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# The Confiscation of Chto Delat Newspaper: Update and Thank You

ByChto Delat Platform

<http://chtodelat.wordpress.com/2008/10/11/confiscation-thank-you/>

Hello, Everyone!

In the hustle and bustle of September and early October, I was unable to inform you what happened to the new issues of our newspaper.

As you know, our issue on perestroika was confiscated during a police search at the printing plant. The prosecutor's office ordered an expert inquest as to whether it violated the law on extremism, which has recently been applied to many publications and even bloggers in Russia.

I have to confess that this has caused us to undertake a serious rethinking of the situation insofar as the regular publication of our newspaper is a fundamental part of our collective work. It seemed like a catastrophe that this work could be interrupted at any moment at the whim of the extremists amongst the authorities. However, we have to accept the reality we are given and adopt corresponding methods of struggle. We made the decision not to pay any mind to this situation and calmly deliver the new issue of the paper to the same printing plant and ask that it be printed. What did we have to lose? We had planned to publish the new issue, *Knowledge in Action* (which deals with the practices of non-institutional, free universities in Russia and elsewhere, and the broader historical context for their emergence), for distribution at the European Social Forum, in Malmö, in collaboration with the Street University. The new issue was to be printed ten days after the unexpected confiscation of the previous number. The new issue was much more pointed than the perestroika issue. We of course knew that now it would be subject to illegal censorship since experience had shown that all printing plants have made it a practice to send dubious material to the KGB for review, and that, without their sanction, no printing plant would risk being shut down.

We didn't subject the new number to self-censorship. We submitted it precisely in the form that we had planned to publish it. To our great relief, it was printed on schedule.

This, I think, was a huge success. In the interim we had been in constant contact with the cops, the prosecutor's office, and the owner of the printing plant. (The owner, Sergei Beryozin, a veteran liberal and political activist since the perestroika period, proved himself to be a quite decent man, politically speaking. I am incredibly grateful to him for his assistance in informal negotiations and his clearly expressed sympathy for our publication.) We insisted to all these parties that our patience was running out and that if nothing was done, we would file a countersuit, that we were prepared to go to court at any moment.

One curious aspect of our case was that the cops justified the delay in completing the inquest by referring to the complications of comparing the Russian and English texts. So now we are confident that our translations are absolutely accurate: official experts have checked them for their extremist content!

The conflict was finally resolved on October 2. A courier delivered the entire print run of the number on the day our film *Perestroika Songspiel* had its premiere at the Rodina Cinema Centre. Given the situation, I see this as a victory, albeit a modest one.

We will continue to publish the newspaper whatever the circumstances: we are now prepared to face any problems and any new instances of persecution. Another positive outcome of this case is the high level of solidarity that was manifested by our friends both here in Russia and abroad. An enormous amount of information about our case was distributed on the Internet, the number of visitors to our websites increased sharply, and we received many letters of support and offers of assistance. We are incredibly grateful for this wave of real solidarity. It has inspired us to continue pursuing our common cause with newfound strength.

Thanks to all of you,

*Dmitry Vilensky*

*Chto Delat Work Group*