

Russians and Zombies Beyond the Headlines

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The  **Moscow Times**

In response to “Zombie Russia,” a column by Richard Lourie on May 23.

Editor,

I am an American editor who has worked closely with [Russia Beyond the Headlines](#), a media project produced by Rossiiskaya Gazeta that maintains a news web site and publishes foreign-language newspaper supplements. I thought Richard Lourie’s opinion piece titled “Zombie Russia” was slapdash and egregiously unfair.✘

I have had the great✘pleasure to work with some excellent international and Russian journalists who contribute to and edit Russia Beyond the Headlines,✘so I am writing this letter on their behalf.

There was one clumsily edited sentence about bin Laden that shouldn’t have

appeared. Otherwise, Lourie was displeased by the Western-pleasing openness of the debut issue in The New York Times.

If Lourie had done his research, he would have known that his stories have been republished in Russia Beyond the Headlines. Does this mean that he is also a tool of the Kremlin?

Russia Beyond the Headlines gets state funding just like the BBC, Deutsche Welle and Radio Free Europe. The goal of the service is to tell great stories about Russia. Yes, the editors have gone out of their way to create a climate of open conversation and debate with diverse views. The idea that this openness is a devious plot by the Russian state to deceive the world about the problems within the Russian government strikes me as a little, well, conspiratorial. Lourie should know that most of our writers are experienced, independent journalists.

I am writing this for the young editors burning the midnight oil in the Moscow office and every independent freelancer who has done a well-written story for Russia Beyond the Headlines on topics as diverse as the Khimki forest controversy, closed cities, opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, the Yandex initial public offering and expatriate life. The service's opinion writers offer views and analysis from a wide range on the political spectrum.

In one feature on Russia Beyond the Headlines titled "From Oil Tycoon to Imprisoned Muse," an independent reporter explored the fact that former Yukos CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky has become an inspiration to artists and the subject of film. Lourie saw this story, including a quote from writer Boris Akunin, as more proof of the elaborate Kremlin plot.

This is zombie thinking on deadline. The only thing Lourie can accuse Russia Beyond the Headlines of is being passionate about Russia.

*Nora Fitzgerald
Washington*

The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.

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