

Inthe Spotlight

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This week, the sultry model girlfriend of footballer Cristiano Ronaldo was hired to replace Ksenia Sobchak as the judge of "Russia's Next Top Model" after the channel got cold feet about Sobchak's political protest activities.

"A model should also be a role model," the channel hinted in its trailer for the show, which is an official remake of "America's Next Top Model."

Irina Shayk, whose full surname is Shaykhlislamova, comes from a village in the Chelyabinsk region in the Urals. She has said her father was of Tatar origin, which is why she has strikingly dark coloring.

Shayk models for lingerie and swimwear brands very successfully. She also seems to spend a lot of her free time lying on beaches and yachts, as WAGs will do. She has not done any Russian television presenting before and is rarely over here, but it sounds as if she could be perfect for the job.

Sobchak scooped the news on her Twitter. She added an implicit warning that her

replacement should stay clear of politics.

"I wish her luck and only to talk about fashion — otherwise there could be problems," she wrote.

It does seem unlikely that Shayk would start spilling out political views while eyeing budding models on the catwalk. In any case, she has proven her reticence by never talking about her relationship with the Portuguese footballer Ronaldo.

One of her conditions for doing the show is no questions about her personal life, Life News wrote.

In an interview with Muz-TV, she vowed to concentrate on "positive notes" in the show, whose new season starts in September.

She also gushed about the joys of being in Russia (temporarily).

"It's really nice to come back to your country where everyone speaks Russian and where they'll step on your foot in the bus," she said, adding that she even took a nostalgic ride on a trolleybus "because we don't have them in America."

The replacement must be a bitter pill for Sobchak, not to mention a minus in her bank account.

The channel chief fired Sobchak "muttering something about it being the wrong format," she wrote on Twitter.

She walked away from her lucrative Dom-2 reality series on TNT last month and wrote on her blog that she seems to have been barred from mainstream television.

She was asked to go on the endless Fort Boyard gameshow by one of the big channels, only for the editor to call back to apologize and say he didn't realize she was on the "black list," she said.

Ludicrously, Sobchak said she has even been cut from Mult Lichnosti, the topical animated comedy on Channel One that has some soft-edged satire. The last show with her seems to have been the episode aired on April 15. In the episode, the animated Sobchak weeps about being excluded from Channel One and moans that she will be stuck on TNT.

Sobchak is not penniless anyway. She still has Sobchak Live on Dozhd TV, which Forbes magazine estimated earns her around \$10,000 per month.

But investigators have refused to hand over the more than \$1 million in cash they found in her safe while raiding her apartment over the May 6 opposition protest. They are saying it must be examined as evidence for a tax probe.

"The world economic crisis could not shake the Sobchak business model, but politics very well could," Russian Forbes magazine wrote in July.

On the upside, she made U.S. Harper's Bazaar posing — bizarrely — in a wedding dress

in Manhattan for an interview titled "From Party Girl to Putin's Threat.

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