

2 Pro-Kremlin Parties Square Off Over Popular Blogger

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Glinka

United Russia has assailed one of the country's most prominent humanitarian aid activists with accusations of secretly working for A Just Russia, a rival pro-Kremlin party.

The attack late last week against Yelizaveta Glinka, better known as the popular blogger Dr. Liza, has rocked the Russian blogosphere and raised suspicions that the ruling party is trying to shift attention away from this summer's mishandled wildfires by manufacturing a conflict with its main pro-government rival in the run-up to Oct. 10 regional elections.

Glinka, a medical doctor who has long supported homeless and terminally ill people and this summer coordinated volunteer firefighters, received a call last Wednesday from editors at ER.ru, a general interest web site run by United Russia, requesting that she comment on volunteers' efforts to fight the fires.

Instead of giving a straight "yes" or "no," she turned to fellow LiveJournal bloggers for an answer. In the ensuing [debate](#), which had attracted 254 comments by Sunday evening, a user called "ozoya" advised her to tell the ER.ru people to "go and have a smoke on the Internet." In Russian slang, "go for a smoke" means to "shut up."

Glinka replied that she agreed — and did not bother to return United Russia's call.

Infuriated party officials responded Thursday by posting an [article](#) on ER.ru in which they accused Glinka of snubbing United Russia because her aid organization was working with A Just Russia.

The article quotes Pavel Salin, an analyst with the Kremlin-connected Center of Current Politics, as saying Glinka refused to comment because her Just Aid organization was under the personal patronage of A Just Russia leader Sergei Mironov. He said some of the commentators on her blog might even be sitting in A Just Russia's party headquarters, acting on Mironov's orders.

Pavel Danilin, a prominent pro-Kremlin blogger and analyst, said in the article that "anything relating to United Russia is like a red rag to a bull to these liberally minded people on the Internet."

"In reality, these so-called independent aid workers are politically linked, in this case by A Just Russia," he was quoted as saying.

Reached by telephone Friday, Glinka confirmed that Mironov was her organization's biggest sponsor — but denied any political meddling. "I have known him for seven years, and he has supported us — but always as a private person and never as a politician," she said.

Mironov's spokesman Vladimir Avdeyev also confirmed links between A Just Russia and Just Aid and said the United Russia attack probably reflected its nervousness in the run-up to October elections.

"This will increase," Avdeyev said of United Russia's attacks.

United Russia and A Just Russia got into a bizarre squabble ahead of the last regional elections in March when Mironov said he disagreed with some of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's anti-crisis policies. United Russia subsequently accused Mironov of disrespect and called for his dismissal as Federation Council speaker.

United Russia commands a two-thirds majority in the State Duma and boasts a similar dominance throughout the country's smaller legislative bodies. A Just Russia has the smallest Duma faction, with 8 percent of the seats.

Analysts have said rivalry between the two parties is mainly driven by the fact that both compete for support from the ruling bureaucracy: so-called administrative resources.

Blogger and pundit Vladimir Pribylovsky, who heads the Panorama think tank, said the latest attack by United Russia probably also reflected intraparty struggles.

"United Russia's factions are now vying for influence and positioning themselves before the

October elections and next year's State Duma elections," he said.

While Putin, who heads United Russia without being a member, has cultivated his strongman image during the fires, appearing in destroyed villages and piloting an amphibious firefighting aircraft, the party itself has struggled to make positive headlines.

Instead, bloggers have derided attempts by United Russia supporters to be at the forefront of volunteer efforts. Among other things, bloggers have accused Federation Council Senator Ruslan Gattarov, a leader of United Russia's youth movement Young Guard, of amateurishly staging photos of himself putting out fires in the Ryazan region.

Gattarov has denied the charges, *Noviye Izvestia* [reported](#).

No matter the politics behind United Russia's attack, it will bring welcome publicity to Glinka and her volunteers, said Tatyana Stanovaya, an analyst with the Center for Political Technologies.

"People like Glinka are vying for attention and money. Maybe that is why she decided to blog about her refusal to comment," Stanovaya said.

Glinka, however, said she was bent on ignoring the political brouhaha. "I am trying to focus on the fire victims. I will not let this get in my way," she said.

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