

a bias in our coverage? Let us know. Think we did a good job? Please tell us.

All we ask is that you include your full name, the city from which you are writing and a contact telephone number in case we need to get in touch.

We do edit letters for grammar and style. In some cases, we cut long letters in order to fit the available space — though we try to take care not to distort or water down your point.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Thank you very much for helping fill in the blanks to this story, and keep up the good work.

David Walker  
Lexington, South Carolina

the future as my Russian wife (she's now an official Swiss resident, which helps a lot) and I go out and apply for visas.

John Sandwick  
Geneva, Switzerland

## Two Kagarlitsky Fans

In response to "Give Me the Visa Already!" a column by Boris Kagarlitsky, March 8.

Editor,

Visa processing makes me quite angry, too. I am an American living in Switzerland.

In 1999, I made the foolish mistake of asking the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to issue a visa for my then-girlfriend, Svetlana. We wanted to get married, and I thought a visit with my parents (both in their late 70s) in Virginia would be respectful and appropriate.

What a joke that turned out to be. I have rarely been so humiliated in my life.

I don't need to go into details since Kagarlitsky described the degradation already. Everyone is a criminal until proven innocent. Every single Russian woman is a prostitute until they show they are the Virgin Mary, which wouldn't be believed by these people anyway.

I dealt only with official U.S. citizen consular officials — no Russian employees of the consulate.

It was worse than Kagarlitsky's experience, I think. The way my fellow citizens treated me was about the same as they treat a drug lord trying to smuggle contraband.

And, get this: The head of the non-immigrant visa section is a true devil. I am convinced this person has a personal hatred for Russians. I am not joking. She said the following to me (almost shrieking over the phone, by the way): "Mr. Sandwick, tell me what's going to stop your girlfriend from getting on the first plane to Miami to walk the streets as soon as she lands in Washington?" I could imagine she had spit flying out of

In response to "Two States Accusing Each Other," a column by Boris Kagarlitsky, March 31.

Editor,

This column was excellent. As an expat in Moscow in 1992 and 1994, I couldn't help but notice the change in Russian attitudes toward America and Americans in my two visits.

— President George Bush (the elder) was foolish enough to think that American-style democracy could work in Russia, and Russia bought in to this notion.

Now Russia has taken on one of America's most distasteful and dangerous hobbies — the idea that having an enemy can cause a distraction and steer criticism away from failed internal policies. I will never understand why America did not provide more assistance to Russia — not in terms of cash, but in dealing with democracy's inherent difficulties.

And I fear that this lack of usable and valuable assistance will continue for at least the next four years.

The appointment by our present President George Bush of Condoleezza Rice (a scholar well-versed in Russian affairs and well-practiced in Cold War paranoia) as national security adviser shows an attitude that will benefit neither Russia nor America.

I do not believe Russia is a desperate country in need of American assistance.

I do believe that it would have been in the best interests of both countries for America to have done a bit more to help a new neighbor and friend.

I sincerely hope this situation does not go into the history file called "Opportunities Lost."

Rick Pettit  
Rutland, Vermont

lems. This aching despair is reflected in Russia's declining birthrate and population, its shrinking productivity, its declining life expectancies.

What can be done?

The most important step that Russia must take is a relentless and continuous campaign to be fully included in the evolving Europe. This means, ultimately, membership in the European Union, membership in NATO and eventually full partnership in all councils and forums that bear on Europe's future.

Vinton Heuck  
Lancaster, California

## More on Teens!

Editor,

I am a teenager who really loves to read your newspaper and not just the comics.

But I wanted to write and tell you that you don't often write about the problems and issues of teenagers. I think it is important to realize that teenagers are not frivolous and wild creatures but an organized society with their own norms, culture and habits that should be appreciated rather than criticized.

Of course, we don't understand life inside and out, but maybe there are advantages to that. Perhaps we act more boldly because of it.

I appreciate that The Moscow Times was created mostly for foreign residents of Moscow, but I think that they too would be interested in knowing more about local teenagers.

Vyacheslav Ryzhkov  
Moscow

## Fresh Perspective

Editor,

Bombarded as Americans are by the relentless media presenting one-sided views of international affairs, variant coverage and analysis are critical to broadening our understanding. The Internet offers one means of providing information and interpretation to at least a segment of our population.

What the Russians or Germans or Chinese, etc., are saying is important to know and it must be said by others than our own mass media.

Thank you for providing alternatives to corporate-controlled American media.

Roland Dion  
San Diego, California

April 16, 2001  
Moscow Times