

# yo-yo

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## The pioneer spirit, made in Russia

A success story: The Russian  
branch of the Simba Dickie Group

## With heart and mind

French toys by Ecoiffier for children  
suffering from cancer in Russia

Galina Rass,  
Managing Director  
Simba Toys Russia





# THE PIONEER SPIRIT, MADE IN *Russia*

*Galina Rass and Boris Pevzner have set up the Russian office of the Simba Dickie Group. Today, it ranks among the most successful branches of one of the largest toy manufacturers in the world. A success story.*







They are a perfect team. The close relationship Galina Rass and Boris Pevzner have with one another dates back to their childhood in St. Petersburg. One gains a sense of how affectionate these siblings' relationship is to this day. It is evident during their joint interview in a Moscow shopping centre. When Galina and Boris talk about the early days of Simba Toys Russia, the unconventional launch of the commercial establishment, the time after the collapse of the Soviet regime and the sense back then of a new beginning in Russia, they practically complete one another's sentences without thinking.

More than 20 years ago, in 1992, they set up a Russian sales operation for toys together in their home city of St. Petersburg. Even then, it became clear that the two complemented one another perfectly, not just in terms of their personalities but in business as well. They were driven by the all-pervasive pioneer spirit of the early 1990s. "Suddenly, it was a different, new Russia", Galina recalls.

Just how far the country has come since then can be seen in the way modern skyscrapers and office buildings are being built today alongside familiar structures dating to the era of the tsars, such as the Kremlin or St. Basil's Cathedral.

### Pioneers in the Russian toy market

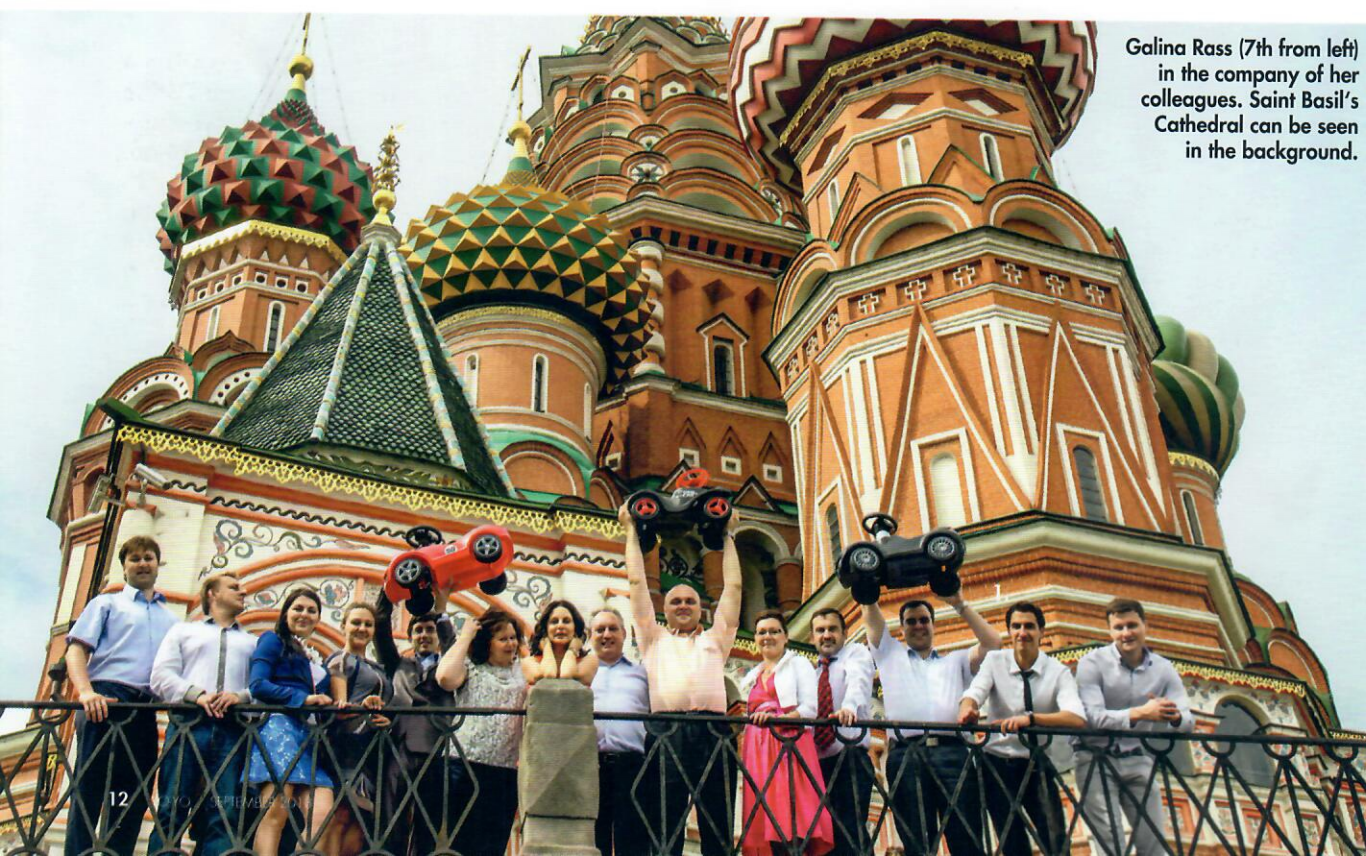
For the two open-minded businesspeople, this new-found attitude towards life in

their country meant one thing in particular: a career change. It was a difficult time for people in Russia. Everyone had to find his or her place in changed circumstances. Everyone had to realise how life was going to be from then on. At the time, Galina and Boris decided that Russian children should be able to play with the same, high-quality toys as other European children. In their research into new products in various trading firms, the Simba Dickie Group caught their attention; they contacted the company in Germany. That was in late 1992. Just two months later, Galina paid her first visit to the Toy Fair in Nuremberg. Everything went quickly after that: In 1994, the siblings set up a joint venture together with Michael Sieber, CEO of the Simba Dickie Group. Then, in 2007, their company became the official subsidiary branch of the Simba Dickie Group. Simba Toys Russia has steadily grown ever since. Today, the Russian branch, now headquartered with its main office in the metropolis of Moscow, includes locations in Kazakhstan and Ukraine as well.

While the branch operation now has a genuine success story to tell, the early years in particular were difficult ones. The year 1998 posed a major challenge with the devaluation of the Russian rouble. "Michael Sieber was very supportive of us during this period of crisis, and he always believed in us and our success", Galina recounts. "In the beginning, I

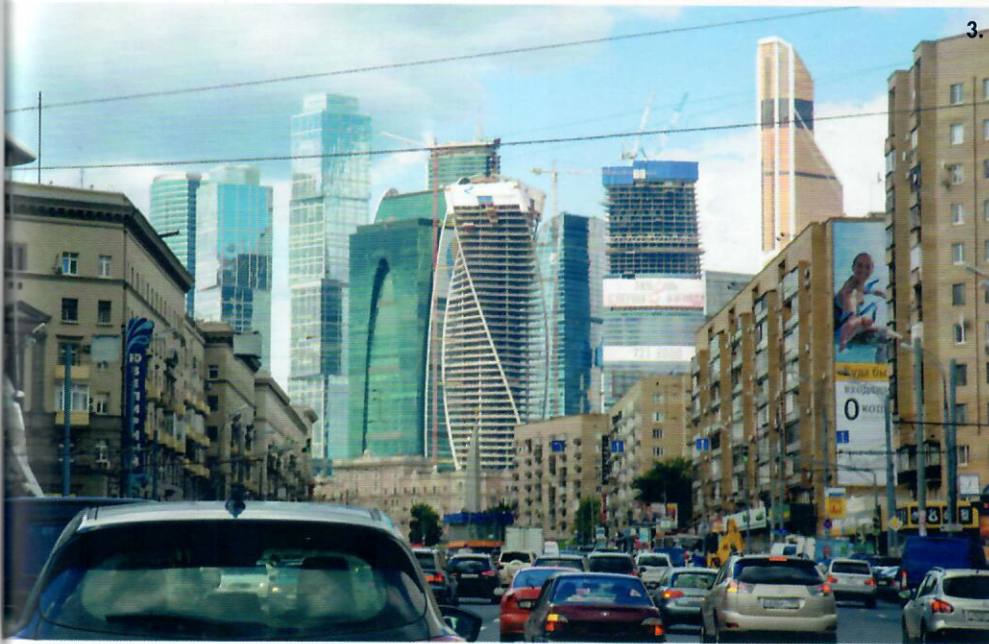


1. Many employees have been working for Simba Toys Russia right from the beginning.
2. During the initial phase, Boris Pevzner unloaded the toys from the lorry himself.
3. The other side of Moscow: a modern skyline.
4. Galina Rass, her colleague Irina Nadezhena, Vice-President Finance of Simba Toys Russia (left) and Karina Naymark (centre), a salaried employee at Detskaya GaleReya Yakimanka – one of Moscow's most luxurious department stores for children.



Galina Rass (7th from left) in the company of her colleagues. Saint Basil's Cathedral can be seen in the background.





even unloaded the toys from the lorries with my own hands", Boris recalls, smiling. The company has steadily grown ever since and is one of the country's leading providers of toys today. The siblings now have around 500 employees on the payroll in administration and warehouse operations. Many of these employees have already been working for Simba Toys Russia for decades. Despite the crises encountered along the way, the company has always been very stable and strong. Today, a modern company management sees to it that the products are presented well throughout the market. The company's customers include nearly all toy retailers, such as the 'Detskiy Mir' chain of children's department stores with more than 200 shops, Dochki-Sinochki, Deti, Korablik, Akademiya or Zdoroviy Malish. Added to these are major retail chains such as Auchan, Metro, Magnit, Karusel, Smik and Lenta. There are also luxury department stores such as 'GUM'

on Red Square, Detskaya GaleReya Yakimanka or 'Winnie'. 'GUM' is considered the most beautiful department store in Moscow, offering a genuine shopping experience with its host of designer brands and cafés. Naturally, Russian retailers also offer the broad Simba Dickie Group range for sale.

Galina and Boris also acquainted Russian children with Chi Chi LOVE. These little puppy dogs came onto the Russian market in 2011 and were an immediate smash hit. The little dogs were invented by Christina Sieber, the daughter of company CEO Michael Sieber, when she was 14 years old. It is important to Galina to introduce the young designer to Russian audiences. "Chi Chi LOVE quickly grew very popular. Meanwhile, there are even imitations in circulation", Sergei Marajo, Key Account Manager at Simba Toys Russia, reports with a smile on his face. A TV-spot airing towards the end of this

year will showcase all of the items in the Steffi Love universe. "The Simba Dickie Group branches – with project management by Simba Toys Middle East, Poland, Russia and Italy – have drawn up a TV concept tailored to the respective countries", explains Sergey Chalking, Marketing Manager at Simba Toys Russia. The company is partnering with television stations such as CTC, Disney, TNT, Nickelodeon, Detskiy and Karusel. In recent years, Simba Toys Russia has worked on marketing the well-known Bobby-Car by BIG. The children's vehicle manufacturer has its plant near Nuremberg.

Very popular among Russian customers are the 'paint by numbers' pictures by Schipper Arts & Crafts. "The huge success of pictures produced by Schipper in Germany can be attributed most of all to the high product quality, the variety of motifs and the immense colour spectrum of more than 5,000 nuances", Brand ►



## Moscow

Moscow is the capital of the Russian Federation, and with around 11.55 million inhabitants it is also one of the largest cities in Europe. It is the country's political, economic and cultural centre. The first written mention of Moscow dates back to the year 1147. The most well-known attractions in the city on the Moskva are the Kremlin, Red Square, St. Basil's Cathedral and the Bolshoi Theatre. Due to the incredible density of its churches – there are 600 within the city limits alone – Moscow has also been referred to as 'the Third Rome' since the 16th century. The Kremlin and Red Square in the Moscow city centre have been listed as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage sites since 1990. With eight long-distance railway stations, three international airports and three inland ports, the city is Russia's leading transport hub and its largest industrial city.

**A well-coordinated team right from the start:  
Galina Rass and her brother Boris Pevzner.**



Topped by its red star, Nikolskaya Tower rises 70 metres into the evening sky over Red Square.

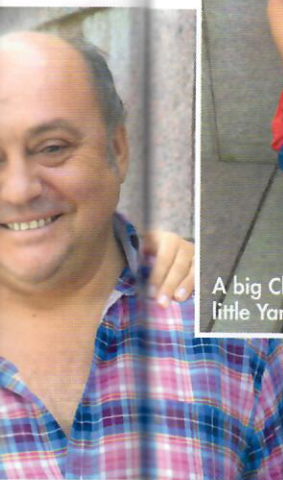


Galina Rass, Boris Pevzner and their colleagues in the office's modern warehouse facility.



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A big Chi Chi LOVE fan:  
little Yaroslava.



*“Our position in the Russian toy market is growing stronger all the time”*

Galina Rass,  
Managing Director Simba Toys Russia

Manager Anna Chochlowa recounts not without pride. Schipper products made their first appearance at trade fairs there in 2011.

Licensed items have naturally found their way into children's rooms in Russia as well. And their market share is growing year by year, for example the little, colourful and particularly cute ponies by Filly. They come from a land beyond the rainbow and are enchanting with their rich colouring. Items by licensors Disney and Marvel are also part of the broad spectrum of licensed products that Simba Toys Russia offers

### Key trade fair presentations

“To present its product range, Simba Toys Russia takes part in the country's leading trade fairs, which are growing bigger and more beautiful with each passing year”, relates Irina Zorina, who is in charge of organising trade fair

presentations for Simba Toys Russia. The company has had a large stand at the trade fair held each autumn and spring, ‘Moscow – Toys and Kids Russia’, since 1997.

“Along with its trade fair appearances, Simba Toys Russia presents its toys on television, runs print advertising or uses the internet as an advertising space”, Boris says. Galina and Boris see opportunities for considerable development at the company. And not without reason: Russian consumers are increasingly interested in quality – particularly when it comes to toys. The high-quality, repeatedly inspected products made by the Simba Dickie Group in its own plants in Germany, France, the Czech Republic, Italy, China and Thailand are perfectly suited for the purpose.

Galina is convinced: “Our position in the Russian toy market is growing stronger all the time”. ■