ANTHONY BOURDAIN PARTS UNKNOWN

Parts Unknown: Russia

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UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Beautiful, right? we can already indulge ourselves into something special, such a beautiful day.

ANTHONY BOURDAIN, CNN HOST: Pony ride.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Absolutely. Now we are coming to your most beautiful fascination side of Russian legacy, the birches, the forest of birch.

Ah, what a place.

(MUSIC)

BOURDAIN (voice-over): All hail, the maximum leader. Now let's dance.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: OK. Thank you.

(MUSIC)

BOURDAIN: Whatever you think of this guy, his dead, affectless eyes, his smooth pulled tight like a snare drum face, he ain't going anywhere. Look at him. He's the Russian superman, the KGB middle manager desk jockey turned expression of Greater Russia's hopes and dreams.

He lets no opportunity to take his shirt off pass him by. Pose with a large gun, he's there. And no matter how transparently autocratic, vengeful, oblivious to even a thin veneer of democracy, Russians love him. They seen to feel about him like New Yorkers used to feel about Giuliani. He may be a son of a bitch, but he's our son of bitch.

It's February 2014, and the Sochi Olympics are just coming up when I arrive in Moscow. It's a different Moscow every time I come here. The '80s style go-go capitalist conspicuous consumption see who can spend the most money disco-techno thing that I encountered when I first came here back in 2001, it's still going strong. In fact, these days, Moscow has one of the highest concentrations of billionaires in the world. But as never before, its imperial Russia now, a one-man rule. All power emanates, every decision must consider, this guy.

(MUSIC)

BOURDAIN: Russia is full of characters with murky pasts and shadowy connections. But one of them I've called a friend for more than a decade.

ZAMIR GOTTA: Tony! wow.

BOURDAIN (on camera): I guess I'm switching to vodka. Zamir.

Now, my concern is back in the day, this place was famous for all of the rooms were bugged.

GOTTA: Not anymore, I'm sorry.

BOURDAIN: Oh, really? I'm really sorry about that.

GOTTA: Times change.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Poor Zamir, my long-time crony, he tries at least to be diplomatic about these things. I mean, he's got to live here, right? He doesn't want plusic (ph) acid on his blintzes.

Home

GOTTA: Listen, as a born Moscowite, I'm trying to be a good patron. So I really want you to tell me, frankly, in a week from now, Zamir, now I understand why stereotypes sometimes send a bad message about Russia.

BOURDAIN: I have an open mind. Everything's great. Russians have everything they want.

GOTTA: Listen. Why don't we just taste the vodka.

Oh, thank you. The most gorgeous women are in Russia. Welcome to Russia.

I'm trying to be kind of sober. United we stand.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I prepared the special for you. Russian tapas. Especially good (ph) for drinking with small pancakes like blinis and caviar. Lots of cucumber with honey. This is Baltic sprouts. Smoky (INAUDIBLE) with beet root, and this one is (INAUDIBLE), this is a white fish frozen with smolten (ph) salt and a little bit pepper and you can eat your own.

BOURDAIN: Thank you, sir. I'm hitting the caviar and the blini. Oy- yoy-yoy.

GOTTA: Maybe some more vodka.

BOURDAIN: Thank you.

GOTTA: And your smile makes it feel like it's water.

What do you think? What is the perception of Mr. Putin these days, after 14 years he's in power?

BOURDAIN: My perception? You really want to hear it? GOTTA: I'm not sure, but let's see.

BOURDAIN: A former midlevel manager in a large corporation, short -- I think that's very important, short -- who has found himself master of the universe. And like a lot of short people, if you piss them off, bad things happen to you. He likes to take his shirt off a lot.

GOTTA: Let's be serious.

BOURDAIN: He strikes me as a businessman.

GOTTA: He is.

BOURDAIN: A businessman with an ego. OK. So he's like Donald Trump but shorter.

GOTTA: I think my friend needs some kind of booze. To you, comrade. Like this, you know.

BOURDAIN: You can have that one. I'll get the other two.

GOTTA: I'm serious about your one week stay in Russia. I want you to enjoy every minute of it. I hope you'll get something new, positive, to learn and share around the world. That's my mission.

(MUSIC)

(SHOUTING)

GOTTA: OK, Tony, so new experience, right, being part of the opposition rally.

BOURDAIN: This is nothing new for me. Blows against the empire. Speed fight (ph) the man. That's me. I go

BOURDAIN: Yep.

GOTTA: So you are well prepared. It is physical and brutal today.

BOURDAIN: I don't know. If that dog was aiming for my nut sack, my day as a dissident will be over quickly.

(voice-over): There is opposition to Putin but it's a mixed bag.

(SHOUTING)

BOURDAIN: If you do see a demonstration like this one, it is with permission along a planned route, carefully managed, and the cops and security tend to outnumber the demonstrators.

GOTTA: The main topic of this rally is to support the political prisoners. Last May when they came to protest against Putin's re- election, which allegedly was also rigged. BOURDAIN (on camera): The election results were, shall we say, dubious.

GOTTA: Some of them were arrested and put in prison and some of them are still there.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Divide and conquer? well, look who showed up today. Everybody from human rights activists to ultra right-wing nationalists who think Putin has been too soft.

(on camera): Putin is not right wing enough for them.

GOTTA: No. He's like a liberal to them. He doesn't refuse immigrant workers.

BOURDAIN: Right. I'm sort of kind of shocked that these guys are at the same demonstration.

GOTTA: Russians are not united against one political agenda.

BOURDAIN: The only thing that's uniting this group is general unhappiness with Putin.

GOTTA: That's it.

(MUSIC)

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Bad things seem to happen to critics of Vladimir Putin. Journalists, activists, even powerful oligarchs once seemingly untouchable, are now fair game if they displease the leader.

(on camera): So we were supposed to be dining at another restaurant this evening and when they heard that you would be joining me, we were uninvited. Should I be concerned about having dinner with you?

BORIS NEMTSOV, FMR. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF RUSSIA: This is a country of corruption. And if you have business, you are in a very unsafe situation. Everybody can press you and destroy your business. That's it. This is a system.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Meet Boris Nemtsov. He was deputy prime minister under Yeltsin and today is one of Putin's most vocal critics.

This restaurant was kind enough to take us in, but the chef is a Brit so maybe he has less reason to worry.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: First course, gentlemen?

BOURDAIN: At Yornik restaurant, they are serving their own versions of dino-era Russian classics. A modern

Home

(on camera): Critics of the government, critics of Putin, bad things seem to happen to them.

NEMTSOV: Yes. Unfortunately, existing power represent what I say Russia of 19th century, not of 21st.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Critics of Putin, beware. Oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky accused Putin of corruption and wound up spending ten years in prison and labor camps. Alexander Litvinenko accused state security services of organizing a coup to put Putin in power. He was poisoned by a lethal dose of radioactive polonium. And Viktor Yushchenko, the former Ukrainian president, poisoned, disfigured and nearly killed by a toxic dose of dioxin.

I'm not saying official Russian bodies had anything to do with it, but it's mighty suspicious.

(on camera): I don't think you need to be a conspiracy theorist to say whoever did this very much wanted everyone to know who done it. Everybody understands.

NEMTSOV: Yes, of course.

BOURDAIN: And everybody is meant to understand.

NEMTSOV: Yes, everybody understands. Everybody understands everything in this country.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): When you're talking classic conspiracy theories and classically Russian style paranoia, you want some classic Russian food to go along with it. Pelmini, minced meat dumplings served on a pillow of cabbage with sour cream.

(on camera): Mm, very good. Maybe the most extreme and visible example of how things seem to work here is the Sochi Olympics.

NEMTSOV: If you look at the map of Russian Federation, it's difficult to find a sport without knowing the (INAUDIBLE), but Putin did.

BOURDAIN: It seems like a pretty obvious question, if you wanted to hold a winter Olympics in Miami, presumably someone would say isn't it a little warm there?

NEMTSOV: This is absolutely personal Putin project. They spent more than $50 billion of dollars, which is the most expensive Games in the history of mankind.

BOURDAIN: $26,000 a seat for the curling stadium? To build?

GOTTA: Per seat.

NEMTSOV: (INAUDIBLE) road from Adler to Krasnaya Polyana, which is 30 miles, price for that, $9 billion U.S. This is a road, right? It's three times expensive than American program flying to Mars.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): And who got many of those contracts for the roads and stadiums and infrastructure? Well, there's these guys. Putin's childhood friends and judo partners, the Rottenburg brothers, whose companie received contracts worth upwards of $7 billion. And Putin's associate of 20 years, Vladimir Yakunin, who own the state railroads. His company received $10 billion worth of contracts. NEMTSOV: It's very easy to imagine what's happened with this money.

BOURDAIN (on camera): Right.

(voice-over): And you know who cares in Russia? Just about no one.

(on camera): And here's -- this is a case of the Litvinenko case, a known enemy of Putin stricken with a bout o

BOURDAIN: Yes. You're a pain in the ass.

NEMTSOV: Tony, I was born here 54 years ago. This is my country. The Russian people are in bit of trouble. Russian court doesn't work. Russian education decline every year. I believe that Russia has a chance to be free. Has a chance. It's difficult but we must do it.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BOURDAIN: America, yes. All of Russia's eyes are upon you. Bring honor to your clan.

GOTTA: You know what, America, I will break you. I will break you. (SINGING IN RUSSIAN)

Forget about it. I'll bury you. I'll revoke your visa! No! Russia doesn't surrender!

BOURDAIN (singing): O'er the land of the free.

GOTTA: Just missed it, buddy. That was pretty close.

BOURDAIN: I was actually out here all last night practicing.

GOTTA: You must be kidding.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): While Zamir contemplates a suddenly grimmer future thanks to me, I head out to Rublevka, a compound of luxury homes outside Moscow, to meet Alexander Lebedev. At one time, Alexander was doing great. Former officer of the intelligence services, like Putin, turned billionaire. He owned pieces of Russia's most powerful energy companies, airlines and banks, and still publishes the Novaya Gazeta, one of the only opposition newspapers left in Russia.

But running a newspaper that's been harshly critical of the ruler has cost him. He's been stripped of nearly everything.

(on camera): It can be a dangerous thing to do investigative journalism in this country. Your own paper, what, five journalists, six lost their lives?

ALEXANDER LEBEDEV, PUBLISHER, NOVAY GAZETA: Yes. Probably the biggest number because there was no war in this country. So in peaceful times, to lose six journalists killed is quite a lot.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Six journalists murdered, one paper. Presumably for their reporting on political corruption or human rights abuse. Though pointing a finger directly at the government is impossible, one can say that the climate here is such that what you say can certainly get you killed.

(on camera): You have at various stages made life difficult for yourself. Business was very good for you, and then you had to have an opinion.

LEBEDEV: When you interact with the local bureaucracies and judicial system, it still leaves a lot to be desired, let's put it this way.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Lebedev is now a potato farmer.

LEBEDEV: That's my production. That's my potato.

BOURDAIN: The biggest producer in Russia, true, but his billions are gone. He now lives the life of a mere millionaire.

(voice-over): Some freshly made potato chips that Levedev is very proud of. And his personal chef prepares Scottish salmon, smoked on cherry tree sawdust, served with avocado.

(on-camera): Mm. That was very good.

(voice-over): Lately, he is getting into slow food.

LEBEDEV: This is cold pressed cedar tree in Siberia.

BOURDAIN (on camera): Cedar oil?

LEBEDEV: From coal (ph), from the cedar coal (ph).

BOURDAIN (voice-over): But he has not slowed down his profile or kept his mouth shut. Recently, in a Russian talk show, he got in an argument over the financial crisis with another guest, a heated argument. He ended up smacking the guy.

(on camera): I saw the incident on television that got you in trouble. I found it very refreshing, actually, I think it's something that political discourse could use more of.

(voice-over): The government took the opportunity to charge him with politically motivated hooliganism, a charge that could have resulted in a penalty of five years in prison. He is instead been convicted of battery. He is working off his sentence painting fences and shoveling snow.

LEBEDEV: I mean, sitting on a bench and expecting to spend the next five years in prison with two small kids it's not always, you know, very nice. But the guy said something very bad. He said those who don't have a billion, go (EXPLETIVE) themselves.

BOURDAIN: Though his victim did not register an official complaint, the message I think was clear.

LEBEDEV: The charges were pressed by the Russian state, which is pretty funny because this is a private accusation.

BOURDAIN (on camera): It's dangerous, very dangerous, to criticize or investigate or speculate. Why? Why do you care?

LEBEDEV: Do you really think you can defeat it? No. So why do it? I hope. Hopefully, reason will prevail.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

PRODUCER (text): We're getting a couple audio hits. We just need to change the channel.

TRAVIS LINK, MANAGER, LUNA: It's the KGB. They're blocking your signal.

PRODUCER: I think they're listening to it.

LINK: I'm sure that they are, believe it or not. I'm quite sure you've had someone on your tail the entire time you've been here.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): What's rock and roll supposed to be about other than cars and girls and aggression? About dissent. About rebellion, right? In Russia, where everything is supposed to be just fine, that can be a dangerous position.

Travis Link is an ex-pat American who manages this band, Luna. Ruben Kazarian is Luna's guitarist and song

elections, democracy, courts, but always doesn't work as it should. So that prevents right now in Russia to speak freely. Formally nothing but in reality, a lot of things.

BOURDAIN (on camera): Let's talk about MTV. "Rebel Music" as I understand it was an MTV music series whose fundamental principle was to celebrate bands who say difficult things in environments where there might be repercussions. And as I understand it, your band was chosen for one of seven episodes.

LINK: Correct.

BOURDAIN: And, in fact, one of your songs was used as the title track for the series.

LINK: So I get a letter from the producer and essentially it says because of political pressure, the Russia episode has been removed from the "Rebel Music" series.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): According to the producer, MTV Russia pushed back on the content, she presumes because of the negative impact it would have on them and their ability to do business on a day-to-day basis in Russia. MTV's official reason for removing Luna from the series is that they simply did not have enough time to air all the stories they filmed.

LINK: This was a documentary series about musicians standing up, and risking their lives in some cases, to stand up against government abuse of power, government corruption, and yet a foreign government was able to editorially control what American viewers see on their TV screens. That to me is a scandal of epic proportion. This entire documentary's gone.

BOURDAIN: Luna's song is the title track to the series, but their episode never happened.

(on camera): The rest of Russia is very, very different than Moscow. I mean, here, you drive around, it's like Bentley, Ferrari, Maserati. You go to buy a pair of shoes, you pick up a Bentley on the way out. You tour a lot in Russia. What do you see?

KAZARIAN: We see a lot of problems. We see the level of believing is very low. There is something in music that unites everybody. It's something beyond politics. There's certain energy and this energy is the same in every country, in every city. We have rock music, we have common people. We're like you.

(MUSIC)

GOTTA: I'm going to the hometown of President Putin. St. Petersburg. He was born there, started his career.

BOURDAIN (voice-over0: The night train to St. Petersburg is one of the great fun things to do in Russia. Roll on great steel wheels through the night, through dark forests of birch and snow. Out there in the dark, visible for a second or two at a time, the real Russia, the one most Russians live in.

GOTTA: So Tony, time to enjoy life.

BOURDAIN (on-camera): The gentle chicken meat.

GOTTA: I need something gentle, Tony.

BOURDAIN: Your seat cushion (ph) and ratatouille.

May I propose a toast? To gentle chicken meats.

(voice-over): Pro tip. If the word gentle is used on a menu, avoid those items and stick to the classics, like blin with caviar and cold pickled herring and potatoes and solyanka, the soup of sturgeon, salmon, olives and lemon.

GOTTA: Well, officially, they say free but if you want to get operation within a month, and you can't wait, you won't get it because long line of those. BOURDAIN: How about education?

GOTTA: Up to the high school, it's still great. The quality's not best as it used to be. People used to get a lot of things for free. Now it's coming to an end.

BOURDAIN: You asked for capitalism, you got it, buddy. According to Reaganomics it's the trickle-down theory. That means if I make lots and lots and lots and lots of money, money will somehow trickle down to you. You know, my masseur, my garage attendant, my aerobic therapist. They of course will be making money I will be buying more things for various wives and prostitutes. In this way, I don't exactly share the wealth, but I trickle it down and if you don't like your job --

GOTTA: What can you do then?

BOURDAIN: Mopping my feces-splattered walls, cleaning up my dead prostitutes, you can leave your job at Wal-Mart and become a billionaire like me. Or you go on a reality show and become really, really rich. Doing nothing. It's fantastic.

GOTTA: Tony, I'm convinced. I think you know what you are doing in life, man.

BOURDAIN: Did you put on your jammies?

GOTTA: Uh-huh.

BOURDAIN: I just want to state for the record, just because you are in the top bunk, that's no indication of any relationship that we may or may not have.

GOTTA: You and me have to be very careful in public. If we bring up subject like this, there could be some different repercussions. Tolerance never existed in Russia. That's why when just recently people started to come out in Russia, like lesbians and gays, they were either fired from their jobs or were given like hard time to exist.

BOURDAIN: But what about Tchaikovsky?

GOTTA: They try not to acknowledge it by saying he was a great musician, so --

BOURDAIN: He was a great musician who liked to have sex with other men.

GOTTA: That's what people are not meant to learn in school.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BOURDAIN: And that's the former palace?

GOTTA: You remember what happened in October of 1917?

BOURDAIN: Everybody came charging through, charged up the states and looted the Winter Palace.

GOTTA: And (INAUDIBLE) before the judge of government (ph) had to put on his female outfit to escape the revolutionary peasants.

BOURDAIN: That wouldn't go over well these days.

GOTTA: Right. Not anymore.

promoting homosexual propaganda to minors, but which could be interpreted any way the authorities choose.

(on camera): What's happening here? What's going on?

XENA ROBREK, ARTIST & FILMMAKER: Oh, my god. I don't know what's going on. Every day, I ask myself what's going on, what's going on.

BOURDAIN: Do you have to be afraid?

ROBREK: No. I have nothing to lose. So I can be myself. I'm nobody in social system and I am independent (ph).

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Artist and film maker Xena Robrek is a brave young woman. She's openly gay. Lately, the actual hunting of gay people has been documented -- violent skinhead gangs who contact gay men and women online, arrange meetings under false pretenses, then violently ambush them. There have been very few prosecutions.

DASHA, TRANSLATOR: You can get killed for this.

BOURDAIN: Our local fixer, Dasha, helps translate.

DASHA: She had a situation once where the skinheads attacked her on the street. Not only once.

BOURDAIN (on camera): This new law prohibits propaganda?

ROBREK: Amongst minors. (SPEAKING RUSSIAN)

DASHA: It's like the anti-Soviet propaganda, you can go to jail for anything.

BOURDAIN: It means whatever they want it to mean.

DASHA: Yes. We -- how many gay families we have, with kids, and those people are in maximum stress right now because their families might be hooligans.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): We rightly see this as outrageous. The Russian public, however, it's very likely a vote-getter. A cynical pandering to a powerful and enduring vein of deep-seated homophobia that goes way, way back. (on camera): What do you think the source of this hatred is?

ROBREK: It's not about Russian or the church. It's about political structure. It's about power. We have two Russias.

BOURDAIN: OK. What are they?

DASHA: Big like big bear. Not very sophisticated but it's an instincts country.

BOURDAIN: OK

DASHA: And the other side is the country of intelligent people, thoughtful people.

BOURDAIN: A lot of these political leaders, are they using the issue of gay rights to appeal to a larger audience?

ROBREK: They try to play with bear.

(LAUGHTER)

ROBREK: Yes.

BOURDAIN: Are you hopeful?

DASHA: It's about responsibility. We should never give up.

(MUSIC)

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Farm to table, in Russia? Organic? Local? Why, yes. There are those who are trying. Sergey Shnurov is a very popular musician and leader of the band Leningrad. Leningrad was banned in Moscow purportedly for promoting alcoholism.

(on camera): Cheers.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: (SPEAKING RUSSIAN)

BOURDAIN (voice-over): This is Sergey's wife, Matilda. Together they have opened this restaurant, Cococo, with the mission to bring genuinely local, quality Russian food to diners.

MATILDA SHNUROVA: We opened this restaurant one year ago which will work only with local farmers and we are the first to do it.

BOURDAIN (on camera): In all of Russia.

SHNUROVA: Yes, in all of Russia.

Traditional combination, rye bread and Russian fish.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Chef Igor Grishechkin's version of sushi. Instead of rice, more traditional Russian black bread with sprouts, mackerel, cod liver and salmon caviar. Old school, but looks new school.

(on camera): When I first came here 2001, the best restaurant in Moscow was a nightmare of French, Japanese ingredients, recipes from nowhere.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Everyone hated Russia, wanted to be someone else.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Pearl barley, lightly smoked raw beef topped with quail egg.

(voice-over): Very interesting combination. Very nice. What's the most popular thing? What do people want?

SHNUROVA: The most popular is Italian-Japanese cuisine. And karaoke.

(LAUGHTER)

BOURDAIN (on camera): Sounds like a nightmare.

SHNUROVA: Cheers.

BOURDAIN (on camera): That was good.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Before Putin, before Gorbachev, Khruschev, Stalin and Lenin, there was this. Imperial Russia. Mighty palaces spread across the empire where the very, very few lived in unimaginable

BOURDAIN (voice-over): While their people worked and starved.

(on camera): Didn't work out so well for Paul, did it?

GOTTA: Not really.

BOURDAIN: They choked the dude to death, right?

GOTTA: Actually strangled with a piece of cord.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): The czars of previous centuries were certainly living the good life. Money no objec when it came to personal comfort or luxurious lodgings. And today's imperial powers seem not far behind. Putin allegedly had a billion dollar palace built for him. We couldn't license the actual smuggled photo, but ou artist rendering looks like this.

A Putin spokesman dismissed all this, telling "The New York Times," "We have Congress halls built for the Kremlin but if you call all of them Putin's palace, it is nothing but absurd."

(on-camera): Vodka. Haven't tasted that before. So what would I be doing on my outing if I were a czar, looking for cool arts (ph) to oppress?

GOTTA: Something, enjoying life.

BOURDAIN: Picking up some good speed here.

GOTTA: Oh, OK.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Some suggested that Russia is, after all this time, coming full circle -- a tiny, tiny minority in possession of nearly unlimited power and wealth.

(on camera): The idea of running up the steps and disemboweling royals, I can easily imagine myself doing that. It would not take much convincing.

GOTTA: Wow. That's a pleasant surprise.

BOURDAIN: I would hurl them all into the sea tomorrow.

(voice-over): After the revolution, in a blood-forced strategy designed to even things out, the government seized private residences, dividing them into little pieces and portioning them out to the masses who were swarming in from the countryside to serve the new industrialized Soviet Union.

(on camera): I never had any ideas of growing up in a socialist wonderland. Like when I was a brief period when I was a hippie and the idea of living in a commune, not attractive to me.

GOTTA: I was born in a communal flat with three other families, sharing one john, one kitchen.

BOURDAIN: No way.

GOTTA: They would hit me when I had no food.

BOURDAIN: No way. I share my toilet with no man.

(MUSIC)

this communal apartment. An arrangement basically unchanged since Soviet times.

URI: Just in case you change your mind --

BOURDAIN: And it's here that I see for the first time a glimpse of my friends in the years mysterious past, growing up in a home just like this one.

GOTTA: In Russia, normally people dip yoru bread into this canned shit and like this. BOURDAIN (on camera): So this was normal for you growing up?

GOTTA: Yes. I wouldn't drink booze until probably 22 but -- I'll show you how it workings.

BOURDAIN: So who decided to moved into these places?

GOTTA: Those who were in charge of the specific communal services and residential department would assign x amount to this plan, to that plan.

BOURDAIN: Did you got to choose your neighbors though?

(LAUGHTER)

BOURDAIN: No. I got that.

URI (via translator): In the present day Russia, there has never been a reason to create infrastructure to make people's lives better. Nobody cared about the people that they should have a decent toilet or shower.

BOURAIN: So how is it lately? Better? Worse?

URI (via translator): So Vladimir Putin changed the whole landscape in the country. First of all, he started to clamp down on the human rights, on these democratic right. The most recent laws and changes in the constitution bring up the old Soviet Union type of structure in the country.

BOURDAIN: So what happens next?

GOTTA: A year before the Soviet Union collapse, you would never believe in your wildest dreams it would happen. Nowadays you think it's a similar situation; it looks like stable, people are busy, money is made, rich cars. But it can't go on like this for too long. So Uri predicts it could be in a similar overnight collapsing situation.

So there is some hope --

BOURDAIN: You're due for some major renovations.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Just another crisp morning in St. Petersburg.

GOTTA: Yva (ph River, ice fishing paradise.

BOURDAIN (on camera): Yes? I wouldn't go out on that, not for a million dollars, man, not now. It's total unstable.

GOTTA: Lessons of history.

BOURDAIN: Where are we?

Home

BOURDAIN: A little bit? They were very executed.

GOTTA: How were they found.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Originally built to defend the Swedes -- God I hate those maurading Swedes -- the Peter and Paul Fortress was overrun by the Bolsheviks during the revolution.

(on camera): So the 100-year anniversary of what is coming up?

GOTTA: Great October socialist revolution -- in three years from now. So I smell, with that this disparity gap in the society, very rich and very poor, that someone might bring up the masses back to Winter Palace and storm it again, like 100 years, nothing changed.

BOURDAIN (voice-over): Every day at noon without fail, this D 30 .122 Howitzer is fired to commemorate the revolution.

GOTTA: Ready to load. Load it. Very solemn moment. Moment of truth, Tony, for you.

(BELL TOLLING)

GOTTA: Come up. One, two, four.

(GUN FIRE)

GOTTA: Sweet. Enemy is destructed. Congratulations, you are the hero of Russia now.

BOURDAIN (on camera): Sweet.

GOTTA: You can't take it on the plane, though. They won't understand.

BOURDAIN: Not even carry on?

(voice-over): Since the filming of this show, a number of things have happened. Putin's Sochi Olympics, a blatant exercise of political muscle and a financial boondoggle the size unheard of in history, went off as planned. Russia won many gold medals, the most of any country in competition, which was really all that mattered.

A few journalists complained about the bathrooms, but that is all but forgotten. More than $50 billion of mostl public money -- gone.

Ukraine rose up and their despotic pro-Putin president run away. As if a foregone conclusion, Russia, in broad daylight, has recently annexed the Crimea and, as I'm writing this, is massing tens of thousands of troops on th border of Ukraine.

The world has done nothing. It will do nothing, as Vladimir well knew. He wins again.

END

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