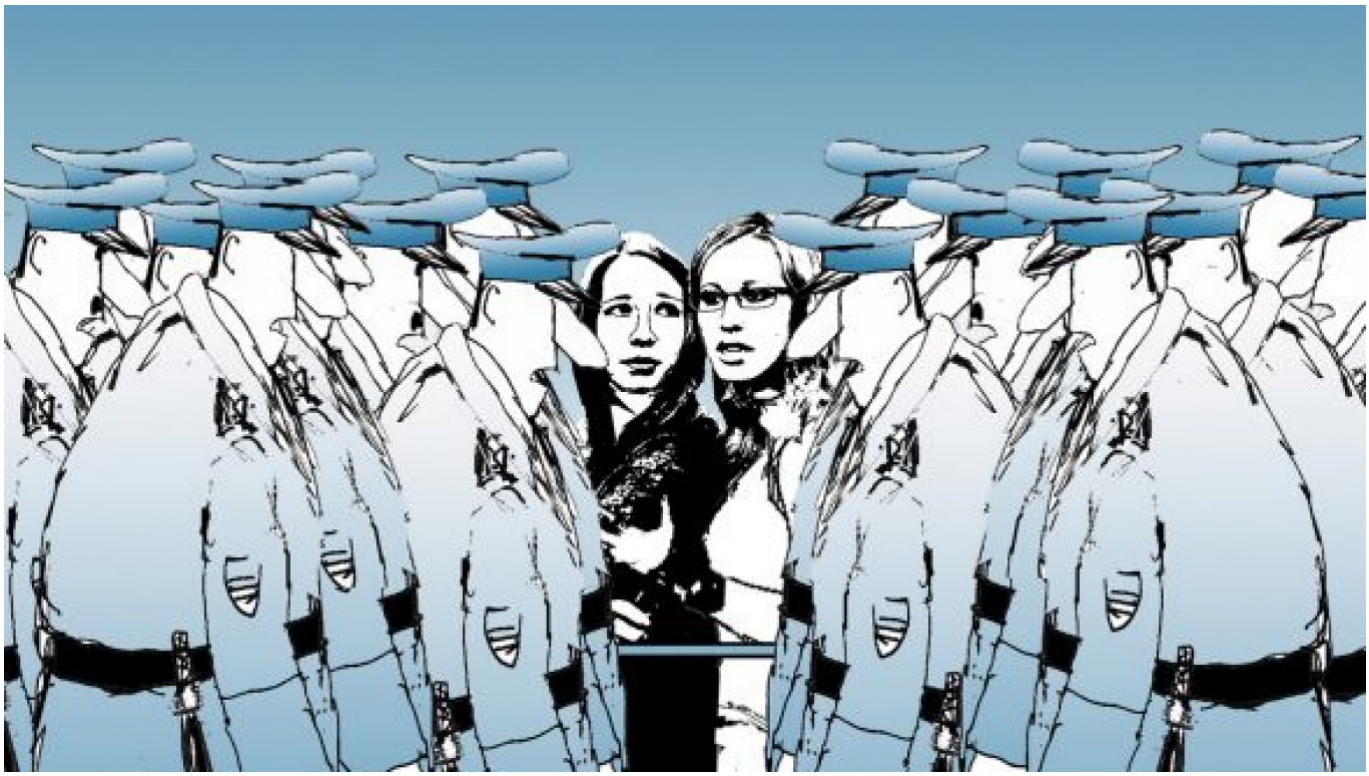
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Inthe Spotlight

By Anna Malpas

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This week the acclaimed actress Chulpan Khamatova and It Girl and media personality Ksenia Sobchak in a rare mood of unity both criticized the jailing for another month of the outrageous anti-Putin punks Pussy Riot.

Khamatova even attended the Tagansky district court where the case was being heard Wednesday and told journalists she wanted to defend the women and thought they should be allowed to go home to their children. Novaya Gazeta reported that she was in tears.

That was a pretty brave and unexpected act from Khamatova, who spoke in a video supporting Vladimir Putin's reelection campaign, citing his help to her children's medical aid charity. Whereas Pussy Riot are awaiting trial after they tried to perform a strident song with the chorus: "Virgin Mary, drive out Putin!" in the shiny-marbled Christ the Savior Cathedral.

Sobchak more predictably wrote on Twitter that the women's repeat detentions for a further month reeked of "injustice."

She herself has been sailing pretty close to the wind lately, what with being arrested and then

having her apartment raided, turning up the early-morning presence of protest coordinator Ilya Yashin.

This week she took another risk by handing a spoof media award to Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill. Given out by Silver Rain radio station, the "Silver Galosh" prizes are for PR disasters. In this case, it was for the "immaculate disappearance" of his flashy watch. An overly zealous member of staff used Photoshop to remove a watch in a photo on his website — while leaving its reflection clearly visible on a table. The Church leader was in absentia.

On Wednesday Life News website reported that pop diva Alla Pugachyova had performed a new song specially for Sobchak, giving her a motherly warning to turn down her act.

Life News published a video of Pugachyova — who supported Mikhail Prokhorov against Putin in the presidential polls — singing a song dedicated to Sobchak at a friend's birthday in a fairly ravaged deep voice. Her lyrics include the lines: "Don't stick your neck out, girl. You'd better sit in the corner. A lot of words means little gets done," the website reported.

"Alla Pugachyova dedicated a song to me. When I was little, how could I ever have imagined that?" Sobchak responded in starstruck style on Twitter.

"The next thing will be a Tsereteli statue," she joked, referring to Zurab Tsereteli, a grandiose sculptor to bureaucrats.

Pugachyova earlier in April appeared on Sobchak's talk show on Dozhd TV. There was definitely no question of Pugachyova ever turning out in support of Pussy Riot, though. On the show, she dismissed the women arrested as "three absolutely untalented idiots."

Sobchak wrote on Twitter that she believed Khamatova turned out for Pussy Riot because of her, although there has seemed to be little love lost between the two.

In April, Sobchak used her role co-hosting a white tie television awards ceremony to ask the actress why she appeared in the pro-Putin video. Khamatova declined to answer.

Speaking more frankly on Sobchak's Dozhd TV talk show, Khamatova admitted that she was pressed to make the video but she refused to tell Sobchak which official called her with the request.

"Of course I would not have come knocking saying 'Please let me record this video'," she said.

"I said I would vote for Putin because for me there were concrete results from his work," Khamatova said in a prickly encounter.

But while speaking to Sobchak back then, Khamatova told her she would follow the Pussy Riot court hearings.

"I'm glad that Chulpan kept her word, given to me during the Sobchak Live interview, and came to the Pussy court hearing," Sobchak wrote on Twitter.

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