The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

In the Spotlight: Tabloid Tasering

By Anna Malpas

October 07, 2010

This week, gossip columnist Bozhena Rynska caused some gossip of her own, writing a lovingly detailed account of how she was groped in a nightclub and then took revenge with a Taser.

Rynska, who writes for Gazeta.ru since quitting the Izvestia newspaper in a fit of pique, is the only gossip columnist to have a high profile herself. She gets photographed at parties and writes a popular blog. She is also not above spreading the odd rumor: At one point her death was reported, and she let the news simmer for a while before quashing it.

Perhaps her finest hour was when she broke the story about nickel magnate Mikhail Prokhorov turning up with a gang of young girls at the Courchevel ski resort in France in January 2007 and getting questioned by police on suspicion of organizing a prostitution ring.

This time, Rynska poured out her heart in a voluminous blog entry where she described how she sat at the bar in low-cut jeans at a new trendy spot, Art-Akademia, and a man came up and grabbed her “by the ass in the most vulgar way, by sticking his hand in.”

When she turned around "in horror and anger," the man "grinned in my face and roared with laughter," she said.

He did not know his opponent. Rynska prides herself on her survival tactics: "I have to be my own brother, father and husband," she wrote. "I very quietly and extremely politely asked the hosts to chuck out the drunk pig, but when this did not happen I had to defend my honor myself."

First she tried to smash a plate on his head but he fended her off, she wrote. "I went to my car, took out my Taser and struck the person who insulted me."

Rynska with a Taser would be a frightening thing. She writes with regret that she "wasn't able to finish him off with the Taser." The man then hit her on the lip, and she called the police over the assault.

Then things get complicated. The man, Sergei Stishov, also went to the police days later, saying he was assaulted, the Tvoi Den tabloid wrote. State news agency RIA-Novosti questioned three legal experts on who was in the wrong.

Rynska "deliberately left the scene when her health was not at risk and decided to take revenge not with a chair that was close at hand but with a special means," lawyer Valery Pedchenko commented. "Under our law, self-defense must be justified."

At worst, Rynska's offence could be classed as hooliganism, lawyers said, which sounds harmless enough but could mean up to seven years in jail.

Rynska has rallied plenty of support, however. "I completely agree," Yevgenia Albats, editor of The New Times magazine, wrote in her blog. "Brutishness needs to be punished."

The story did not promote universal female solidarity on the Spletnik.ru gossip site, where it was one of the hottest topics. "She got what was coming to her," wrote a blogger called Laura. "The fact that no one around her stepped in is significant. Judging from this, everyone was sick to death of 'Madam's' hysterics," JuliaL said unsympathetically.

Others lamented the fact that women were standing up for gropers. "If you want customs like that in our country, maybe you should go to Iran. There, 'hysterical' women who say a word against men are stoned to death," wrote a user called Princess Kate.

Others just wondered how Rynska managed to call out police to a nightclub on such an allegation. "You would need to make a call to the 'right people,'" one wrote darkly. Which is not a bad argument for packing a Taser.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/10/07/in-the-spotlight-tabloid-tasering-a2047