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In the Spotlight: Putin Party

By Anna Malpas

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This week Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was outraged and demeaned at the idea of a nightclub party with semi-naked girls shouting his name. But luckily, democratic freedoms mean that it took place without any last minute discoveries of fire safety violations.

The Putin Party was put on by Rai, or Heaven, a nightclub in the old Krasny Oktyabr chocolate factory. Women who go to the nightclub picked Putin as the famous man they found most attractive, the PR director told me, rather charmingly referring to the women in English as "go-go dancers." The vote also included football's golden boy David Beckham, along with some dubious candidates such as Bruce Willis and Russian rapper Timati, although I'm not suggesting it was in any way rigged.

They had a flyer designed to look like a ballot paper with a big lipstick tick next to Putin's name and banners saying "I want the prime minister." A touch bashful perhaps, Putin did not respond in person, but his press secretary Dmitry Peskov made some vaguely worded statements about how they had to check whether the club was using Putin's name and image commercially and that they could not stop it going ahead, but could stop them using such content.

In any case, the party went ahead, although sadly I only saw the photographic evidence. Blogger Ilya Varlamov had a full report, although the high nipple count means that it comes with an adult content warning. ⊠⊠

The edgiest thing about the party was a sign saying: "Peskov, you're not right. We are not trading on Putin." There were also pictures from the calendar featuring Moscow State University journalism students who stripped off last year in a burst of enthusiasm for the dear leader's birthday. The girls also turned up, although they were lost in a crowd of women dancing topless. And the MC shouted "Only Rai, only Putin, only sex," Varlamov wrote in his blog. ⊠⊠

Life News tabloid web site, which loves Putin and women's breasts, had a video of the party with girls shouting "We love you, Vladimir Vladimirovich."⊠⊠

"And it's true, how can you not love him? He's strong, creative and talented," a female journalist narrated in honeyed tones as we saw clips of him doing judo and playing the piano and singing badly at that charity event in St. Petersburg — now under question in the press as it emerged that no one seems to know whether it raised any money.⊠⊠

"You have to agree, 'Putin party' sounds a lot better than 'Obama party' or 'Gadhafi party,' or maybe it's just that we really love Vladimir Vladimirovich," the journalist concluded. "On this evening, there was only one master of women's hearts."

Moskovsky Komsomolets described how some of the non-professional girls "ripped their clothes off" along with the strippers.

Vedomosti got analytical, though, saying that "the Putin brand is becoming more and more glamorous" and backed it up with the cast-iron statement that "no one strips off for other top-level Russian politicians."⊠⊠

"The brand has taken on a life of its own, which is extremely convenient for the bearer of its name in the light of the upcoming election campaign. And maybe the party itself did not happen by accident, some conspiracy theorists might ask themselves," it stated obliquely.

Financial Times was more direct. "To many, the event looked like the (garish) start to a presidential campaign," Catherine Belton wrote in the newspaper's blog.

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