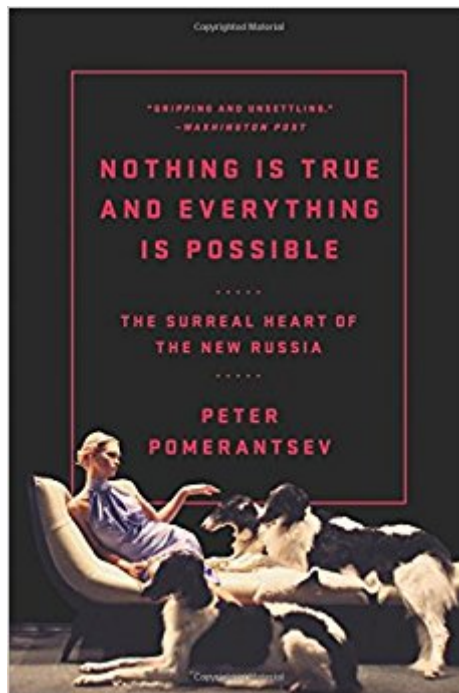




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# Nothing Is True And Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart Of The New Russia



## Synopsis

In the new Russia, even dictatorship is a reality show. Professional killers with the souls of artists, would-be theater directors turned Kremlin puppet-masters, suicidal supermodels, Hell's Angels who hallucinate themselves as holy warriors, and oligarch revolutionaries: welcome to the glittering, surreal heart of twenty-first-century Russia. It is a world erupting with new money and new power, changing so fast it breaks all sense of reality, home to a form of dictatorship—far subtler than twentieth-century strains—that is rapidly rising to challenge the West. When British producer Peter Pomerantsev plunges into the booming Russian TV industry, he gains access to every nook and corrupt cranny of the country. He is brought to smoky rooms for meetings with propaganda gurus running the nerve-center of the Russian media machine, and visits Siberian mafia-towns and the salons of the international super-rich in London and the US. As the Putin regime becomes more aggressive, Pomerantsev finds himself drawn further into the system. Dazzling yet piercingly insightful, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible* is an unforgettable voyage into a country spinning from decadence into madness.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of the Month, November 2014: When the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 90s, the West rejoiced with the relief that came with the end of the Cold War and the possibility of an era of peace and cooperation. At the same time, its corporations and conglomerates trained a beady eye toward its newly opened markets, and a seemingly virgin economic landscape soon became home

to icons such as Coke and McDonalds and Levi's. But the door was open wide, and tagging along with big business were some seedier characters: organized crime, a youth-and-glamour-obsessed oligarchy, and an entertainment complex hungry for the new concepts of its Western counterparts. That's where Peter Pomerantsev comes in. Born in Kiev but raised in Great Britain, Pomerantsev returned to Russia as a consultant to its burgeoning film and television--especially "reality" television--industries. What he found was a capitalist's wet dream: an unfettered cash and service economy with no apparent limits on cash or available services--one where everything is possible, if you can pay for it. At the top of it all sits Vlad Putin, infusing the old TASS tactics with Hollywood flair to create a vision of a bare-chested (bear-chested?) virility and power, of both self and state. Pomerantsev finds himself gazing deeper into this looking-glass world--willingly and otherwise--and he finds it impossible to look away, as will his readers. This is not your father's Russia, and yet it kind of is.--Jon Foro --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Shortlisted for the 2015 Guardian First Book Award  
 Longlisted for the 2015 Samuel Johnson Prize  
 Amazon Best Book of the Month, November 2014  
 Captivating observations.  
 New York Times Book Review  
 Sparkling collection of essays.  
 Wall Street Journal  
 Enthralling; his exquisite rendering of mind-control techniques is chilling.  
 Times Literary Supplement  
 This is a gripping and unsettling account of life in grim post-Soviet Russia.  
 Washington Post  
 "Brilliant collection of sketches...powerful, moving and sometimes hilarious."  
 Washington Times  
 Hauntingly perceptive and beautifully written.  
 New Statesman  
 [UK]  
 A patchwork tapestry that leaves you shaking your head in disbelief.  
 The Guardian  
 "[A] tale of descending into and eventually emerging from Moscow's hallucinogenic reality.  
 Foreign Affairs  
 [A] riveting, urgent book ... Pomerantsev is one of the most perceptive, imaginative and entertaining commentators writing on Russia today and, much like the country itself, his first book is seductive and terrifying in equal measure.  
 The Times (UK)  
 A scintillating take on a twisted reality.  
 Prospect Magazine  
 Everything you know about Russia is wrong, according to this eye-opening, mind-bending memoir of a TV producer caught between two cultures  
 the stylish rendering of the Russian culture, which both attracts and appalls the author, will keep the reader captivated.  
 Kirkus, STARRED  
 "Sometimes horrifying but always compelling, this book exposes the bizarre reality hiding beneath the facade of a youthful, bouncy, glossy

country."#151;Publishers Weekly#147;It is hard to think of another work that better describes today's Russia; Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible may very well be the defining book about the Putin era. This might seem like excessive praise for a relatively short, non-academic memoir by a reality-TV producer now living in London, but it is justified by the author's gimlet eye and reportorial skill."#151;Commentary Magazine#147;A brilliant, entertaining, and ultimately tragic book about not only Russia, but the West.~"~#151;Tablet Magazine,#147;This is the strangest book of note I have ever read#133; a dark and grotesque comedy of manners#133; His reporter's straightforward and unlimited curiosity, his willingness to plow and harrow the widest fields for facts, and his exacting descriptive details give him credibility. Plus, what he tells us is so incredible.~"~#151;World Affairs Journal#147;A riveting portrait of the new Russia with all its corruption, willful power and spasms of unforgettable, poetic glamor. I couldn't put it down.~"~#151;Tina Brown#147;Peter Pomeranzev, one of the most brilliant observers of Putin's Russia, describes a country obsessed with illusion and glamor, but with a dangerous, amoral core beneath the surface. Nothing is True and Everything is Possible is an electrifying, terrifying book.~"~#151;Anne Applebaum, author of Gulag and Iron Curtain, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Nonfiction

As noted by other reviewers, the author is a very good story-teller and has included many entertaining and--to some extent--informative vignettes in this book.I have lived in Moscow for many years and have been to many of the places mentioned in the book--unlike some other works I've read about Moscow, this author's descriptions and insights about places and events generally ring true. Moreover, he describes many interesting incidents/personalities that I was not previously aware of, so reading this book was certainly worthwhile for me. As a journalist, the author seems to have had a very good perch from which to observe a rapidly and constantly evolving Moscow.Some other reviewers have criticized the book for not enabling them to "understand" Russia any better. Don't expect to read this--or any other--book and come away with an "understanding" of Russia, but at least it might help readers appreciate why Russia is such a difficult place to understand.I enjoyed the book, so why not five stars? I had three basic concerns about the book:1) Russia, and Moscow in particular, evolves rapidly and is changing constantly. Therefore, many of the author's observations seem a bit dated at this point. The author generally doesn't provide much of a timeline in the book, so it is often hard to determine whether he is writing about 2002 or 2012. Moscow in 2014 is a very different place from Moscow 2002 or Moscow 2012;2) While many of the author's stories are very entertaining, the result is sort of a grotesque caricature of Moscow, which in fact is a

huge and heterogeneous city, with millions of absolutely ordinary people very different from those described in this book. The author provides a good description of an interesting but freakish "froth" of people that provide good copy, but creates an impression that they, rather than ordinary citizens, define the city (which, admittedly, they do to some extent...). Therefore, as you read this book, bear in mind that millions of people are taking the subway/bus to work every day as book keepers, lawyers, account managers, etc., pretty much like everywhere else in the world...3) In a few instances, the author seems to overdramatize things a bit. For example, he goes on and on about the constant fear of having your "documents checked", etc. In fact, I don't think I've had my "documents checked" even once in the last several years, and it is certainly not something I'm worried about (this kind of thing was indeed more common several years ago, hence my comment about some observations being somewhat dated...).

This is a contemporary historical thriller. It is in two parts. The first deals with the hideous corruption that is Putin's Russia today and is frightening. I hope someone will write about how this could have happened. I didn't expect Pomerantsev to ponder this question so this is not a criticism. I have many Russian friends in Moscow and have been there often both before and during Putin's reign. I have never seen the people the author describes but educated Russian will confirm his observations. The second part of the book is something quite different. It describes a cult the likes of which exist world wide. It is a detective story. The two parts do not belong in the same volume. Pomerantsev writes compellingly and I await more of his work

Pomerantsev's account of life in modern-day Russia benefits from his having been a journalist. As does holding dual Brit/Russian citizenship and native Russian language. He was able to swim with the fishes--including the minnows and some pretty big sharks. Using examples of real people's lives in Putin's Russia the author gives the reader vivid characters whose lives and experiences, taken together, present a startling picture of the infinity of mirrors that is Russia today. Pomerantsev's style reminds me of the Gonzo journalists of the 1960s and '70s, who didn't hesitate to step inside their characters' minds to illustrate a point or set a mood. Good stuff. But scary.

I recommend this to anyone interested in understanding the oligarch mentality. This book does not specifically outline or detail oligarchic activity, but does provide context for the Russia they seek to influence. The section about the Rose was perhaps the most gripping, and surreal story in the book as it elaborates on how the very brain washing tactics and strategies utilized by the KGB being used

by a "self realization" cult that still practices in Moscow today. This is not a book about policy, history, or the rise of Russia from the ashes. This is a book about the real Russia outside of the Kremlin and the people who's belief it is that Russia will once again take its rightful place at the table of power through Tsardom.

The author tells many anecdotes about the people and places he encountered in 10 years living and working in Russia and especially Moscow. Russia is one big Reality TV show, and Putin is the star. Russia is all about hierarchy and connections, laws count for nothing. In some sense, the entire country is like a big, long-lived LifeSpring encounter -- citizens alternately terrorized by the Government and uplifted by heroic stories. The elite rip off as much money as possible and sock it away in London and Switzerland and elsewhere: bank account, homes, yachts, boarding school for their kids. Russia is corrupt and is also corrupting the West. The Russians make Goebbels look like a rural PR hack.

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