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Novelist Cleared of Insulting Russians' Knowledge of Noodles

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An ultranationalist serving a life sentence for race murders accused a popular crime novelist of fostering ethnic hatred by insulting Russians' culinary sophistication in a 2009 bestseller — prompting a short-lived inquiry.

Boris Akunin, whose real name is Grigory Chkhartishvili, reported on his LiveJournal blog on Thursday that his publisher had received a summons for questioning. The summons, which Akunin posted, said the case was related to his book "All the World's a Stage," but did not elaborate.

The book was accused of being extremist by Alexei Voyevodin, a notorious ultranationalist sentenced in June to life in prison for murdering non-Slavs, BaltInfo.ru news agency said Thursday.

Akunin speculated that Voyevodin was upset about a passage in which a Japanese character says Russians are incapable of distinguishing between two types of Japanese noodles.

But after a check — which presumably included a close reading of the text — police decided not to open a criminal case, Investigative Committee spokesman Viktoria Tsyplenkova told RIA-Novosti.

She added that police are required by law to look into all accusations of lawbreaking, but she did not explain why Voyevodin's accusation justified an official summons.

Some bloggers interpreted the incident as the start of a crackdown on artists and intellectuals, but Akunin told Gazeta.ru that authorities were hyperactively pursuing extremism ahead of the ultranationalist Russian March rally, set for Nov. 4.

However, Voyevodin could have been campaigning for his ideological cause. Ultranationalists are often charged with violating extremism laws and have long pushed to have them canceled, arguing that they are vague and unenforceable.

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