

Letter From the Editors: Dec. 19-31, 2016

Goodbye for Now: The Most Memorable Moments of 2016.

As 2016 draws to a close, most will agree that it was a year with more than its fair share of shocks, surprises and plot twists. Before the final curtain descends on this turbulent year, here are the seven most memorable events of 2016, in no particular order:

Brexit. – Despite most expert predictions, UK citizens voted in June to leave the European Union. According to Vladislav Inozemtsev, continental Europe’s hysterical reaction to the UK’s possible withdrawal was partly to blame: “It’s hard to shake the idea that this hype about the importance of the moment turned out to be an additional factor that swayed the vote.”

President Trump. – Not to be outdone, Britain’s former subjects pulled a stunt of their own in November, electing billionaire reality show host Donald Trump the 45th president of the United States. Once again, most polls got it wrong. But political expert Fyodor Lukyanov has a few words of advice for Mr. Trump: “You promised to ‘make America great again,’ and apparently your view of [a great America] is something like the ‘good old’ ’50s, when America was the winner in a terrible and just war; had authority; but had not yet learned political correctness. You won’t be able to return there, just as your opponent could not return to the ‘golden age’ of her husband, Bill [Clinton].”

Arrest of Aleksei Ulyukayev. – The now-former economic development minister’s arrest on corruption charges came like a shot out of the blue: Not even his boss, Prime Minister Medvedev, saw it coming. Many experts saw the shadow of Rosneft CEO Sechin behind the brouhaha.

Savchenko flies home. – Ukraine’s celebrity pilot convicted in Russia for the murders of two Russian journalists was exchanged for two Russian soldiers captured in Ukraine, arriving home on May 25. The Moscow Times predicted that Savchenko’s prickly personality will now become a thorn in the Kiev regime’s side. That prediction proved correct – last we heard, the Batkivshchina [Fatherland] party, which she joined, was working to expel her.

Navalny for president – or for prison? – Opposition activist Aleksei Navalny announced he is going to run in the 2018 presidential election. The announcement came after Russia’s Supreme Court overturned his earlier conviction for embezzling funds from the KirovLes timber company. But according to Tatyana Stanovaya, the Kremlin has crossed the invisible red line where anything goes, so the temptation to “squash [Navalny] like a bug” is stronger than ever.

All not quiet in Montenegro. – Before it was accused of meddling in the US presidential election, Russia was implicated in an alleged coup attempt in Montenegro. According to the Montenegrin authorities, a group of Russian nationals planned to start a protest rally against the supposedly rigged parliamentary elections, set off a riot and even allegedly kill the prime minister. It’s the stuff John le Carré novels are made of.

Murder of Russian ambassador to Turkey. – In a shocking conclusion to an already tumultuous year, Russian Ambassador Andrei Karlov was shot eight times at point-blank range by a Turkish security official on Dec. 19. The killer’s shout of “This is for Aleppo!” leaves not a shadow of a doubt that the consequences of Russia’s operation in Syria are starting to catch up with it.

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