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Jokes about Putin and the Elections Ten Years On, or, Is There a Folklore of the 'Snow Revolution'?

How does folklore behave during a social or political crisis? How can we measure the reaction of texts to political events? This article tests the hypothesis that a critical quantity of new protest jokes arose at the time of the protest movement in Russian cities (which began in December 2011 and came to be called the 'Snow Revolution')¹ and attempts to answer the question of what the particular properties of this new political folklore are.

Principles of selection

To test the above hypothesis, a sample of jokes was compiled consisting of 110 texts which either originated in December 2011 or became topical again then,² divided into 73 subjects.³ What I call 'singular' texts have been jettisoned, since they form an infinite 'tail' in the distribution in which the frequency of a single subject is equal to 1, in accordance with Zipf's law.⁴ I have found a number of articles which

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¹ It should be noted that although the three principal themes both at meetings and in political jokes naturally co-incide — protests against Putin, protests against election rigging and Churov, and protests against 'United Russia' (with Medvedev never appearing as a separate character deserving of attention), there is much less overlap (about 5 %) between the 'protest formulae' (texts on the placards) and the texts of the jokes than might have been expected, which itself leads to certain thoughts.

² The collection of texts was completed on 13 January 2012.

³ Since the article is concerned with a formal quantitative analysis of the texts as a whole, it does not discuss their origin or dissemination, though the commentaries do contain individual considerations on these subjects.

⁴ Zipf's law refers to regularity of distribution in the frequencies of words in a natural language, and states that if all the words in the language (or a sufficiently large corpus) are arranged in descending order of frequency, then the frequency of the *n*th word in the list will be approximately inversely proportional to the number *n*, forming a so-called 'hyperbolic ladder'. Thus the second most frequent word will be found approximately half as often as the first, the third three times less frequently than the first, and so on. When a corpus drawn from a natural language is analysed in this manner, we find that it has a 'tail' of objects with a frequency of 1 which goes on more or less for ever.

quote ‘popular’ jokes which cannot be found anywhere outside these articles (e.g. [Nikitchuk 2011]).

There were four methods of collecting the texts: an oral survey, an examination of the *anekdot.ru* site, a search of blogs and forums using Yandex, and a search of the ‘Integrum’ full-text database, which is an archive of news sources (including the local and Russian-language foreign press).

Why is the sample what it is? Texts in the mass media are always ‘texts of power’ (in the sense of the communicative aspect of the newspaper text, which always intends to convince the reader of something, even if it often uses an ‘unofficial tone’ to do so, and, besides, newspapers, as a source of information, are deliberately censored). Texts published in newspapers were contrasted, as sources of information, with comments on forums and blogs, which (with certain major reservations, which will be discussed in the following section) may approximate to natural, uncensored communication. Besides, the present ‘revolution’ is taking place on social network sites and on the blogs of Runet.¹

For each subject we counted the frequency:

- 1) on forums and blogs via a Yandex search over an unlimited period;
- 2) on forums and blogs via a Yandex search for the period from 4 December 2011 to 4 January 2012;²
- 3) in the press (via the ‘Integrum’ full-text database) over an unlimited period, with special attention given to the national and local press.

Principles of publication of the texts

The number before the name of the subject is *not* a running number, but indicates the subject’s frequency in blogs and forums on Yandex (over an unlimited period). In this way the subjects of the jokes are ordered in decreasing order of popularity. A subject with the number 0 is thus one that is not found in the blogs and forums, but does appear, for example, in the press. The number indicating the frequency of the subject in both Yandex and Integrum is the sum of the frequencies of the keywords from different variants of the subject. For example, for the subject of ‘A Hard Choice’, the frequencies of the variants ‘On 26 March, Russia will have a difficult choice at the polls: Putin, Putin, or Putin?’ and ‘The plot thickens at the Russian elections: Everyone is wondering whether Putin will be the next

¹ ‘Runet’ is a portmanteau of the domain name suffixes .ru and .net, and is colloquially used for the Russian-language internet, particularly in its unofficial aspect.

² This period of time was chosen because one of the aims of the article is to test the hypothesis that the protest activity that began with the Duma elections of 4 December 2011, much of which was expressed on the internet, changed the overall dynamic of political humour.

president – or on the other hand, will it be Putin?’ are established, and the results added together. The search was conducted using a combination of keywords and set phrases from the subject. The same search combination was used for all types of search.

Old and new subjects

Any cycle of jokes may be defined as consisting of two types of material: constant subjects (the ‘nucleus’) which existed before the cultural or socio-political paradigm which became the subject of the joke; and ‘new’ jokes which appeared at the same time as the subject of the cycle. In other words, the larger the nucleus, the more constant and, within certain limits, traditional the cycle itself is. This sample includes texts which users regarded in December 2011 and the beginning of 2012 as topical jokes about Putin and the rigging of the Duma elections and the presidential elections to come. However, many of the subjects had arisen long before December 2011 and were ‘re-worked’ to fit current events – such subjects may be called ‘old’, while subjects with no variants that can be found before December 2011 are regarded as new.

In this case, the ‘nucleus’ of the December jokes about Putin (referred to henceforth as DJAP) is 25 % of the overall number of subjects in the cycle and consists of ‘old’ subjects, including some from the Soviet period, ‘wandering’ subjects, and also some that date from after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Table 1

Old and new subjects in the DJAP cycle

Type of subject	Quantity
New	55
Post-Soviet	13
Soviet / ‘wandering’	5

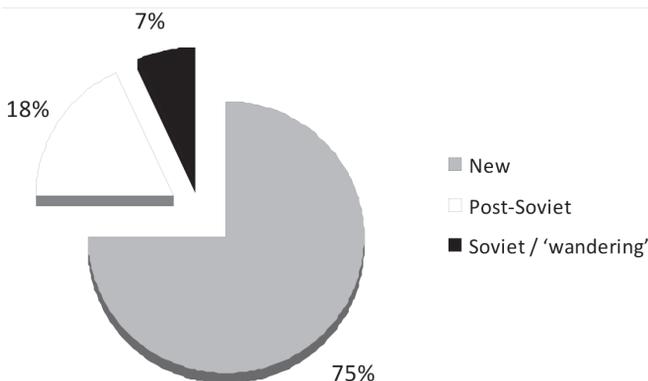


Fig. 1. Old and new subjects in the DJAP cycle

I began to collect jokes about Putin a little over ten years ago [Arkhipova 2009], which allows me now to compare old and new data and thus to see the changes that have taken place in our country’s political folklore. Thus the ‘nucleus’ of the cycle of jokes about Putin originating from 2000 to 2008 makes up only 20 % of it [ibid.: 182],¹ and the ‘nucleus’ of jokes about Stalin is even smaller at 10 % [Arkhipova, Melnichenko 2010: 31–34]. In this way the December cycle of jokes about Putin, with its ‘nucleus’ of 25 %, despite being new, is quite traditional, and has absorbed many more old subjects than the Putin cycle of ten years ago (see Table 1, Figure 1). It is thus incorrect to say that only new jokes about Putin are current at the moment.

Jokes about Putin in the press and the internet

In the first five years of the present century new subjects in the cycle about Putin were actively published in the ‘paper’ press, including the local press [Arkhipova 2009: 184, table 3]; 27 new subjects about Putin and only seven old ones.

What is the situation now? In order to answer this question, I checked the frequency of each subject in the local and national ‘paper’ press, and also internet media (through the Integrum database²), after which I calculated the sum of their frequency (153 for old subjects and 119 for new ones), and by dividing it by the number of subjects, obtained a coefficient of average frequency, or average popularity in the press for old and new subjects. The result was somewhat unexpected (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

Table 2

Popularity of old and new DJAP subjects in the press

	New	Old
Number of subjects	55	18
Popularity in the press (average frequency)	2.1	8.5

It turned out that over the last two months the publication in the press of new subjects about Putin and the elections had become much

¹ When jokes about Putin had only just begun to appear, in the beginning and middle of the first decade of this century, they represented a sharp break with earlier tradition (which is why the ‘nucleus’ of the old Putin cycle is smaller), but when the subjects of this cycle were borrowed, they were borrowed from Soviet jokes about Andropov and Stalin [Arkhipova 2007a]. This is apparently why the ‘Soviet component’ of the old Putin cycle is higher — 12 % as against 7 % of Soviet subjects in the new DJAP cycle.

² I removed double citations of the same source manually (there are, unfortunately, not a few of these in Integrum).

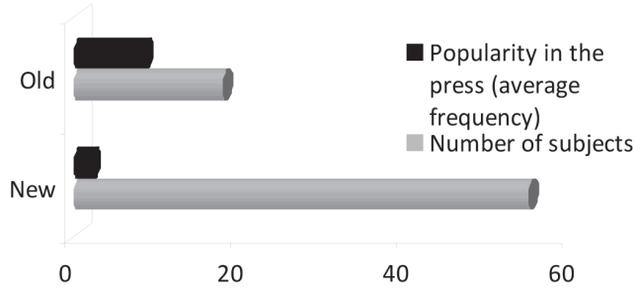


Fig. 2. Popularity of old and new DJAP subjects in the press

less frequent¹ than previously: their popularity in relation to old subjects had fallen by a factor of 4, in stark contrast to the situation in 2000–2008. In other words, even though jokes about Putin are printed in the press,² they are old subjects, not new ones. This may be explicable by censorship considerations, or else by the fact that the blogosphere, which is the principal habitat of new subjects, produces and disseminates new texts ahead of the press.

Two types of joke: their morphological and functional properties

It must now be understood whether the mechanisms by which new texts are produced depend on any internal factors, such as the structure of the text. In the first place we shall consider whether the texts which the bearers of the tradition call jokes are of two different types.

Class A

Churov says to Putin:
'I have some good news and some bad news.'
'Start with the good news.'
'You've won!'
'And the bad news?'
'Nobody voted for you.'

Class B

PUTIN THREE FOR TWO OFFER from the Central Electoral Commission: vote for Putin twice and get him three times! No need to vote again!

Among the DJAP there are twenty-two subjects with a Class A structure and fifty-one with a Class B structure.³

¹ For this reason when a subject is found both in blogs and in the press, I have always cited its occurrence in the press.

² Certain publications (Novaya Gazeta, Nezavisimaya Gazeta and Radio Liberty) form an exception to the general rule, in that their articles quoting jokes were actively reprinted in the local press.

³ Our sample also illustrates an uncommon phenomenon where within a single subject a variant structured as a dialogue, Class A, turns into a Class B joke without dialogue. A good example of this is the subject of Churov and Copperfield, which has two Class A variants and two Class B variants. I repeat, this is not a frequent occurrence: there are only two examples in our sample of 110 texts.

How do variants of Class A and B texts arise? Let us examine, for example, subject 35, ‘Voting for Nicholas II in the madhouse’.¹ Here is a fragment of a article from *Novaya Gazeta* (on the left), where a communist’s memories of the local elections of two years ago are given as evidence of vote-rigging. A fragment of this text appeared the following day on the *anekdot.ru* site as a joke. Taken out of context, the quotation appears to refer to current events.

Two years ago at the local elections in Tver’, as one communist remembers, the party lost in only two wards: the remand prison and the psychiatric clinic. *When the director of Psychiatric Hospital No. ... was asked how she could explain why 100 % of the patients voted for United Russia, she said, ‘Well, not quite 100 %. We had one vote for Nicholas II, and one for Nicholas I.’* [Taratuta, Lysova 2011]

When the director of Psychiatric Hospital No. ... was asked how she could explain why 100 % of the patients voted for United Russia, she said, ‘Well, not quite 100 %. We had one vote for Nicholas II, and one for Nicholas I.’¹

Class A (the traditional dialogue joke) may equally in turn easily be formed from a text by the introduction of dialogue. We may compare a sentence recorded in November 2011 with a very similar joke that appeared six days later:

Let Putin and Medvedev exchange surnames as well. That’ll bugger all our minds up once and for all. (Blogs, 24 November 2011)

The Russian leaders are playing badminton. Between games, Putin says: ‘Hey, Dima, let’s swap names.’ ‘OK, Vladimir Vladimirovich, but may I know why?’ ‘To bugger everyone about.’ [Remchukov 2011].

Class A jokes may be distinguished from Class B on formal criteria. The objects in Class A are jokes with the classical structure, the *dialogue*, and it is of little importance what the protagonists are called, it is their function that matters,² whereas the objects in Class B are utterances by a single speaker, who may be ‘out of shot’. Moreover, Class A texts are stories of an *event*, and class B texts are *descriptions of*

¹ We should note that this text is included among the jokes also because there is a recurrent subject of ‘the inhabitants of the madhouse supporting a tyrant’.

¹ See <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111207;10,100.html>>.

² Cf. in the appendix all the variants of the name of the first speaker in subject 506, ‘Good and Bad News for Putin’, who may even be nameless: A — no name, B — Churov, C — Churov, D — no name, E — Surkov, F — no name.

a situation or remarks prompted by a situation, very often parodying a particular type of language,³ such as that of an advertisement: the Central Electoral Commission's 'special offer', or *the rebranding of a popular vodka: Putin-Kaa — special discount for the Bandar-log*,² a news broadcast: *the Chairman of the CEC, Vladimir Churkov, has been hurt in a fire; he has suffered burns to 146 % of his body*, or an official announcement with a special frame: *After Putin was proposed as a candidate for another term as president, there was an announcement at the United Russia party congress: 'Everyone Out of Twitter!'*

Another formal criterion for distinguishing Classes A and B is the theme-rheme structure, or the use of a particular word order. If we look at the grammatical structure at the very beginning of jokes of Classes A and B (see Table 3), we see that in Class A jokes (with the traditional dialogue structure) may have either the sequence theme + rheme, or the reverse: *Churov zvonit Putinu* [Churov rings Putin] (SVO) or *Zvonit Churov Putinu*³ (VCO). In this cycle of jokes we find twenty instances of the sequence theme + rheme and fourteen with rheme + theme.

Is this distribution normal? Evidently it is, insofar as analysis of other materials shows that in a joke with the traditional dialogue structure both the theme + rheme sequence and its reverse may be used: *Vinni-Pukh vstrechaet Pyatachka i govorit...* [Winnie the Pooh meets Piglet and says...] or *Prikhodit Vinni-Pukh k Pyatachku i govorit...* (a ratio of 60:40).⁴

Table 3

Grammatical composition of the first words of jokes of Classes A and B

First words of the sentence	Class A	Class B
Total subjects	22	51
Total texts	54	56
Introductory nominative construction	4	6
Immediate speech or dialogue	15	2
Impersonal verbal construction	1	6
Subject + predicate	14	36
Predicate + subject	20	6

³ Many similar texts are given in Natalya Lisyuk's article on the Orange Revolution [Lisyuk 2005]; she calls them parodic texts or aphorisms, naming another ten or so genres. Unfortunately the article is completely devoid of any quantitative analysis, so that apart from the general conclusion that that there were a lot of them, we can discover nothing of their currency.

² [On the use of references to Kipling's Bandar-log as a way of poking fun at Putin, see the articles by Akhmetova and Radchenko, Pisarevskaya, and Ksenofontova in this selection.] [Editor]. The name of the vodka is actually Putinka; Kaa is the name of the cobra in *The Jungle Book*.

³ Untranslatable in English: literally, 'makes a call to Churov Putin'. [Editor].

⁴ For calculations on four control groups of 400 texts see [Arkhipova 2003].

In Class B, however, there is a preponderance of different (sometimes called the ‘basic’) word order, in which the subject precedes the predicate,¹ with thirty-six examples against six: *Tsentrizbirkom zaveril, chto... The Central Electoral Commission has confirmed that; Zheny “Edinoi Rossii” ne imitiruyut orgazma... United Russia wives never fake orgasm...* (see Table 3).

Instances where the name of the main hero comes at the very beginning of the text and is the subject of the sentence (in a sentence with normal word order) are regarded by O. Yokoyama [Yokoyama 1986] as deliberate communicative mistake (an imposition): the subject, in a sentence like *Shtirlits shel po koridoru* [Stirlitz was walking along the corridor]² is a theme which in normal circumstances ought to be known to the listener. However, the hero of a new story is by definition new to the listener! One may compare the opening words of Tynyanov’s novel *Pushkin*, ‘The major was mean’³ and the beginnings of jokes: *Stirlitz was walking along the corridor...; The Snow Maiden accused Father Christmas...; The vote-rigging passed off as usual...*

Why is there a tendency towards imposition in Class B jokes? Evidently it stems from their very nature. Jokes of this class in the given cycle of jokes about Putin and the elections are imitations of news bulletins or advertisements, i.e. parodies of particular forms of speech. Jokes about Stirlitz owe their structure, with a high percentage of SVO constructions, to being parodies of the ‘out of shot’ narrator Efim Kopelian [Arkhipova 2003]. Thus these anecdotes refer syntactically to their prototext, showing that they are not independent texts.

In addition, jokes of Classes A and B are distinguished by their variability, means of dissemination and mechanisms of adaptation.

As already stated, Class B jokes are parodies of particular genres of speech. They exist as long as there is something to parody — the preceding text that is to be parodied. (All the jokes about Churov the Magician will be forgotten, once the relevant remark by Medvedev has passed out of common knowledge.) Contemporary Class B jokes exist mostly in writing (even if their transmission is close to natural communication, for example in the blogosphere), and ‘reproduce’ by cloning, with minimal variation. Any user may convince himself

¹ This word order is typical of situations where one is describing perceived reality: *Mother washes the frame, the girl eats peaches, the exile returns home.*

² Stirlitz, a Soviet officer posing as a Third Reich official, is the hero of the popular novel *Seventeen Moments of Spring* by Yulian Semyonov (1969), which became a hugely successful TV series in 1973. He is also the hero of many popular jokes based on the fact that he cannot always conceal his Soviet identity. [Editor].

³ This example of the displacement of *given* and *new* is taken from [Testelefs 2001: 456].

of this by entering the aforementioned joke into a search engine and calculating the variation coefficient. Internet users copy jokes and send them as text messages or include them in social networks. This, incidentally, is the reason why such texts will tend to be short (the principle of economy). Cloning in a suitable environment ensures a high degree of reproduction — the r-strategy¹ — but the text's adaptive mechanism deteriorates in the course of evolutionary selection, and for this reason the adaptation threshold of Class B jokes is very low: this sort of joke cannot very well adapt itself to changing political events.

Class A jokes, on the other hand, reproduce more slowly (the K-strategy), but are highly adaptive and tends towards variation. For example, the joke about the three rulers in the aeroplane (No. 13 in our sample) adapts itself to situations on Cuba, in Belarus, under Stalin and under Hitler, let alone the modern-day versions about Putin. In other words, the traditional jokes of Class A are based on folklore models which ensure their adaptation and variability, but limit the speed of their dissemination.

Accordingly, if there are two classes of joke within the sample with different morphological structures, these two types should absorb old or new subjects in different ways.

Table 4

**Choice of old or new subject in two-voice (Class A)
or one-voice (Class B) structures**

	1 voice (Class B)	2 voices (Class A)
With a new subject	43	12
With an old subject	8	10
Total	51	22

As we see from table 4, there is a correlation (dependency) between the choice of an old or new subject when a two-voice (Class A) or one-voice (Class B) structure is used, equal to 0.317^2 with a significance of 0.006 .³ In other words, if the subject is new, then there

¹ MacArthur and Wilson's theory of r/K selection defines two different natural strategies for the reproduction of living organisms which secure the optimal population for a given species: the r-strategy presupposes the maximum number of offspring without and special adaptation to their environmental conditions or care for them by their parents (such as the millions of eggs produced by fish); the K-strategy operates with a reduced number of offspring but individual care for their survival (elephants).

² A Spearman rank correlation coefficient, on which see [Gmurman 2004] for more detail.

³ The statistical significance of the result is a measure of its reliability (in the sense of how representative of the sample it is). The higher the coefficient of significance, the greater the probability that the correlation observed is the result of random coincidence, and the lower it is, the greater the certainty that the regularity is not accidental. Accordingly, the low coefficient of 0.006 in this instance indicates

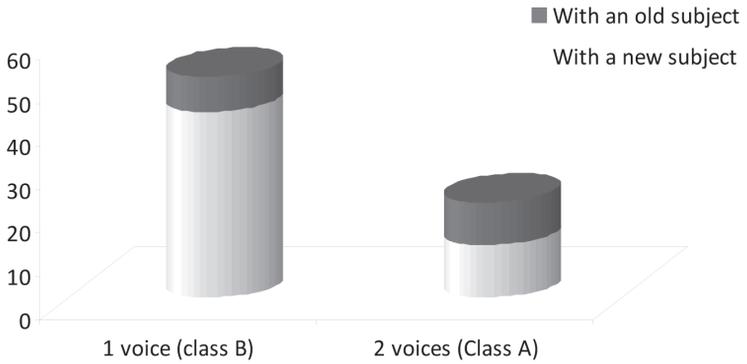


Fig. 3. New subjects tend towards the morphology of Class B

is a certain probability that it will be expressed in a one-voice text of Class B (a situation described without dialogue). This dependency is shown in Figure 3.

Jokes of Classes A and B thus have the following characteristics.

Table 5

Characteristics of Classes A and B

Characteristics	Class A	Class B
Voices	Two or more	One
Structure	Dialogue	Description of situation
Opening words	SVO or VSO	Strong tendency towards SVO (imposition)
Variation and adaptability	High	Low
Tendency to use old and/or new subjects	Old and new	New subjects
Models	Folklore models present	Parody of styles of speech and absence of folklore models

Let us now consider how these theoretical considerations relate to the December jokes.

that the dependency relation obtained, though not great (0.3), is not random. More detail about this is given in A. V. Korotayev's commentaries to the Russian edition of Murdock's *Social Structure* [Merdok 2003], which analyse examples of the calculation of correlations between social factors.

The dynamics of change in jokes about Putin in December 2011 and their interpretation

We shall start by examining the frequency of old and new subjects in jokes about Putin before December 2011 and in the course of that month.¹ We shall assume that the situation with regard to jokes before December 2011 is the ‘normal distribution’. As may be seen from Table 6 and Figure 4, new subjects were, despite the great number of them, on average less popular before December than classical subjects. In other words, in the normal situation contemporary folklore ‘prefers’ old jokes. By contrast, the popularity of new subjects soared in December, practically exceeding that of old ones.

Table 6

Relative popularity of old and new subjects before and during December 2011

	New subjects	Old subjects
Quantity	55	18
Average popularity before December	98.7	121.4
Average popularity in December	48.8	41.8

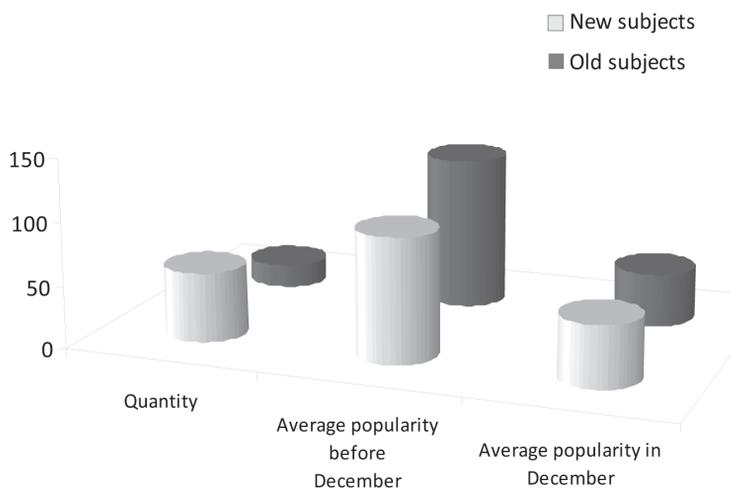


Fig. 4. Relative popularity of old and new subjects before and during December 2011

¹ The significance of the differences was subjected to the Mann–Whitney U test to demonstrate that it was not random. I am grateful to my colleague A. V. Kozmin for assistance in processing the data and for verifying the sample according to this criterion.

Now we shall examine the average popularity of Class A and B jokes about Putin before and during December 2011 (Table 7, Figure 5).

Table 7

Average popularity of jokes of Classes A and B

	Class A	Class B
Number of subjects	22	51
Average popularity before December	112.6	100.7
Average popularity in December	32.9	53.2

The result is the same: before December Class A ('traditional') jokes were more popular than Class B jokes by a short head, even though there were more of the latter. This is clearly seen in Figure 5. In December, though, the situation changes and the popularity of the traditional (Class A) jokes falls sharply.

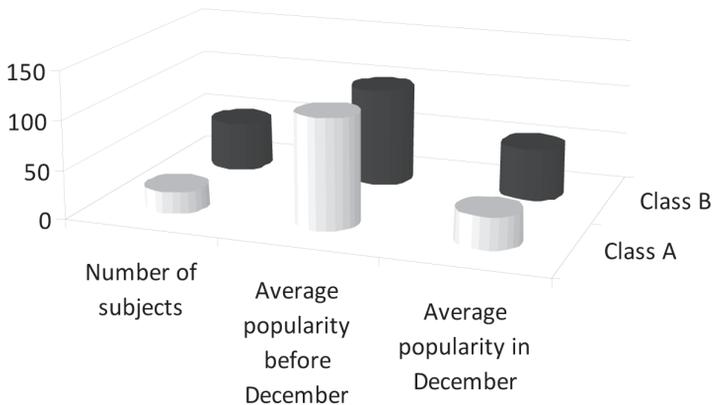


Figure 5. Average popularity of jokes of Classes A and B in and before December 2011

Conclusion

How are these results to be interpreted relative to the subject of this article? The hypothesis to be tested was whether there are abrupt changes in folkloric texts on political subjects at times of social tension. We have a sample of jokes which we have divided into two groups twice by different criteria. In the first case the division was into old and new subjects, that is, those which had existed earlier and had been reworked to fit topical themes in December 2011, and those which appeared in December 2011. The second division was into Classes A and B, distinguished by their morphological characteristics. Class A jokes (with the traditional dialogue structure) owe their existence to folkloric models. They continue to spread as long as

their subject can be adapted to new social realities. Up to December 2011 political jokes recycle a lot of old, timeworn subjects, and the Class A structure is more popular in their reproduction. This is the normal mode of existence for the political joke.

December 2011 saw an explosion of political and social activity. People began actively to discuss political subjects in the blogosphere and on social networks, make up and pass on jokes and satirical postcards, and go to public meetings bearing placards with humorous slogans. This situation is reflected in the internal features of political folklore. The 'normal' distribution is upset. The popularity of Class A jokes begins to fall sharply (a coefficient of 32.9 in December versus 112.6 before), as does that of old subjects (a coefficient of 41.8 versus 121.4). This means that the texts which we consider part of the traditional folklore by their content and/or structure proved unnecessary to the protest movement.

On the contrary, new texts,¹ belonging to Class B and similar to slogans, aphorisms and other oral genres in their structure, lacking folkloric models, were much more important to the people on the streets and on the internet for their protest activity. Both the humorous slogans (studied in more detail in other articles in the present section), and new Class B subjects were based on parodies of oral genres (Putin and Medvedev's statements, news bulletins, advertisements). The popularity of the new subjects and Class B texts grew in December, which cannot be said of that of the old subjects and Class A jokes. This is why there is a question mark after the second part of the title of this article: 'Is there a folklore of the "Snowy Revolution"?' Everything 'traditional' is thrown overboard from the 'ship of modernity', so that to a certain extent the 'folklore of the Snowy Revolution' simply does not exist, since it is not the texts that are traditional in their content and/or structure that are most widely distributed, but the new subjects and Class B texts. However, I do not think that this is a stable situation. We shall soon see the end of the stage of active development, the pendulum will swing back, and the balance of old and new forms will be restored.

¹ One should also remember the 'unsuccessful' jokes (see at the end of the sample those with a citation rate of 0–5 or even lower), which are often gobbets hacked out of newspaper articles (cf. the example of votes for Nicholas II in the madhouse discussed above). These may simply be the results of 'graphomania' and a side effect of the 'wave of protest' which 'demands' more and more new humorous texts devised by every possible means.

December Jokes about the Elections and Putin: Subjects and Variants

The number (indicating the frequency of the text of the joke on Yandex forums and blogs (over an unlimited period) and name of the subject are followed by the following data: frequency in blogs and forums over the whole period (calculated by Yandex search) and frequency in the press (calculated on the basis of Integrum media sources). Sources are indicated as follows:

FIP — foreign internet publications

FP — foreign printed press

IP — internet publications

IM — internet media

LIP — local internet press

LP — local press

PC — personal communication

NP — national press

FSR — text from the ‘Folklore of the Snowy Revolution’ Facebook page¹

The indication ‘(blogs)’ means that the text is cloned or reproduced with minimal variation in blogs; in such cases it would be meaningless to cite a particular source.

506. Good and bad news for Putin

Blogs and forums — 506, Integrum — 37: NP — 9, LP — 6, FP — 3, IP — 8, IM — 5, FIP — 5, TV and radio — 1

This joke in version 1 (ending ‘Nobody voted for you’) is a modification of an old joke, popular in the first decade of the century, with Veshnyakov instead of Churov. There are traces of the old joke in version 2 (variant E). For other examples of the old version see subject I.8 [Arkhipova 2009: 205].

A

Vladimir Vladimirovich, I've got two bits of news for you, one good one, one bad one. Which would you like to hear first?

The good one.

You've been elected President!

And the bad one?

Well, nobody actually voted for you [Guseva 2011].

¹ See: <<http://www.facebook.com/groups/236087386462841/277276462343933/>>.

D

Vladimir Vladimirovich, I've got two bits of news for you: a good one and a bad one.

Give me the bad one first.

The Communists got 51 %.

So how come there's any good news?

You got 152 %! (blogs).

E

Vladimir Vladimirovich, I've got some good news and some bad news.

Which would you like to hear first?

The good news.

United Russia got 65 % of the votes.

And the bad news?

So did the Communists (PC).

420. Who will contribute towards saving the president?

Forums and blogs — 420, Integrum — 14: NP — 3, LP — 6, FIP — 5

An old subject, which existed as a variant about the Jews going on a visit to a concentration camp after the war.¹ The subject was topical during the Orange Revolution [Lisyuk 2005].

B

A bloke is stuck in a jam on Nevsky Prospekt. Suddenly there's a knock on the window. He winds it down and asks what's up.

'Some terrorists have taken the PM hostage and they want a 10 million dollar ransom, or they'll pour a load of petrol over him and set fire.

We're organizing a whip-round.

'Well... I can certainly spare 5 litres myself.' (blogs).

264. Perelman and the election results

Forums and blogs — 264, Integrum: IP — 3, LIP — 1

A

When Grigory Perelman discovered that 147 % of the electorate had voted in Rostov province, and 130 % in Voronezh province, he immediately offered to cede all his prizes for mathematics to the Central Electoral Commission [Narodnyi folklor 2011].²

¹ The reference is to a tasteless joke about a bus breaking down somewhere in Germany: the driver stops a local farmer and explains that he is stuck, and is taking a group of elderly Jews to Auschwitz. Can the farmer help? The farmer replies: 'Sorry, I'd be happy to, but I'm not on the gas main myself.' [Editor].

² 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 6 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111206.html#52>>.

234. Announcement by the Central Electoral Commission

Forums and blogs — 234, Integrum — 13: NP — 2, LP — 8, CIZ — 2, IM — 1

A

*The Central Electoral Commission has announced that it will not allow vote-rigging by the people*¹ [*Narodnyi folkolor* 2011].

223. Falsification of winter

Forums and blogs — 223, Integrum — 0

A

The Snow Maiden accused Grandfather Frost of falsifying the winter. Grandfather Frost told her not to rock the sledge and accused her of collaborating with a foreign agent, Santa Claus (blogs).

222. Letter to Father Christmas

Forums and blogs — 222, Integrum — 0

A

*Oh yes, Grandfather Frost, and there's something else: I'd like a new little teddy bear [medvedik] as well. The old one's got above himself. Thanks and all best, Vova.*²

214. The people's future

Forums and blogs — 214, Integrum — 3: ИП — 2, IP — 1

The subject appeared about 2007.

A

Putin holds a meeting with United Russia representatives after the elections:

'Congratulations on our victory, gentlemen. Now we've got a free hand. Time to think about the people, too.'

Someone calls out:

'Dead right, Vladimir Vladimirovich. 200 or so serfs apiece should do it.' [*V Internete* 2011].

¹ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 6 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111206.html#52>>; 'Censor.net'. 2011. 6 Dec. <<http://censor.net.ua/jokes/29909>>.

² 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 25 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111225.html#25>>.

170. Progress of Vote-rigging

Forums and blogs — 170, Integrum — 0

A

*The vote-rigging has been proceeding well. There has been no evidence of voting in the irregularities.*¹

166. Churov and Perelman's Theorems

Forums and blogs — 166, Integrum 14: IP — 7, IM — 4, NP — 1, LP — 2

A

Grigory Perelman called to say there was no way he could solve Churov's Theorem [Cherkasova 2011; Arifmetika 2011].

158. Churov and Copperfield

Forums and blogs — 158, Integrum: IP — 3

The joke already existed in 2009 (see variant A); this is a classic example of an old subject regaining topicality.

A

After the 11 October elections, the following joke started going round: the magician David Copperfield arrives in Russia and asks, 'When can I meet up with my mate Churov?' [Perlov 2009].

C

After the Russian elections, David Copperfield admitted that he might as well pull out of the World Conjuring Championships: Churov would wipe the floor with him (blogs).

158. 'For United Russia!'

Forums and blogs — 158, Integrum — 33: NP — 11, LP — 10, IP — 8, IM — 4

The subject was extremely popular in 2007 (see variant A) in connexion with the elections and the seizure of leaflets with political jokes by the FSB in Novosibirsk [Alekseyevsky 2010; Arkhipova 2007b].

A

A bloke's walking down the street when a journalist comes up to him and says: 'Excuse me, could I ask which party you'll be voting for?' The bloke answers: 'Just f...' The journalist cuts him off right there: 'For United Russia! Excellent choice!' [Polguyeva 2007].

¹ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 5 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111205.html#6>>.

B

A journalist is doing a survey for a radio programme out on the street. He stops someone and says: 'Excuse me, could I ask which party you'll be voting for?' The bloke answers: 'Just f...' The journalist cuts him off right there: 'For United Russia! Excellent choice!' [V Internete 2011].

157. Churov's burns

Forums and blogs — 157, Integrum — 4: IP — 2, IM — 1, FIP — 1

A

Urgent! As a result of a fire in Moscow, the head of the Central Electoral Commission, Vladimir Churov, has suffered burns over 146 % of his body [Internet 2011].

B

The Guardian cites two jokes: The head of the Central Electoral Commission, Vladimir Churov, has been the victim of a fire, which has damaged 146 % of his skin [Grigoryan 2011].

153. Everybody out of Twitter!

Forums and blogs — 153, Integrum — 5: NP — 3, IP — 1, IM — 1

The joke became popular at the end of September 2011, when Putin announced his third candidacy.

B

After Putin was proposed as a candidate for a new term as president, there was an announcement at the United Russia congress: 'Everybody out of Twitter!' (blogs, 6 Jan. 2012).

133. Why Medvedev doesn't believe there was any vote-rigging

A

Radio Erevan is asked: Medvedev's always on the Internet, so why doesn't he believe the stories about vote-rigging? Radio Erevan answers: Because Putin got him the 'Kiddy Safe' version of Megaphone broadband (PC).

131. A hard choice

Forums and blogs — 131, Integrum — 20: NP — 3, LP — 5, IP — 5, IM — 1, FIP — 3, TV and radio — 3

A

On 26 March, Russia will have a difficult choice at the polls: Putin, Putin, or Putin? [Anekdoty 2000].

E

*The plot thickens at the Russian elections: Everyone is wondering whether Putin will be the next president — or on the other hand, will it be Putin?*¹

126. Putin is our always

Forums and blogs — 126, Integrum — 7: NP — 4, IP — 1, IM — 1, LP — 1

The joke appeared no later than 2006 (cf. variants A and B); see also subject III.18 in [Arkhipova 2009: 213].

A

A new joke's going round: We already know Pushkin's our all, and Tsereteli's our everywhere. Now we also know Putin's our always. [Mishin 2007; cf. a closely comparable joke in the blogs on 5 December 2011].

112. A new mobile phone tariff

Forums and blogs — 112, Integrum — 10: NP — 4, LP — 2, IP — 3, TV and radio — 1

There are two versions of the subject of the joke, which appeared no later than 2004. See subject I.11 in [Arkhipova 2009: 206].

A

*Have you heard the one about the new mobile phone tariff? The Presidential! Rates guaranteed for a lifetime! (PC, 2004).*²

B

[Record of Putin's calls]:

Khordokovsky rang. 22 minutes. Wanted to say he was sorry. I told him, No.

The wife rang, 35 minutes. Wanted to know what a roundabout is. What's she on?

Fradkov rang, 3 minutes, said he was running late. I told him to put a spoke in it.

Berezovsky rang, 6 minutes. Got the wrong number. I gave him Boris Nikolaevich's [Yeltsin's] number.

Khodorkovsky rang again. 18 minutes. Just hung on the line and didn't say anything. I gave him Berezovsky's number.

Fradkov rang again. 8 minutes. He wanted to know whether he should buy anything on his way back. I said I wanted some biscuits. What's he on?

¹ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 23 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111223.html#26>>.

² Some Russian mobile telephone companies offer 'lifetime' rates to subscribers. [Editor].

My phone rang out of juice. Whole 50 minutes like totally useless. Got the bodyguards to recharge it.

Abramovich rang, 45 minutes, and told me about how the match had gone. One-nil — great stuff! The head of security rang and asked when to close down the Rublyovka road. I said, you can start right now.

Abramovich rang again, 45 minutes, told me how the second half went. The head of security rang again, 24 minutes, the Rublyovka road's closed now. Should we leave?

Boris Nikolaevich rang, 57 minutes, and said, why the flipping heck did I give Berezovsky his number? I said he'd got the wrong number himself.

96. Medvedev's conscience

Forums and blogs — 96, Integrum — 16: IP — 2, LP — 14

'Just as well the ballot's secret,' Medvedev thought, and decided to vote Communist, partly because he was feeling kind of sore, but mainly because — God knows why — his conscience was giving him trouble.¹ [Novyi assotsiativnyi ryad 2011].

78. The Restaurant Bill

Forums and blogs — 78, Integrum — 3: LP — 2, IP — 1

A

When I got the bill in a restaurant the other day, I realised that it's not only the Central Electoral Commission that knows how to massage figures (blogs).

75. Putin's mother congratulates him

Forums and blogs — 75, Integrum — 7: NP — 3, IM — 2, LP — 2

An old subject, recorded in 2002, see subject I.2 in [Arkhipova 2009: 203]. There is also a variant about Lukashenko (PC, 2011).

A

The future president is sitting in his office when the phone rings. He picks up the receiver, listens for a few seconds, hangs up, then dials a number himself and says:

'Hey, Mum! Guess what? I've won the presidential elections!'

Putin's mum says excitedly:

'Oooh! You never!'

'Mum, I thought I could at least rely on you not to take the piss!'
[110 cases, 2002; cf. closely similar anecdote on the Internet, 2011].

¹ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 5 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111205.html#10>>.

73. *The Old-Believer Village*

Forums and blogs — 73, Integrum — 3: LP — 1, NP — 1, IP — 1

It is interesting that this is a political re-working of a non-political joke (see version A); the first occurrence of the 'political version' in the blogs (21 Oct. 2011) is copied from an article: [Pishchikova 2011].

A

*Not long ago, way out in Cloud Cuckooland province, a family of Old Believers came to light who still believe in the State Savings Bank.*¹

B

Far out in Siberia, in the taiga, there's an Old Believer village where people still believe that Medvedev is president of Russia [Pishchikova 2011].

69. *Churov's report*

Forums and blogs — 69, Integrum: IP — 1

A

At a meeting with Medvedev, Central Electoral Commission chief Churov reported that the vote-rigging was proceeding smoothly, with no violations observed (blogs).

66. *The Devil's Announcement*

Forums and blogs — 66, Integrum — 2: LP — 1, IM — 1

A

The Devil has decided to copy Putin: at a recent press conference he announced that he had nothing to do with the Hell Party and had always enjoyed complete political autonomy [Anekdoty 2011].

63. *How people vote*

Forums and blogs — 63, Integrum — 3: IP — 1, IM — 1, ZIP — 1

A

Thanks to the recent State Duma elections, we now know not just WHO will be president, but also BY WHAT PERCENTAGE (blogs).

¹ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2002. 10 Oct. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an0210/s021010.html#38>>.

56. The gagged opposition

Forums and blogs — 56, Integrum — 2: IP — 1, FIP — 1

A

Putin: 'How can you talk to the opposition? They keep mewling something you can't understand.'

*'Vladimir Vladimirovich, have you tried taking the gag out?'*¹

40. Rules of Democracy

Forums and blogs — 40, Integrum — 0

A

*The Russian elections were carried out according to all the rules of apparent democracy.*² (blogs).

38. United society

Forums and blogs — 38, Integrum — 0

A

So has United Russia really united Russian society?

*Yes, against United Russia!*³ (blogs).

19. KaaPut

Forums and blogs — 19, Integrum — 0

A

I wonder, will March 2012 be the time when Russia goes KaaPut? (blogs, 21 Dec. 2011).

18. Medvedev and Putin at the end of January

Forums and blogs — 18, Integrum: IP — 1

A

It's late January, and Medvedev's wife says to him:

'Dima, dear, are you ever going to get rid of that New Year tree?'

*'Why should I, darling? Vovochka will be back in the spring, he can deal with it himself.'*⁴

¹ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 29 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111229.html#3>>.

² 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 5 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111205.html#11>>.

³ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 5 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111205.html#13>>.

⁴ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 27 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111227.html#49>>.

18. 1920 and 2011

Forums and blogs — 18, Integrum: IP — 1

A

Recently discovered newsreel footage from the 1920s:

Lenin at a meeting with the Governor of California, Charlie Chaplin.

Lenin and Stalin say, 'Of all the sports, the most important for us is badminton.'

Lenin dancing the 'Apple' at a reunion for former pupils of Simbirsk Classical High School.

Alexander Bell presenting Lenin with the latest version of his new invention, the telephone.

Stalin, after being told that the Trotskyites are holding a meeting on Bolotnaya Square, chuckles and says, 'No harm in that: the boys need to earn a little pocket money!' (blogs).

18. Putin at the Fortune-teller's

Forums and blogs — 18, Integrum — 0

First recorded in blogs and forums on 28 Nov. 2011, and growing in popularity at the beginning of January 2012.

A

Putin visits a fortune-teller and asks her to tell his fortune.

She replies: 'I can see in my crystal ball an image of you in an open-topped limousine, and there are hundreds of thousands of people milling around.'

Putin looks surprised. The fortune-teller goes on:

'I can see that the people are all very happy, there they all are with flags and balloons, clapping and shouting "Bravo!" They're all beaming!'

Putin smiles and says:

'So the people really do love me! And do I shake their hands?'

'No.'

'Why not?'

'Because the lid of the coffin is nailed down!' (blogs).

15. The Churov Cocktail

Forums and blogs — 15, Integrum — 0

A

Recipe for a new cocktail, the Churov: 25 % grenadine, 12 % freshly squeezed lemon juice, 90 % vodka (blogs).

15. Euphemism

Forums and blogs — 15, Integrum — 0

A

Putin and Surkov are sitting in the Kremlin. Outside the walls, the sounds of an oppositionist meeting can be heard. ‘What’s that they’re yelling?’ Putin asks Churkov, who is standing at the window. ‘Hum, how do I put this, Vladimir Vladimirovich?.. They’re yelling that you’re... a “white ribbon”.’ (blogs).¹

13. Three government figures in a plane

Forums and blogs — 2, Integrum: LP — 1

This is a very old subject in a traditional framework (competition between three rulers), widespread and typical for many totalitarian regimes. This, for example, is a contemporary Cuban joke:

Fidel [Castro], Raul [Castro] and Machado Ventura [the Cuban vice-president, known as La Momia] are flying over Habana. Fidel says: ‘I’m going to throw a 100 peso note out of the plane.’ [to make people happy]. Raul says, ‘I’m going to throw two 50 peso notes out.’ So La Momia says: ‘And I’m going to throw out 100 one-peso notes.’ And the pilot tells him: ‘Better jump out yourself, and make a whole 11 million people very happy.’ (PC, the original in Spanish).

This is the oldest subject in the collection. In the Soviet period it was most often expressed in two basic versions (*the cheapest way to make the people happy is to execute the tyrant and an aeroplane carrying the government crashed, but the nation survived*):

Stalin calls a meeting of leading communists to discuss the speediest, most efficient, and most economical way of making the Soviet people happy. Radek whispers something to his neighbour and the neighbour starts corpsing. He tries to cover it up. But Stalin notices.

‘What’s so funny, Radek?’ he asks.

‘Don’t worry, it’s only as silly joke. It’ll just annoy you,’ Radek says.

Stalin insists he wants to hear it, and promises that Radek won’t get into trouble.

¹ A reference to Putin’s well-known comment in an interview where he said that he had assumed that the white ribbons were linked with an anti-AIDS drive, and signified ‘condoms’ (*gondony*). *Gondon* is also a vulgar word for an idiot (something like ‘dickhead’ in terms of register), as in a joke from the late 1980s: “‘I’ve just heard that the International Red Cross has delivered a consignment of condoms [partiya gondonov] to Pulkovo airport.” “What do we need that for? We’ve already got a dickheads’ party [partiya gondonov]”’. [Editor].

'The speediest, most efficient, and most economical way of making the Soviet people happy, comrade Stalin,' says Radek, 'is to rig up a gallows on Red Square — and hang you on it.' (subject IIX.6B [Arkhipova, Melnichenko 2010: 248]).

A

Medvedev, Putin, and Kudrin are taking a trip in a helicopter. Kudrin says:

'I'm going to throw down a 1000 rouble note, and make someone very happy!'

Putin says:

'And I'm going to throw down two 500 rouble notes, and make two people very happy!'

At which Medvedev retorts:

'Look at these philanthropists! I'm going to throw down ten 100 rouble notes and make ten people very happy!'

And the pilot turns round and says:

'That's nothing! I'm going to press the ejector button and send you three dickheads to f...! And that will make an entire 129 million people as happy as can be!' (blogs).

12. Churov's Wife

Forums and blogs — 12, Integrum — 0

A

Churov's wife is expecting a baby.

He takes her to the doctor.

'Well? What's the test say? Is it a boy or a girl?'

'Hum, at this stage it's impossible to tell for sure.'

'So what are the chances of a boy?'

'There's a 146 % chance of a boy, but a 132 % chance of a girl.' (blogs).

9. Churov in America

Forums and blogs — 9, Integrum — 2: TV — 1, LP — 1

The joke appeared in 2000¹ [Arkhipova 2009: 206]. It was a response to current affairs: at that point the world was following the presidential race between Gore and Bush, which was decided by the counting and recounting of votes in Florida. It came to life again in 2007, when on 3 November (a month before the Duma elections and a week after the scandal surrounding the Novosibirsk branch of the FSB) the well-known television presenter V. V. Pozner unexpectedly ended his evening broadcast on Channel One with 'a joke from Zyuganov':

¹ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2000. 9 Nov. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an0011/j001109.html#1>>.

George Bush calls President Putin and asks: ‘Hi Vladimir, how’re you doing?’

‘Fine, thanks. And you?’

‘Not too good. Got elections coming up, to Congress. The Republicans are behind in all 50 states. I’m real pissed.’ Putin says, then I’ll send over our CEC chief, he’s called Churov, he can fix things for you.

So he does.

10 days later or so, Churov rings Putin and says, ‘Vladimir Vladimirovich, I’m glad to report we’re getting things in hand.’

‘So fill me in.’

‘There’s a small lead now in all 50 states. For United Russia.’ [Alekseyevsky 2010: 28].

A

Obama and Medvedev hold a meeting. Medvedev asks: Hey Barack, what you so down for? ‘Well, the Democrats are bombing in the polls.’ ‘Don’t worry, I’ll send Churov over.’

A few days later Medvedev asks Churov: ‘So how’s it going?’

‘Just fine, Dmitry Anatolyevich: United Russia has a big lead all over the US!’ [Selezneva 2011].

7. Pig-keeper’s electioneering

Forums and blogs — 7, Integrum: IP — 2

A

Hey, mate, listen to this! Lyuba the pig-keeper’s just got sent down for 15 days for illegal electioneering!

So what did she do?

She was going round saying: Those pigs’ve been scoffing more than they should, time they got the chop! [Nikitchuk 2011].

6. Vote-rigging concert

Forums and blogs — 6, Integrum — 4: NP — 1, LP — 1, FIP — 2

A

A big gala concert’s just been held in the Rossiya concert hall. There were lots of great acts: hunt the ballot paper, double your numbers, and as the grand finale, vote early, vote often!¹

¹ ‘Korrespondent.net’. 2011. 6 Dec. <<http://censor.net.ua/jokes/29912>>.

5. *Blushing cameras*

Forums and blogs — 5, Integrum — 0

A

The CEC has installed some new video cameras at polling stations: if violations are observed, they're programmed to go bright red and turn in the other direction...¹

5. *The Pied Piper*

Forums and blogs — 5, Integrum — 0

This text originated in English²:

A man from Atlanta moved to New York. As he wandered the streets he stopped at an antique shop and decided to go in. On looking around he noticed a very strange-looking bronze cat which had a tag on it saying, "Bronze Cat \$30.00, Story \$150.00". The man was very curious and asked the salesman to explain.

"Well" said the man, "it's just like it says, \$30 for the cat and \$150 for its story."

"I'll just take the cat," said the man.

"Very well, but you will be back," said the salesman.

The man left the shop with the cat in his pocket.

As he walked down the street he heard a strange meowing sound. On turning around he noticed there were a couple of cats following him.

The farther he walked the more cats seemed to follow him. As he got to the Brooklyn Bridge he turned to see thousands of cats behind him.

"Screw this!" he said to himself and threw the bronze cat into the river. All the cats jumped into the river, too, and were drowned. The man returned to the shop where he bought the cat.

"I knew you would be back. \$150.00 for the story," said the salesman.

"Forget the story," said the man. "Have you got a bronze Mets fan?"³

A

A man walks into a gift shop. He sees a little bronze figure of a cat. The price tag says: CAT 1000 roubles; STORY ABOUT IT 10000 roubles' 'Can I not buy the cat without buying the story?' he asked the salesman.

¹ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 28 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111229.html#19>>.

² I am grateful to M. Alekseyevsky for indicating this source.

³ 'HaHaHaSports.com' <<http://www.hahahasports.com/jokes.html>>.

'Of course,' comes the answer, 'but you'll soon be back for the story.' The man buys the bronze and sets off across town. Then suddenly he notices that first one cat is following him, then another, then more and more of them. Soon he has thousands padding along behind him. Gripped by horror, he starts to run. The cats keep following. So he chucks the bronze in the river. All the cats completely lose interest in him and jump straight in the water — where they duly drown. The man goes back to the gift shop. 'I said you'd be back for the story!' says the salesman. 'Bugger the story!' says the man. 'It's a bronze United Russia politician I'm after.' (blogs).

4. Fake orgasms

Forums and blogs — 4, Integrum: FIP — 1

A

The Guardian has published the following joke: 'United Russia wives don't fake orgasm, they rig it.' [Grigoryan 2011].

4. Future voting

Forums and blogs — 4, Integrum: IP — 2

A

This joke evidently appeared after President Medvedev's declaration that provincial governors would be held responsible, and might even be dismissed, if United Russia did badly in their provinces: 5 March 2012. According to CEC figures, there have been multiple cases of vote-rigging at polling stations. Electoral observers have discovered a huge number of votes that aren't for Putin and United Russia. The voters responsible will be severely punished.¹ [Narodnyi folklor 2011].

4. A question on a photographers' forum

Forums and blogs — 4, Integrum — 0

A

At an online forum of photographers:

Imagine that you're doing some nature shots by a river. Suddenly you hear shouts for help: a swimmer's in trouble. You run up to the bank and see the Russian president. He stretches his arm out so you can pull him out of trouble. What do you do: take the shot in colour, or would you go for classic black and white? (blogs, 7 Dec. 2011).

¹ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 6 Dec. <<http://www.anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111206.html#42>>.

3. *Congratulations from Churov*

Forums and blogs — 3, Integrum: FIP — 1

A

The end of the count in the State Duma elections of 3 December 2011 is expected this evening. This morning, Churov rang Putin to congratulate him on victory in the 2012 presidential elections. (blogs).

2. *Churov counts the people at a meeting*

Forums and blogs — 2, Integrum — 0

A

Navalny says to Nemtsov:

'So why did you say there were 100 thousand people at the meeting? It can't have been more than 20 thousand!'

*'Those figures were from Churov.'*¹

2. *The Year of the Dragon*

Forums and blogs — 2, Integrum — 0

A

*It's midnight on 31 December 2011. Dmitry Medvedev appears on the TV screen with his New Year message. It's very short: 'Dear fellow citizens of the Russian Federation! It's now the Year of the Dragon! A very Happy New Year to you all!' The national anthem starts playing, and the picture switches to the Kremlin towers — with Putin's face projected on them.*²

2. *Whom to vote for*

Forums and blogs — 2, Integrum — 0

A

An exit poll is in progress. The pollsters stop a man on his way out of the polling station.

'Excuse me. Could you possibly tell us how you voted?'

'Ha, ha, what a question! Love to know the answer myself!' (blogs).

¹ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 28 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111228.html#23>>.

² 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 29 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111229.html#26>>.

2. The next presidential elections

Forums and blogs — 2, Integrum — 0

A

*Have you heard how they're buying 60 thousand glass boxes for ballot papers to use at the presidential elections? Well, when you bury democracy, you should do it in style! In a glass coffin!*¹

2. Letter to Father Christmas

Forums and blogs — 2, Integrum — 0

This text is the caption to a satirical postcard.

A

Dear Grandfather Frost: Please give me a new president and prime minister for Christmas. I don't like the old ones. Maybe you want them as reindeer for your sledge? (blogs).

2. A song for the governors

Forums and blogs — 2, Integrum — 0

A

*In the restaurant. The band leader announces: 'And now I have a request from Dima at Table Number One. He's asked me to play 'On the Way to Vladimir Prison', specially for the governors with low United Russia votes!*²

2. Putin's Amphora and Medvedev's I-Phone

Forums and blogs — 2, Integrum — 1

A

President Putin opens the amphora and out jumps a djinn, which immediately offers him a wish: 'I want a third term,' says Putin. Then Medvedev opens his amphora, but he only finds a new I-Phone 3 inside [Ganapolsky 2011].

¹ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 29 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111229.html#25>>.

² 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 7 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111207.html#28>>.

2. *Allah and Russia*

Forums and blogs — 2, Integrum — 1

A

*O, the munificence of Allah! For truly he hath lavished untold wealth on Chechnya, and 99.5 % of the vote on United Russia!*¹

1. *New Technology*

Forums and blogs — 1, Integrum — 0

A

New invention for the 2070 elections! As soon as the voter marks the ballot paper, the surname of the right candidate appears electronically alongside! (FSR).

0. *Putin and Mikhalkov*

Forums and blogs — 0, Integrum: LP — 1

The joke has existed since 2009.

A

People's Artiste of the Russian Federation Sergei Sosnovsky amused his audience with a new political joke he'd made up himself [...] and which appears in today's edition of Reporter newspaper (Saratov):

'Nikita Mikhalkov pays a call on Putin:

"Vladimir Vladimirovich, I'm making a blockbuster biopic about you. We're showing it all — childhood, boyhood, judo... All the stars of the Russian cinema have agreed to take part. And I'll be playing you myself.'

'But then you'll have to shave off your moustache.'

'No, Vladimir Vladimirovich: you'll need to grow one.' [Saratovskiy aktor 2011].

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¹ 'Jokes from Russia'. 2011. 6 Dec. <<http://anekdot.ru/an/an1112/j111206.html#43>>; 'Censor.net'. 2011. 6 Dec. <<http://censor.net.ua/jokes/29910>>.

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¹ The jokes were translated by Catriona Kelly.