

Royal Wedding Can't Compete With the Dacha

By [Nikolaus von Twickel](#)

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Well-wishers celebrating the wedding of Prince William and Kate outside London's Buckingham Palace on Friday. **Oli Scarff**

When the bells tolled for Prince William and Kate Middleton in London last Friday, many Muscovites were stuck in huge traffic jams out of the capital for the start of the traditional dacha season.

Yes, the "wedding of the century" was covered by state television, including even the Defense Ministry's Svezda channel, but Channel One aired its five-minute report only toward the end of its evening news, which was led with a raid against insurgents in the North Caucasus.

Kommersant, one of the country's few dailies published on Saturdays, did not carry any news of the event in its weekend edition. Most other newspapers only came out Tuesday because Monday was a public holiday.

The media's apparent lack of interest might be explained by the absence of a clear national angle to the event — whose only official Russian guest was Russia's ambassador to Britain, Alexander Yakovenko.

Heads of state, including President Dmitry Medvedev, were not invited because the groom is only second in line to the throne after his father, Prince Charles.

Instead, Medvedev [wished](#) the newlyweds in a telegram that "peace, joy and harmony" would always reign in their family. He also sent them a traditional Russian lacquer box with a 19th-century winter landscape of Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral, the Kremlin said on its web site.

And even though William of Wales, who adopted the title Duke of Cambridge on Friday, has thick Russian blue blood running in his veins, there were no direct representatives of the Romanov family at the wedding.

Grand Duchess Maria Vladimirovna, who styles herself as the heir to the imperial throne and is both the great-great granddaughter of Tsar Alexander II and Queen Victoria, merely sent a congratulatory letter.

Her spokesman Alexander Zakatov said last week that while the Romanovs and Windsors enjoy close family ties, the Russian imperial house does not attend state-level events in Britain "due to the specific historical relations" between the two countries after 1917, Interfax reported.

On the Internet, however, a fair number of Russians expressed joy and even envy for the British monarchy.

The British Embassy [asked](#) users to comment on the wedding on its Facebook page, collecting some 90 entries by Monday that ranged from enthusiastic to eccentric.

Karina Nikoforova from Tula wrote, "Dear Prince William and Princess Catherine, may you be happy, healthy and wealthy!" while one Ilya Abramov from Yekaterinburg posted, "I am raising up ze glass of Russian vodka for the happiness of the Royal Couple."

Yekaterina Vinokurova, a reporter with Gazeta.ru, said the wedding paralyzed the work of the news site's politics desk Friday. "We watched the ceremony with pleasure and interest instead of writing about political intrigues and corruption," she wrote, adding that she and her colleagues regretted that they were not assigned to cover the wedding "because of the absence of politics in it."

Er.ru, the official site of United Russia, the country's dominant political party, churned out a 750-word [feature](#) on the wedding that said Friday's roadblocks in London prevented self-exiled businessman Yevgeny Chichvarkin from getting to his yacht and Boris Berezovsky, another self-exiled businessman, from reaching his office.

Perhaps the most remarkable publication came from Alexander Baunov, a -turned- journalist who called for the reestablishment of the Russian monarchy. In a somewhat ironic blog post on Slon.ru, he argued that this would restore quality to the country's high society, which he lamented, is made up of "flabby State Duma deputies, voiceless singers and graduates of the

'Dom-2' reality TV show."

Having said that, Baunov [suggested](#) seating William's younger brother, Harry, on the Kremlin throne because of his Romanov ties. "Let him receive parades, make visits and give dinners and New Year's congratulations," he wrote. This will give Russians "delight like never before" while relieving both Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin from the unnecessary burdens of symbolism, enabling them to "work quietly and rotate when their turn comes," Baunov wrote.

Experts believe that restoring the Russian monarchy is hardly possible. A [survey](#) by state pollster VTsIOM found in 2006 that just 10 percent consider this to be a pressing issue.

Yevgeny Gontmakher, one of the country's leading sociologists, said the monarchy remains largely discredited among Russians. "If anything, it is present in the minds of the majority who want a strong presidency — a kind of hidden monarchy," he said Monday.

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