

The background of the page features a black and white photograph of three people sitting on a wall, their forms rendered as dark silhouettes against a bright, overcast sky. The person on the left is in profile, facing right. The person in the middle is also in profile, facing right, and appears to be looking towards the person on the left. The person on the right is in profile, facing right, and has a backpack on their back. The overall mood is contemplative and somber.

HUMPTY DUMPTY SAT ON A WALL,  
HUMPTY DUMPTY HAD A GREAT FALL,  
ALL THE KING'S HORSES,  
AND ALL THE KING'S MEN,  
COULDN'T PUT HUMPTY  
TOGETHER AGAIN

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My parents met in a very romantic time, which is called “perestroika” in school textbooks. They also were lucky to meet each other in very romantic place, “the cradle of the Russian Revolution”, called Leningrad at the time. Some time after that, they made their own revolution and decided to get married. A year later the doctor told my mom that her future child would have a great sense of humour, because her son was going to come into this world on the first of April. Mom was in a panic; her first child was to be born on April Fool’s day! So I decided to appear on the second of April, because any fine lady should be a bit late. Yes, that was my April joke, but mom was expecting a boy, and that was why I was paraded around town in a blue pram wearing a blue bonnet. Such a shame! Luckily, I don’t remember it.

At the same time, the world was enjoying the other great events of 1987. U2 received the Grammy Award, the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, Nike released a new line of shoes called the Air Max, the best-selling shoes of all time and, on the 12th of June, Ronald Reagan, standing near the Brandenburg Gate, called out: “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” I would find out what wall he was talking much later, but my interest in Mr. Gorbachev would awaken quite early.

I liked watching TV since I was a kid and my choice was pretty unusual for little girl. I loved cartoons, but I was also a big fan of the show in which “the man with the world map on the forehead” took part. Later, it was explained to me that Mr. Gorbachev was the president of the USSR, that he had a birthmark and that, actually, the world map looked a bit different.

I was a little disappointed since I thought it was cool to have the world map on your forehead, especially for a president. First of all, it is very cosmopolitan and, looking in





the mirror, you always can check where the next international summit will be. At that time I couldn't imagine what an important role this person would play in the world, in my country and in my life. "The man with the world map on his forehead" really changed the map of Europe and the world forever!

I was two when the Berlin Wall came down, I was born in one country, never moved, but was growing up in a new one. It was a country which was on the highway of change, driving at crazy speed. Everything was changing and everything was new: name, map, politics, way of life. But when you are a child and just starting to take your first steps everything is new and you are looking forward to trying everything. First snow, first Santa's present, first kiss and first cigarette. It happens to everyone. When you are growing up, changes are natural, no matter what they are – a change of season or your country's name. You are just curious and can't wait to see what will happen next.

My generation and the New Russia are almost age-mates, that is why we get on well and understand each other. As with all age-mates, we have common experience, interests and worries. When Russia turned into a democracy that was a choice made for all of us. The country had to elect the president, whereas I wanted to watch cartoons. Even at this age it was clear to me that democracy was not ideal.

Despite the fact that my family had traditionally held deep beliefs in democracy, almost every evening the electoral process of what to watch somehow always ended not in my favour. Mom and dad, who formed the majority, voted for the election show and my vote for Spiderman who saved the world on cable never changed anything. At that time I was disappointed with the majority vote in my house, and it seemed that many people felt the same about the country's

choice. But anyway we agreed that democracy is the worst form of government except for all the others that have been tried.

We learned to speak together as well. To be honest, at that time everyone learned not to whisper, but to speak out loud about what they really thought. It seemed for us children that it was easier, and some adults weren't really so happy about the fact that we enjoyed our freedom of speech so early and so playfully. So, some of us were sent out of the classroom very often and dissidents' parents received complaints like: "Talks too much in class!" Compared to the murder of journalists, to be sent out of the classroom was not a risk at all.

Now, no matter what critics of state TV channels say, you always can change the channel and listen to an alternative opinion and version of events you believe in. So we have made big progress in the question of freedom of speech!

"I have nothing to wear!" This is a permanent global problem for women of all ages and continents, even if their wardrobe is about to explode. But in Soviet times people really had nothing to wear just because they had nothing to buy. Women were ready to die for Italian shoes and it was a big problem to get them. I asked my mom once how she understood that she had found her Mr. Right. She told me a bittersweet story about the twelve near-Herculean trials of my dad, the last one being something about getting a pair of jeans for my mom. This story can be used for the next film about James Bond, "License to Buy", as it is full of pursuit, secret agents and passwords.

Well, if someone decides to prove his feelings to me now and brings me jeans, whatever the brand, I will definitely say NO! For us girls, good alternatives in shopping are almost as important as having an alternative in elections. The free market provides us with good choice in the shops, but some people suppose that democracy in Russia doesn't give people a choice in elections. Let's see: in 2000 we had eleven candidates, during the last elections there were only four. Not so bad anyway, because some democratic countries have only two candidates all the time. Figures are a stubborn thing!

The free market comes with competition and competition hurts. The first to suffer were Russian cars and Russian men. In the past every family wanted to buy a Russian car, now people prefer driving German or Japanese vehicles; women wanted to marry Russian men, now they are looking for Spanish machos, English gentlemen or at least Turkish businessmen.

When my parents were kids many of their friends wanted to become cosmonauts and establish contact with aliens.

Mars was closer then the West and it was more risky to communicate with guys from capitalist countries than with aliens. The internet changed everything and even if you never were abroad you can easily get in touch with every part of the world. In my contact list on Facebook I don't have a single alien, but only 15% of my friends are from Russia, the rest of them come from all over the globe, from Brazil to Japan!

I asked my friend: "What has changed in your life since the Berlin Wall disappeared?" She replied, "Darling, why don't you ask me how life was before the Great Wall of China?" It was a long time ago, I was born much later." I reminded her that she was a pretty big girl in 1989 and already could walk and talk. "Really? I thought it happened a long time ago," she said. "Anyway, it is impolite to hint at my hair colouring all the time. Yes, I am blonde and it is not my job to remember all the dates, but I am OK now!" Of course it wasn't my intention to discriminate against my friend on the basis of her hair colour, but our conversation means that my generation got used to all the changes and found them absolutely natural. That is why my friend thought the Berlin Wall was demolished before our birth.

Twenty years have passed since the Berlin Wall was torn down. We can travel all over the world, can work and study everywhere (if you get a visa of course), because this question still stands and sometimes common Russian people still feel that there are some walls we should destroy. If we look back, all these changes seem unbelievable. The main thing is that despite all the difficulties and challenges, this "revolution" really changed the life of my generation for the better. Some people call us "the lost generation", but I think I was born at the very right time, and we are not lost, we are united, possibly by Facebook and MTV, but it is much better anyway than to be separated by any kind of wall, even if it leaves Humpty Dumpty unhappy and homeless forever.



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