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Gessen Fired Over Putin Snub, She Claims

By The Moscow Times

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Masha Gessen, the former chief editor of Russia's oldest magazine, said she got fired for snubbing an event attended by President Vladimir Putin.

The Vokrug Sveta (Around the World) travel monthly terminated its contract with Gessen seven months after she got the job because, she said, she refused to send a reporter to cover an expedition where Putin would release some endangered Siberian cranes.

"I'm leaving Vokrug Sveta #thankputinforthat," Gessen wrote on her Twitter on Monday.

The official reason for the contract termination is "a disagreement over the separation of powers between the editorial and the management," she told Kommersant-FM. She said the management had asked her to send a reporter to cover the expedition but she had objected.

Siberian cranes, known for their snow-white feathers, are the most critically endangered of the world's 15 crane species, with only 3,200 birds thought to exist in the wild. Gessen said in the interview that she did want to write about Siberian cranes — but without Putin.

Gessen, who authored a Putin biography titled "The Man Without a Face," is a renowned critic of the Kremlin and a columnist for The New York Times.

Vokrug Sveta had not made any official statement about the conflict by Monday night. The magazine, first published in December 1861, has become a mouthpiece for the Russian Geographic Society, whose board of trustees is chaired by Putin.

Most wild Siberian cranes live between Eastern Siberia and China, where they spend the winter. A Western Siberian population that winters in Iran is thought to be all but extinct.

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