

Wanted: Extras

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Beria looks out from the middle of Red Square in a photo, staring straight at the camera as if he would like nothing better than to star in a cheap Russian comedy or appear at a children's birthday party.

Lavrenty, otherwise known as Levon, looks as if he has been over-egging on the khachapuri, but he has a bald head and wears glasses — which seems to be about the most you can expect on the web site,

<http://massovki.ru>.

The site is divided into different sections, one of which is for non-Slavic males, where men show off their dusky, pale and dark features and boast about the various nationalities they can play before being riddled with bullets by spetsnaz special-forces commandos at the end of the movie.

Sergei “can look like an Armenian, Italian, etc.,” while Manu grudgingly writes that he can be “a Turk, or, well, an Arab.” One budding extra simply writes that his mother told him that his

father was Uzbek.

Beria was in the doubles section along with some people who looked like the kind of stars even their agents wouldn't recognize. The twins section had one pair of twins, who didn't look like each other, nor were the same height. Both their names did start with a "D" though.

I was once part of a massovka event for a Pepsi ad, which was so bad that it was only ever shown in South America. The pay back then — and this was when dentists still thought that Pepsi could be used as mouthwash — was still more than you get now for sitting in the audience of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire."

The viewers — who do not, according to the ad on Stunner.ru, either look like former heads of the security services or members of one of the multiple strings of this country's ethnic diversity quilt — get paid 400 rubles (\$13).

I suspect that the reason the viewers get paid is because that allows the producers an element of control over them. The program once had a problem in the first season when the audience kept on deliberately getting the question wrong when asked by the contestant. If they had renamed the program "Who Do You Want Not to Be a Millionaire?" it would have been far more popular.

Another ad asked whether anyone wants to be made over by Olga Buzova, a star from reality show Dom-2, whom Russia will one day pay for in the International Crimes Court.

As for Beria — who, if it weren't for Benny Hill, would have completely destroyed the bald-man-with-crappy-glasses look forever — there is interest.

One hundred and seventy-three people have checked him out so far.

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