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In Page From Gogol Classic, Official Takes Puppy as Bribe

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In Russia's most famous anti-bureaucracy satire from the 19th century, "The Government Inspector," an official boasts of accepting bribes in puppies, not money.

An official was convicted of the same crime this week.

Army officer Yulai Giniyatov, 27, was found guilty of obtaining various perks from a conscript under his command last year in exchange for passes to leave the unit, Interfax reported Wednesday.

The conscript, Yevgeny Klimentyev, purchased tables and plumbing equipment for Giniyatov's mechanized infantry company, as well as a laptop and a mobile phone for Giniyatov, Kommersant reported.

He also repaired Giniyatov's car — and, yes, shelled out 30,000 rubles ($1,000) for a Yorkshire

terrier puppy for Giniyatov's girlfriend.

The conscript spent more than 60,000 rubles to gain permission to go on leave twice a month — much more frequently than soldiers are usually allowed, Interfax said.

Klimentyev's leaves lasted for days instead of the usual 24 hours, and some soldiers in his unit did not even know what he looked like, Lifenews.ru reported.

No penalties were reported for the conscript, but Giniyatov was charged with fraud and extortion.

He could have faced up to four years in prison, but the Novosibirsk Garrison Court only slapped him with a fine of 350,000 rubles ($12,500) and banned him from executive positions in state agencies for two years.

The court also confiscated items obtained by Giniyatov — including the terrier, no longer a puppy. No mention of the dog's whereabouts was available.

Prosecutors, who requested to jail Giniyatov and demote him to a private, did not say whether they would appeal.

Numerous studies indicated that corruption has flourished over the past decade. The Economic Development Ministry said Tuesday that Russians paid $5.9 billion in bribes last year, almost double the amount in 2001.

In the 1836 play by Nikolai Gogol, a corrupt judge tells fellow bureaucrats: "I tell everyone plainly that I take bribes, but what kind of bribes? Why, greyhound puppies." The line has became a catchphrase in Russian culture.

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