas. And if you compare his slogans back when, in 2000, with what Putin is saying now, well, there is striking similarity. It's exactly the same language. So Putin evolved with time, and I think he got to the idea-- about this idea of exploitation of the Russian World as we see it now probably after, or maybe right before the annexation of Crimea.

ELIZABETH Mhm, yeah. That makes a great sense.

WOOD:

CAROL SAIVETZ: Well, we don't want to monopolize the conversation up here. Please, if you have questions of our guests, there are mics on either side. There, you have-- please go to the mics. There are mics on either side. Identify yourself, and please just ask a question.

AUDIENCE: Thank you for the lecture. I'm Andrii Roman from Berkshire School in Sheffield, Massachusetts, and I only have one question. What are some of the examples of Kremlin's use of [? soft ?] power or a culture of diplomacy that promotes the idea of Russian world in the United States, specifically?

ANDREI I think that one of the big example is what is going on on the 9th of May. We have his initiative.
SOLDATOV: It's called as Immortal Regiment. It means that on the 9th of May, you have thousands of people march in the streets of Manhattan, but also several other citizens United States holding portraits of the veterans of the Second World War.

And on the surface, it's a very cultural, historical initiative. The idea is to remind-- officially, is idea is to remind Americans that, actually, America should be grateful to the Soviet Union

because we won the war. But the problem here is that it's very nationalistic because there is the symbols we use. For example, they use-- there's a special ribbon [? so-called-- ?] of the [INAUDIBLE]--

ELIZABETH [? Except ?] the old one.

WOOD:

IRINA BOROCHAN: I wouldn't wear it.

ANDREI --a St. George ribbon. It was used by Russian troops in Crimea and Ukraine, and it became a

SOLDATOV: symbol of the Russian military presence in Ukraine. And it's exactly how we now understand--

IRINA BOROCHAN: Regard the symbol.

ANDREI --and regard this symbol in Russia. So this idea of the Immortal Regiment actually is a

SOLDATOV: projection of the Russian view of how Russia should be considered and seen by the world.

That's one of the examples.

AUDIENCE: [RUSSIAN]

IRINA BOROCHAN: Please.

AUDIENCE: Good evening. My name is Vesko Garcevic. I was a former Montenegrin ambassador in NATO, now at Boston University. I have, let's say, two questions, again, about your [? scheme ?] here, but from a slightly different angle. My first question is I would like to see your comments on how Russia uses Orthodox Church to reach out to people in its world, which means in Orthodox world, and in the West, and how it uses her sister churches for the same purpose, for the same goal.

And also, do you see that Russian World, or Russkiy Mir has actually two circles? The first circle refers to Russian-speaking diaspora, and the second circle refers to Orthodox population, Orthodox Slavs, because I see branches of the Russian World as just branches of offices of Russian World, all over the Balkans in Orthodox countries.

IRINA BOROCHAN: Ah, you're absolutely right, that Russkiy Mir, or Russian World, concept here is [? boss-- ?] Russian culture, Russian history, and Orthodox here because it's-- like, it flows through [INAUDIBLE]. And very often, Russian churches abroad is using as a base for cultural activity and some kind of recruitment people who are Russian immigrants for [? finding ?] [? out-- ?]

for promoting, or for promoting the Kremlin's ideology or Kremlin's propaganda or Kremlin's ideas in the European conscience and here in the United States.

But as a concept, why has the Kremlin created the concept of Russian World? Because of-- when Putin-- you know, is that Putin came from the KGB, and, by definition, by his psychology, he is a very suspicious person here. He get used-- he was grown-- or having grown as a person who look at the world as a collection of threats.

So every person should-- because he is a KGB officer, and his youth-- he spent his youth inside the KGB. And he was trained as a Soviet spy, so he-- as if he-- he's [? seeing ?] on the world as a big threat, so every person should be suspicious, and every activity should also-- mostly it's a-- mostly, and it pose as a threat. It can pose as threat.

So, of course, a lot of activities, a lot, or there was organized by the Russian cultural center and also the Orthodox Church, or was organized because Putin look at Russian emigrants as a recruitment base for something-- which is very normal for him, but not very normal for this [? constant ?] because cultural activities shouldn't be like this. It shouldn't be considered as a recruitment base.

**ANDREI
SOLDATOV:**

And I can give you some examples you're asking for. For instance, when I mention it was 9th of the May initiative of as Immortal Regiment, in New York, it's organized by a guy who is, by chance, also as the head of as a youth organization with the Russian Orthodox Church in New York. So you see that connection.

Also, for some of the festivities, I would say, on the 9th of the May, when people, for instance, they put on uniforms, old Soviet uniforms, and march in the woods, the church facilities were used in New Jersey. That's one example. Another one is, for instance, the question of Syria. The Russian Orthodox Church uses the argument that we need to protect Christians in-- our Christians in Syria.

And there were contacts between the Russian Orthodox Church, [? relying ?] on, especially who is in charge of the foreign department of the Moscow Church. Therefore, some of-- with some people in the close circle of Trump because it's such a noble idea if you look at it like, we need to protect Christians in Syria, and why not to talk about it? So this kind of channels, this kind of argument, is used and could be used again.

CAROL SAIVETZ: Next.

AUDIENCE: Thank you. Keith [? Caton-- ?] I recently graduated from the Harvard Kennedy School, and work in renewable energy currently. I'm curious to get your thoughts on the increased adoption of renewables and the decreased dependence on natural resources, and how that will affect Russia's geopolitical influence.

ANDREI All I--

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: Unh--

CAROL SAIVETZ: [LAUGHS]

ANDREI It's a difficult question for us because we are not experts in this field.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: We are not experts of oil and gas also, so it's--

CAROL SAIVETZ: Yeah.

IRINA BOROCHAN: Amazing, [? because ?] it's for the-- for it's all the gold--

AUDIENCE: I got you.

IRINA BOROCHAN: --but--

ANDREI We just don't know. I'm sorry.

SOLDATOV:

[LAUGHTER]

AUDIENCE: It's [? very-- ?]

IRINA BOROCHAN: It's far from our field of expertise. So ask us a question--

AUDIENCE: Thank you.

IRINA BOROCHAN: OK.

CAROL SAIVETZ: OK.

AUDIENCE: Isaac [? Caper-- ?] I'm a student at Northeastern. What about Navalny has made him safe

from political assassination if his compatriots abroad are seemingly less safe, where-- with Skripal as the most notable recent example? Wouldn't he be at more risk since he's in Russia preaching to the domestic arguments for change in Russia?

IRINA BOROCHAN: Navalny.

ELIZABETH The boys--

WOOD:

ANDREI Oh, you mean them. The problem--

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: Inside the country or outside the country?

AUDIENCE: Inside. And Navalny's inside the country, and--

ANDREI Yeah.

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH Why is he safe?

WOOD:

ANDREI He's not safe, actually. He had his brother in prison for years, as you know, and he was only
SOLDATOV: recently released. And now, only himself spent several months, actually, because of the Moscow protest just again recently. But the problem with the Kremlin approach about it, we are not living any more in a totalitarian state, which means that you have strict rules-- what is allowed and what is not.

We live in a much more flexible environment, which means that there are no rules, and we never know actually what is fine and what is not. We have some people in Moscow who are doing things like-- now, I know, we have some very courageous journalists who are exposing various sensitive things, for instance, about the Russian military intelligence and their continued activities from Russia.

And at the same time, we have lots of people who were beaten up or sent to jail for posting some photographs or cartoons online. And the idea of this flexible approach is, when you live in such a murky--

AUDIENCE: [? Parole? ?]

ANDREI --touchy situation--

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: Oh, we don't know where the line is, and now we don't know, so--

ANDREI You need to guess all the time.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: And then they're punished forever, so, and it send you a very strong message, and that put many people in a position when they need to develop self-censorship. People develop self-censorship on posting something controllable. Expression's happening on social networks because [? tons ?] of people are over-punished for posting-- for posting anything critical of the Kremlin on the social networks, but even for some innocent things.

A lot of your [? childhood ?] is developing self-censorship, or writing stories and articles on the Kremlin because that is very difficult to understand. There is a line. There is no rules, so you can be punished for something quite innocent. But you couldn't be-- but they also can get away with very serious things like investigating some things, investigating secret Security Services activities abroad, and inside the country.

AUDIENCE: Thank you.

IRINA BOROCHAN: It's strong message. [LAUGHS]

CAROL SAIVETZ: Yeah. [INAUDIBLE]

AUDIENCE: Dmitry Gorenburg, Davis Center at Harvard. So when people talk about compatriots, usually we think of Russians in the United States, in London, in Western Europe. Is there-- does it reach beyond that? Are there connections in Latin America, Asia, other parts of the world that-- I haven't-- unfortunately, I haven't had a chance to read the book yet. But I'm just curious if there's a reach that goes beyond kind of the usual places that we think of.

ANDREI We decided to focus mostly on the United States, as I said, because most of the political
SOLDATOV: organizations, most of the political activities was based here in the United States. Of course, this topic is extremely big, and you have lots of Russians now living in Ukraine or in the Baltics, and now there are several very interesting things which are-- well, which are happening there. But the book is-- well, you cannot make more than 300 pages. You would be killed by your

publisher.

[LAUGHTER]

AUDIENCE: Yeah, but is there-- I mean, in studying the top, beyond what's in the book, is there-- can you talk a little bit about something-- are there things you know about, you know, Russians in China, or Africa, or whatever? I mean, we saw, you know, this Wagner going-- getting involved in Africa. Are there connections? Are there local connections there? I don't know.

ANDREI SOLDATOV: As far as we know, but I-- we never actually witnessed any activities, prominent activities of the Russians, say, in-- or local Russians based in Australia or Africa. The most interesting examples we have is the Baltics, of course, and Ukraine, Kazakhstan. There you have a lot of interesting things.

And mostly, it's-- well, it's, to me, because we also be surrounded by friends who left the country recently, especially after 2014. And we have many friends, journalists, who decided to leave the country after the annexation of Crimea, and some political activists. And it's mostly about the Baltics and Ukraine.

And, to be honest, it's a very sad story because in these countries, the governments, we are welcome with them, but, they did not-- they're still struggling to find a way to-- to find them a proper use, I would say. And, in a way, it reflects the history. Remember, after the revolution, many Russians decided to stay in the Baltics, and they're not really welcomed there because the local governments have a fear of this presence--

IRINA BOROCHAN: "Russians, Russians."

ANDREI SOLDATOV: --as the Russian threat. And I sort of understand why it was there because the Russian White émigré in these countries were still very imperialistic, and we wanted to group-- again, to get back to this big Russian Empire, which probably was not a great thought for, say, for Estonia-- independent.

But, I mean, now, the Russians, the new Russian emigration are completely-- it's completely different. They are much more Westernized. They don't want to get-- I mean, to recreate the Russian Empire. They are ready to study the local languages. And I think it's one of the-- great, but the opportunities which we are missing right now.

But we still have a chance to create this concept of-- recreate the concept of the rise of Russia

maybe, for instance, to start a university, or to give positions for the Russian intellectuals in some universities in Ukraine, or Estonia, or Lithuania. And that would be a great thing because you would have these alternative for many people who still-- who live in Moscow and feel uncomfortable. But it seems that nobody actually care.

AUDIENCE: Well, thank you.

CAROL SAIVETZ: Please.

AUDIENCE: Hi. My name's Mark [? Montursch. ?] I'm kind of a Cold War-era graduate of West Point, where I had a concentration in Soviet studies. My question goes back to the-- I guess the 1996 election, the re-election campaign by Yeltsin. And I wonder if perhaps supporters of Yeltsin at that time might have overplayed their hand a bit in the West-- in particular, Bill Clinton, the super-cynic might even say, instead of Hillary Clinton and Vladimir Putin having this sort of cat fight. Vladimir Putin should have written her a thank-you note for everything that Bill did to support Boris Yeltsin, which, of course, then ushered in Vladimir Putin.

But my question is, when you think about loans, shares-- loans for shares and some of the other programs, and the outside-- I'll call it participation, but, you know, sort of influence in that election, if maybe that election had gone a different way, that we might be in a different place today.

ANDREI [LAUGHS]

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH Tough.

WOOD:

ANDREI Wow. It's difficult to think what could be done differently. An interesting thing that actually, after
SOLDATOV: these elections in 1996, some Russians-- I mean, some members of the Russian Security Services, they actually tried to do-- they tried to help Clinton in that election. There is a great story in the book written by Robert Baer, a former CIA officer-- probably you know him.

AUDIENCE: Mm-hmm.

ANDREI And it's a great story, how Kazakov made, reportedly--

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: Who was a chief, [? really. ?]

ANDREI --who was the chief of--

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH Security Service.

WOOD:

ANDREI --it was the Security Service of Yeltsin.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: A personal guard-- a personal Yeltsin guard.

ANDREI A personal Praetorian Guard, and how he traveled to Italy and had some strange market

SOLDATOV: meetings with some guys. And actually, he proposed it's like a help, like, well, you help with us-- we are ready to help you. And an officer who was the present at the meeting, he got so scared, he reported this conversation to the Washington, and got scared-- got everybody scared.

So while it sort of reflects that, say, you have-- but in the county with no democratic traditions. And you have a lot of people who are, by definition, extremely adventurous and ready to break any rules, and no matter in Russia or in the West. They just want to get things done, and it could be really, really dangerous.

IRINA BOROCHAN: I met Kazakov last summer, and I asks him all those questions about that 1996 election, which was a very controversial point in Russian history. He did not confirm the stories that they-- just as, did they try to, or just [? thought ?] to interfere into the American election and send money for the Clinton's campaign. But he told me that they-- of course, we should be very critical to this guy because he was expelled by-- he was fired by Yeltsin in 1995. And he's still very angry about this.

But he told me that, as I accept it-- as I accepted money from abroad for the Yeltsin's campaign. And he was personal-- he personally was responsible for that because, as he explained to me, he was the only one honest person in the campaign, and everybody trusted him--

ANDREI Give money.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: --with money. After he had [? collated ?] those as money and spent all of them for the campaign--

CAROL SAIVETZ: He was the one with the suitcase of cash, right?

ANDREI Right, right.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: Yeah.

ANDREI And he was very proud of it.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: He was very proud of it, because it's happened because, I'm the only one honest person, he said.

CAROL SAIVETZ: Great, give it to me.

IRINA BOROCHAN: [LAUGHS]

AUDIENCE: So I enjoyed *The Compatriots*, great book, and for anyone who hasn't read *The New Nobility* yet, I'll plug that one, too.

ANDREI Thank you.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: Thank you.

CAROL SAIVETZ: Please.

AUDIENCE: Hi. David Gamarnik-- I'm a faculty here in Sloan School of Management and also a happy-- a colleague of Elizabeth in the MIT Russia program. First, I wanted to thank you for naming the 11 million figure of Russian speakers. I didn't realize there were so many of us--

[LAUGHTER]

--in the West. But my question perhaps is a bit naive. I understand the methods that you describe that Putin is using, and his team is using, ranging from poisoning to [? parades, ?] and so on. I still am-- I'm still struggling to understanding what are his goals. Why is he doing it? What is he trying to get from us, from Russians and so on?

I can understand the short-term goals of, like, next election and so on, but there's many of the Trump sympathizers among Russians, so that might give some short-term gains. But this sounds like a very expensive expenditure to tap on that many-- not that many people actually, 11 million people. It's not that much. What is his strategic goal for this? I'm sorry if I missed this answer in your previous remarks, but I just wanted to hear you.

**ANDREI
SOLDATOV:**

Yeah, it's-- actually, it's a very good question-- may be part of the answer. And I don't have a full answer, but maybe part of the answer, what Putin always cares about, domestic audience. And for the domestic audience, as the most important thing is Putin has been playing on these feelings for years, is to get back the feeling of-- we lost-- we used to have this superpower. We lost it, and we have this feeling of grievance against the West. And Putin has been really good at playing on this feeling-- but I can get you back. I can give you the sense of our national pride.

And every scandal with the United States, he tried to use to this effect. Remember, with the big scandal with-- there's the Russian illegals in 2010. This story was portrayed as victory in, surprisingly, in two country-- in both countries. And you sort of understand why it was a big victory for FBI because, we caught these guys. But it was--

**ELIZABETH
WOOD:**

Remind the audience about the Anna Chapman and pull the illegals in [INAUDIBLE].

**ANDREI
SOLDATOV:**

Yeah, it's in 2010, FBI investigated and finally arrested 10 Russian illegals. Some of them lived actually here in--

**ELIZABETH
WOOD:**

Cambridge.

**ANDREI
SOLDATOV:**

--in Cambridge. And one of them was, of course, this rat-- had Anna Chapman. And what happened next, there was a swap in the Cold War way, so four people from Russia who were convicted and have either sentence them to several years for spy for the Americans, and they were sent to Britain. And two of them decided to stay in Britain, and the two of them decided to go to and to live here in the United States. And in return, we got all these 10 guys.

So the interesting thing that it was-- this operation and scandal was portrayed as a big victory in Russia, too. These guys were given a red carpet. Anna Chapman was given a TV show.

Some guys were given very good positions in Russian-owned corporations, and then give more. They [? teach them-- ?] give more now, at least one of them.

And the idea is not that these people, they're not really competent. The idea is just to say, look, we are capable of doing this again. We can send out people to United States to be there for years. So we are back. And the same thing actually happened in 2016. You can think, well, actually, the whole thing was exposed. The Kremlin got caught with the hackers. Why they're so happy? And many of them were really happy because it was an idea that you can see Putin in the middle of this big scandal, and he'll look like a [? king-maker ?] in the most powerful country in the world.

So if he can use the Russians abroad to play on the feelings of national pride, of that, we matter, as, the Russians matter-- but you can have Russians marching in Manhattan with these St. George ribbon, and it could be seen as a projection of Russian power, he's extremely happy with that because these could be seen in Russia as in you approve that Putin is good and that he's given us back the sense of, well, of meaning-- well, and gives us a sense of national-- of our identity [? back. ?]

IRINA BOROCHAN: And, of course, there was some real achievement, but the Kremlin-- after Skripal's poisoned, and we found out that a lot of people in Moscow and abroad really got-- got really scared because eventually-- and there's some people, or political emigrants understood that they could be the next victim. And whether you're in London or New York, there is no guarantee for you.

But people inside the country also understood that living in the state which is sending the killers across the world, and this feeling is really scared. And people-- or when people understood that, it got really scared because-- I never did-- a lot of people-- I'm an independent-- liberal people didn't believe that our state have something to do with Iranian state, with Iran. And our methods have something common with-- something common with Ayatollah Khomeini's methods. When they understood, they really [SMACKS LIPS].

ANDREI They were scared.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: That's a really unpleasant feeling to think about this, to understand this.

ANDREI Yeah, it's, like, the climate in Moscow completely changed after that.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: Climate of Moscow after Skripal, after this-- interview of these two military intelligence guy who was exposed by Russian and the--

CAROL SAIVETZ: *Bellingcat*.

IRINA BOROCHAN: --*Bellingcat*-- oh, a Russian's done this number. And the cooperation was *Bellingcat* after they gave this really great interview to RT. People understood who they really were, and they got scared. So that's like--

ANDREI [? Thank ?] you.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: This one-- well--

ELIZABETH This-- I think--

WOOD:

IRINA BOROCHAN: --that's so great that you want to [? impose it on them. ?]

ELIZABETH This Skripal case, I'm curious if you think this is true. It's-- and particular interesting also

WOOD: because they can play it both ways at once. By chance, the trade minister from the Russian embassy in Washington was coming up to Boston just the week that that happened. And he went to great lengths to tell my students that it couldn't have been the Russian government. It was a local production of Novichok and so on.

ANDREI [CHUCKLES] Oh.

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH So it's really interesting that-- I'm curious what you think about this. What's great about this

WOOD: kind of murder is that they simultaneously send two completely contradictory signals. They send a signal, we did it. You know we did it. And, we didn't do it, and we're going to deny it upside-down and sideways. It's an interesting kind of chess--

ANDREI Yes, and it's--

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH --if I have--

WOOD:

ANDREI --extremely--

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH --have understood correctly.

WOOD:

ANDREI --you're absolutely right. It's absolutely-- it's very skillful. But one bit we've been researching
SOLDATOV: for the book, and almost every prominent émigré sooner or later will raise the issue and ask this question about Skripal. And I had a very, very interesting conversation with a guy who was a priest and a financier, which is a strange combination, and he was an instrumental in this operation of uniting two Russian churches.

And as you can imagine, he is a very high-level priest. And he's Russian-American, so he still has his American passport, and so he is absolutely safe, you can imagine, because he helped Putin to achieve his very important goal. And he is highly positioned inside of-- as a church hierarchy.

So he didn't want to talk to me. Finally, I convinced him to meet me. And he started out conversations saying, Andrei, you have very powerful enemies. So he tried to scare me immediately. But after the conversation ended, like, in an hour or two, and, finally, he said, Andrei, you sure have some good sources inside. Please tell me why we decided to kill Skripal, and he was visibly--

ELIZABETH We? Huh.

WOOD:

ANDREI --and he was visibly-- he was anxious. Why, as if it [? has ?] [? been-- ?] or no, not just [?
SOLDATOV: visibly-- ?] why he was kill-- why have they decided to poison him? He was-- because he understood that there was no rules any more. And that's a big problem because, actually, Skripal-- why Skripal was so important here?

We've had some assassinations before, but-- and we have even the law, which actually led the Russian Security Services to kill abroad. It was approved in 2006, and the idea was to kill terrorists abroad. The problem here, that officially Skripal was acquitted by Putin because that was a part of the legal procedure of swap. You cannot be swapped until you are not first acquitted, and he was acquitted.

So there was no legal framework for that. What we have instead, we have some operational reasons. For instance, some people said that probably Skripal was poisoned because he was reactivated by the British, or maybe he was reactivated by the Americans. So he was involved in some intelligence operation. And that's why the Russians decided to send a message to the Americans and the British.

But we are talking here about operational reasons, and you never can know with operational reasons. That's completely murky. And nobody could guess it if you are not inside. And that put so many people in this position only to guess who might be the next. Because if we live in a world where-- and everything is decided according to operational reasons, well, it's quite a dangerous place to be.

CAROL SAIVETZ: Can I just jump in?

ELIZABETH Yeah.

WOOD:

CAROL SAIVETZ: It strikes me from listening to you that it's sort of a two-way street, that on the one hand, the Russkiy Mir, the Russians who are abroad, can be cultivated to promote Russian interests or at least to aggrandize the image of the Russian state. On the other hand, they're seen as enemies.

IRINA BOROCHAN: Yeah. [LAUGHS]

ANDREI Yeah, exactly-- that's when it becomes a book.

SOLDATOV:

CAROL SAIVETZ: And it goes back to the questions that were asked here about where that line is, and as long as you're cheerleading for Russia, you're safe. And, I mean, is that how you might describe it? But if you do-- I mean, some people allege that Skripal was also working with the Czechs in kind of counterintelligence operations and giving away KGB or GRU secrets, and therefore he was assassinated, because Putin kept talking about betrayal.

But Skripal is at one level, but the 11 million sort of average citizens of various countries now, [? or are they ?] operating in a completely different level? So are they assets to be used? Are they just cheering squads? If you're known in Russia, are you much more vulnerable than otherwise?

I mean, what you've described is this sense of-- again, cheerleading is the word that keeps coming to mind-- this idea that somehow Russia is great because of all these people here, and they're our links between these pockets of Russian exiles or Russian, even second generation. Or is it just, when you leave, it depends on when you leave, who you are, what you did, and are you therefore not an asset, but someone to be targeted?

IRINA BOROCHAN: I think that people who are living abroad here are-- in United States or in Europe, they're not-- these immigrants are not vulnerable because there are a lot of them, and in terms of they're not political exiles, and they're not Putin's appointed. So they couldn't be-- I mean, if even they did something bad, they couldn't be-- or they couldn't be, like, [INAUDIBLE], the Russian Security Services because it was there under the United States or Europe in conscious protection. So that is now direct threat for them.

But, psychologically, immigrants always are on some kind of [? age. ?] And so if you're not doing well in the new country, if you are experiencing some financial now and psychological difficulties-- it is a very usual thing for immigrants-- you maybe psychologically wanted to be closer to your former country or country of your origin.

And if-- or there is some kind of activity organized by the Russian state, especially, whether it's that its cultural-- say, its cultural center, and there are some-- you can-- or you may be offered to join to some organizations. Or it can be offered by some possibilities, on maybe-- or some-- a little money for doing some job for them. So this is a position when they can found out as themselves a [? little-- or what ?] [? available. ?] But, of course, everybody can refuse you. It depends on people.

ANDREI To be honest, I don't completely agree with that. [LAUGHS]

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: [? Mhm, no wonder. ?]

ANDREI Actually, the [? bonus ?] we-- when we're writing our books, we have this constant fight.

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH [LAUGHS]

WOOD:

ANDREI It's kind of normal.

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH That's [? astute. ?]

WOOD:

ANDREI [LAUGHS] But I just wanted to add that maybe the one thing I learned while writing about the
SOLDATOV: Russian Security Services for 19 years is that they could be not extremely competent sometimes dealing with real threats, like terrorism or espionage-- sometimes were extremely sloppy when they're conducting their operations.

But what they know, and they know really well, they know how to use fear. And they know how to use fear in the country and outside. And they know how to send a message to people. And they know-- and sometimes you think that, as Irina said, well, formally, legally, no, you cannot be vulnerable. But, well, the Kremlin actually, they knows how to send these message.

IRINA BOROCHAN: Well, you can't-- you disagree with it.

ELIZABETH I want to--

WOOD:

IRINA BOROCHAN: You can-- it just-- have been approached, have been a Russian emigrant, and if you're approached by some guys from the Russia embassy, you can say no.

ANDREI I know. I think it's--

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: You know, it's OK.

ANDREI --yeah, of course, you-- I mean, I think this might be more complicated.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: [LAUGHS] Well, it may be.

ELIZABETH I want to try a different question, but only because no one else has asked any questions. But
WOOD: one of the characters I think you do write about a little bit is Mikhail Lesin, who was Putin's communication director.

ANDREI Minister.

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH Minister.

WOOD:

IRINA BOROCHAN: Yes, ha.

ELIZABETH And-

WOOD:

IRINA BOROCHAN: But yes, minister.

ELIZABETH --went with him to Chechnya on January 1st of 2000, carrying or not carrying the nuclear

WOOD: suitcase-- I've never known-- and was really in Putin's good circle. And then he ends up dead in Washington, DC, in Dupont Circle. What's the story there?

ANDREI SOLDATOV: Oh, it's one of the mysteries right now because there were many rumors that-- but, first of all, I mean, how Lesin had his family here. And probably, you know, his excellence actually [? blew ?] him-- I'm not joking. Really good movie, their favorite, Pitt, *Fury*, about the American tank, Sherman, I think, during the last days of war, how they're fighting, you know, tigers. And, actually, it's great movie. It was produced by Lesin's son. And so his family was well established here.

And some years before his death, he lost his positions in Russia, or he was fired from his company. And he lost his position for presidential advisor, so he was not extremely on good terms with Putin. And then, there was a rumor in Moscow that he moved to the States, and he started cooperating with local law enforcement.

And there was a rumor that probably he was under some sort of protection of FBI. That's why he was put in this hotel. It was never confirmed, actually, but the problem here, that we are now talking about duality again. We are talking about perceptions. And then, if some people in the Kremlin decided that he started cooperating with the FBI, that could be really dangerous for him. But we don't know as a whole-- [? big chance. ?]

IRINA BOROCHAN: Why we don't know, because what the [? facts ?] said to me is that this-- his death in Washington wasn't properly investigated by the American authorities-- it-- still a lot of questions.

CAROL SAIVETZ: Right. Go [? ahead. ?] All right, if there are no other questions, can I ask another question? Going back to your book on cyber and hacking and everything, what is-- I'm trying to figure out

how to ask the question. We know that the Russians hacked the DNC during the 2016 election. We also know that they used bots and other public platforms to promote the outcome we presume they wanted. But some of that was done by Prigozhin and the Internet Research Agency, et cetera.

Do you have a sense of whether it was at Putin's direction, or was the Internet Research Agency doing something because, oh, I know the boss'll like it, and maybe I'll get-- be put in a better position in terms of Russian politics? Do you see it going one way or the other, or--

ANDREI SOLDATOV: I think, first of all, after 2015, especially after 2015, after Putin started selective repressions, and with selective repressions targeted in the country, almost every strata of the Russian society, and we got governors in jail, ministers in jail, and we got FSB generals in jail. So nobody now feels immune.

It was absolutely impossible to do something that important without first consulting with the first-- with the main guy. But the problem here is-- and we are describing this story in the added chapter of *The Red Web*, but we believe that there was a personal history here.

And the personal history is that Putin, for years, he was obsessed with Hillary Clinton. And he got obsessed with her because in 2011, 2012, when we got protest in Moscow, he believed back then that these protests were inspired and instigated by your State Department, and that Hillary Clinton was State Secretary. There was some unfortunate coincidence. For instance, Hillary Clinton, back when he had some advisors on the internet who said that, our social networks are-- was a--

IRINA BOROCHAN: Chicken war.

ANDREI SOLDATOV: --was a chicken war of all days, and you just need to understand about, well, how it could be taken by paranoid Kremlin. Well, you have people close to the State Department, [? 44 ?] State Department, saying openly that social media, American social media, as a tool for revolution. And it was exactly how they, back then, understood this. And what happened in 2016 was-- probably you remember-- there was a big scandal, Panama Papers.

CAROL SAIVETZ: Yes.

ANDREI SOLDATOV: And just, it exposed lots of big names having accounts in offshores. But one of his guys who was exposed was a cellist. And he was--

CAROL SAIVETZ: [? Correcting ?] [? them? ?]

ANDREI --by chance--

SOLDATOV:

ELIZABETH Yep.

WOOD:

ANDREI --a personal friend of Putin. And it turned out that he was in possession of accounts for billions

SOLDATOV: and billions of dollars. And everybody took it as a sign that, actually, he was put in charge of taking care of Putin's personal money. The problem was that, for some reasons, mysterious reasons, Putin was briefed that these operation, Panama Papers, was supervised by the Hillary Clinton people.

CAROL SAIVETZ: Oh.

ANDREI And he was given this kind of brief. And that made him really mad. And he attacked the
SOLDATOV: Panama Papers here openly, which was very unusual for him, here, defending his personal friend. And, actually, two weeks later, we got DCLeaks.com registered. And we believe that was a very important moment for this operation because, of course, the Russian hackers were in the DNC system already in 2015. But, until the spring of 2016, it was a kind of espionage conventional operation. They just collected the information probably for some-- I don't know--

CAROL SAIVETZ: Or for [? months. ?]

ANDREI --so they use-- I don't know is how-- is a way usually spy use this kind of stuff. But after that,
SOLDATOV: there was a decision taken to make it public and to attack Hillary Clinton. It was not that much about Trump. It was all about Hillary Clinton. And believe me, I remember when we-- we were in Moscow when Trump got elected. It was such a big surprise to everybody--

CAROL SAIVETZ: [LAUGHS]

ELIZABETH Ah, yes.

WOOD:

ANDREI --including people in the Kremlin. Nobody actually predicted that. They just wanted to harm
SOLDATOV: Hillary, also because they believed in this crazy idea of a deep state. They actually believe that the whole thing is already predestined and predetermined. But, of course, Hillary Clinton would

be the president. But at least we can try to make her weak and vulnerable. When we got Trump, was a big surprise for everybody.

[LAUGHTER]

ELIZABETH Looks like we have two more questions.

WOOD:

[? **MICHELLE** ?] I've got these. Suzanne.

ENGLISH:

AUDIENCE: Sure. Hi. I'm Suzanne. I'm a first-year PhD student in the MIT Political Science Department. I sort of have an odd question, which is that, the classical narrative is that Putin's world view is formed by his time in the KGB.

But I guess if we actually think a little bit about the positions that he held in Dresden and then in St. Petersburg, he wasn't in Berlin. He wasn't in Moscow. He wasn't at the center, but he was kind of off on the periphery. So the conclusion might be that he wasn't necessarily a very celebrated or successful intelligence officer.

ANDREI That's right.

SOLDATOV:

AUDIENCE: Right? So how do you think it changes your world view if you're formed by an organization in which you're not excelling, versus if he had been excelling?

ANDREI Interesting question. It's a good question. I think--

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: And, too, that's a lot of question. It's, like, [? holding ?] off too much-- is that [? hard? ?]

ANDREI No, no. It's about how he's got [INAUDIBLE] defined, but he was not actually that successful

SOLDATOV: inside of the KGB. I--

IRINA BOROCHAN: Someone must've [? found ?] he was successful [? in all that. ?]

ANDREI No, he was-- see, he was not-- yeah, you're right. He wasn't extremely successful. He had

SOLDATOV: some friends, like Sergei Ivanov, who was much more successful. He was a KGB general, and Putin was just a colonel. I think it's a big problem for him, was that he was-- actually, he never-

- it's difficult to say if, in terms of his intelligence training, but usually it means that you get this [? provisional ?] mentality. You don't actually understand how things-- you don't understand there's a decision-making process.

And also, the problem was-- you rightly pointed out, that he was not present in Berlin when the wall fall, and he was not present in Moscow when we got Perestroika, or we got 1991. It means that he actually-- he saw these events from outside. He didn't understand, I think, about freedom of press. He, actually, he missed everything in Moscow.

When he came back to Russia and the Soviet Union in 1990, he was struck by what he got. I mean, you left the country when everything was under strict government control. And you get back, and you have freedom of press, and everybody talking about Stalin's crimes and about Yeltsin, and he didn't understand this mechanism.

And I think it was very unfortunate for-- I mean, for Russian citizens because it made him extremely-- he didn't understand, actually, and still doesn't understand what actually happened in 1991. And just imagine how important it is. You have the mighty Soviet Empire. We have this great, cherished by him, KGB, which was the most powerful, the most intelligence intelligence agency in the world.

And all of a sudden, it just-- what? Collapsed? How it could collapse? Why all these KGB people who actually are-- well, we claimed that we would protect this, the political regime, until the last blood of a-- the last-- I don't know-- well, until death. Why they didn't do that?

AUDIENCE: No.

IRINA BOROCHAN: [? Enconce. ?]

ANDREI There should be some conspiracy here.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: We just [? caught ?] this many times, and we came to conclusion that Putin very often overreacted to the events and to the threats in the world. And that's-- and his overreaction partly on [? one of ?] [? them, ?] mostly explained, but that he didn't understand why it's Soviet Union collapse and what happened in 1991.

He still believe that there was a conspiracy against the Soviet Union, and this conspiracy was organized by the Foreign Intelligence Service, and mostly by the CIA, because that's why he's

so crazy about the United States. And he and his-- and the people, and his close circle still believes that the CIA is the most powerful power in the world. And it's explain his overreaction to many things.

ANDREI SOLDATOV: It's especially when you look, for instance, at the Moscow protests right now. Of course, normal people understand, but if you have the political stability in the country, and you have all this regime, why not to let people, I mean, protest? And at the height of the protest, how many people have you got? 60,000 people-- I mean, it's nothing. We have 15 million people living only in Moscow. So it's a tiny bit of the population of the capital of the country.

But he cannot let this happen because he doesn't know what could trigger the political change. It starts with what? With 100 people, 1,000 people, with 10,000 people? He doesn't know. That's why he always try to suppress 100% of the street protests.

[? MICHELLE ENGLISH: ?] Can we fit in one last question?

ELIZABETH WOOD: Yeah, one last-- please.

[? MICHELLE ENGLISH: ?] A quick question?

AUDIENCE: My question has to do with the journalists in Russia. You mentioned that-- I think you said after Russia annexed Crimea, that a lot of journalists left at that point?

ANDREI SOLDATOV: Yeah, that's right.

AUDIENCE: I would have assumed that journalists would leave Russia because they're afraid for their safety. But if they left at that point, is that the reason? And my second question is, do the two of you-- you mentioned that your priest-financier said, Andrei, you're in danger. Do the two of you feel that you're actually in danger?

IRINA BOROCHAN: No. People left after annexation in Crimea because the rules has changed, and that it's getting- and it's getting worse and worse every year. But that's-- I don't want to be so pessimistic because we have still a lot of independent, liberal journalists, and also many are independent, thinking people who are not afraid of expressing critics of the Kremlin. So, and

there's journalists that are still working on their-- after annexations-- before annexations of Crimea--

ANDREI The Crimea.

SOLDATOV:

IRINA BOROCHAN: --we had-- before annexation of Crimea, we had just maybe a few-- several journalists, investigative journalists in Moscow because investigation was extremely dangerous for journalists. But after annexation of Crimea, I don't know why, but for some reasons, we had several teams of independent investigative journalists who really exposed and are still exposing extremely important things. It's corruption. That's Security Services activities. That's what's going on in the Russian region.

So let me be a little bit optimistic because of-- because they still can't-- because they're still doing something. And what they're doing is very important for the Russian audience. So not all of people, or not all of journalists are frightened, and not all of opposition politicians are [? truly as they ?] say, but they're frightened to some extent, but it's done. It doesn't prevent them from continue the activity and from opposing to the Kremlin.

CAROL SAIVETZ: Well, maybe on that optimistic note, we should thank our speakers.

IRINA BOROCHAN: Yes.

ELIZABETH Yes.

WOOD:

ANDREI And thank you.

SOLDATOV:

[APPLAUSE]

IRINA BOROCHAN: Thank you.

ELIZABETH Thank you for this. Thank you so much.

WOOD:

CAROL SAIVETZ: And just to remind you, there are books--