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Governor Finds Worm in Kremlin Salad

By Alexander Bratersky

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A senior Kremlin official blasted Tver Governor Dmitry Zelenin for "imbecility" on Wednesday, after the regional leader posted online a photo of a worm he found in his salad during a state dinner for German President Christian Wulff.

Zelenin, 47, posted a note to his Twitter account Tuesday evening describing the find and linking to a cell-phone photo of the creature.

“Things like this happen, even in Alexandrovsky Hall. Together with beef, you're being served lettuce with earthworms,” Zelenin wrote.

“It's an attempt of sorts to show that the salad leaves are fresh,” he added.

The post and photograph were quickly deleted, but the Kremlin did not see the humor in Zelenin's blogging.

"Fortunately, I'm responsible for foreign policy questions, but I should probably suggest to

my colleagues who are dealing with the law to introduce to the criteria for evaluating governors a line on 'termination for imbecility,'" Sergei Prikhodko, the Kremlin's top foreign policy aide, told RIA-Novosti on Wednesday evening. "I won't even comment on irresponsibility and foolishness," he said, referring to the post.

The comments seemed even more unforgiving in light of President Dmitry Medvedev's recent decision to sack Mayor Yury Luzhkov. Medvedev fired the longtime city leader for a "loss of confidence."

Zelenin was elected as Tver governor in December 2003 and was reappointed to a second term in July 2007.

Zhanna Lyapunova, a spokeswoman for the governor, declined to comment on why the Twitter post was removed. She told The Moscow Times that the governor's office was focused on Wulff's ongoing visit to the Tver region.

Anatoly Galkin, the Kremlin's head chef, brushed off Zelenin's allegation as "nonsense" in an interview to Lifenews.ru.

All dishes served in the Kremlin “go through a very careful examination," Galkin said, adding that he was on vacation and could not personally look into the matter.

Vladislav Vasyukhin, a food critic for the Gastronom magazine, said finding a worm in a salad — even in the Kremlin — is quite possible.

“While there is strict control over dishes served to the likes of Putin and Medvedev, it's hard to inspect every plate for a reception that serves hundreds of people,” he said, adding that lettuce is hard to wash properly.

“During Stalin's times, the cook might be punished, but today things like that are seen more as an amusing accident,” the critic said.

Incidentally, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's grandfather served as a personal cook to Soviet leaders Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin, according to his official "From the First Person" biography.

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