

Socialite Chews Out Kremlin Youth Leader

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Yakemenko

In a new sign of the upper class's mounting oppositional slant, Kremlin-linked socialite Ksenia Sobchak cornered the Kremlin's youth policy chief, Vasily Yakemenko, in a posh Moscow [restaurant](#) and scolded him for frequenting such establishments.

Yakemenko's spokeswoman Kristina Potupchik denounced the confrontation on her LiveJournal [blog](#) on Monday, calling Sobchak "a cheap prostitute." But anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny [praised](#) Sobchak on Twitter.

The short exchange between Sobchak, previously not known for political activism, and Yakemenko took place Sunday at the Mario restaurant in downtown Moscow, where Yakemenko was dining with his wife. Sobchak shot the conversation on her cell phone and put the 78-second [video](#). It had more than 25,000 views late Monday.

In the video, a velvet-voiced Sobchak informs Yakemenko, who heads the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs, that she wants to interview him for GQ magazine. Without changing her tone, she then proceeds to accuse him of lying and rebukes him for going to "Moscow's most expensive restaurant."

The average bill at Mario starts at 4,000 rubles (\$130) but can get much higher if the diner focuses on dishes such as Belon oysters or goatling with rosemary and potatoes stewed in a wood oven.

A soft-spoken Yakemenko averts his eyes from the camera through most of the video, toying with his smartphone as he rejects Sobchak's request. He caves in at the end, agreeing to consider an interview if Sobchak "promises to believe his words," and does not comment on how he can afford to dine at Mario.

Yakemenko declared an income of 1 million rubles (\$32,000) in 2009, the latest year for which figures are available. But his agency controls much bigger sums allotted for youth policy in the federal budget. A chunk of the money goes to Nashi, a pro-Kremlin youth group that Yakemenko founded.

Sobchak, who has interviewed Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and Yevroset founder Yevgeny Chichvarkin for GQ, is the daughter of late St. Petersburg Mayor Anatoly Sobchak, who started the political career of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

She is believed to maintain good ties with Putin, who has not commented on the story.

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