

Tom Parfitt in Moscow writes in the Guardian's weather blog:

Russia is - unsurprisingly - well-equipped for battling snow. From its fleets of gritting lorries to its nationwide army of dvorniki - the street cleaners who wake Russians every winter morning with the "scrape-scrape" of their shovels - this a country that knows how to fight the frost.

But a new piece of snow-clearing hardware being used in the Urals city of Nizhny Tagil has shocked even the locals: The T-72 tank.

"The thing is that tractors and other special machinery can't always cope with drifts more than a metre high," explained Ivan Sakharov of UralVagonZavod , the town's famous factory that converted from building train carriages to tanks during the Second World War. "But our tanks can."