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Medvedev Vows 2nd MSU Visit

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Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev appearing on a Lada Kalina sports car at a St. Petersburg car expo Friday. Amid a scandal, Medvedev has agreed to revisit Moscow State University. **Dmitry Lovetsky**

National politics are notoriously devoid of public discussion, but President Dmitry Medvedev pledged on Saturday to change that by meeting with young journalists and fielding any questions they might have.

The promise, relayed by Medvedev's spokeswoman Natalya Timakova, came after his trip to the journalism department at Moscow State University ended in scandal Thursday.

Medvedev's trip was billed as a "meeting with students," but most journalism students were barred from talking to him by the Federal Guard Service.

The 30 students allowed to attend the meeting, dedicated to the "national question," were ardent Kremlin supporters. The other attendees were members of pro-government youth groups, including Nashi.

Actual journalism majors were relegated to waving hello to Medvedev as he walked into the building. Many students and professors were then shut out of the building, which is located on Mokhovaya Ulitsa, across the road from the Kremlin.

Several students attempted to ask hard questions, holding signs with statements such as "Why do you tweet while Khodorkovsky rots in jail?" But seven of them were promptly marched off by the Federal Guard Service, which locked some in an auditorium and others in a police vehicle and threatened all with expulsion.

The treatment of the students caused a storm in the Russian blogosphere, generating dozens of Twitter posts with the Russian-language hashtag #zhalky, or "pitiful." On Saturday, critical-minded students staged a "subbotnik," or a voluntary cleaning, of the department to protest Medvedev's visit.

Timakova said later that a meeting with journalism students was never in the cards, and the department had been chosen as a convenient venue, department head Yasen Zasursky wrote on his LiveJournal blog.

But she promised another visit, this time specifically to "meet department students and answer any questions from them," Zasursky wrote.

No time frame was given for the event.

Medvedev also came under fire last month when he visited the Peoples' Friendship University and toured selected dorms that students likened to a Potemkin village. "Medvedev's visit, and everything that has been written about it, is a lie," two students wrote to The Moscow Times in a letter titled "Dmitry in Wonderland."

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