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NTV Expos Alleges Anti-Church Campaign

By Jonathan Earle

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A Femen activist cutting a cross in Kiev is cited as part of the campaign.

State-controlled NTV television on Sunday aired its latest documentary-style film targeting prominent opposition figures, this time for allegedly being part of an organized information campaign to discredit the Russian Orthodox Church.

The film, "I Don't Believe It," accuses popular blogger Rustam Adagamov — a member of the opposition Coordination Council — TV hosts Leonid Parfyonov and Vladimir Pozner, and others of links to an anti-clerical campaign partly run out of Ukraine.

Ukrainian feminist group Femen, known for staging topless protests, and the punk band Pussy Riot are portrayed as among the most infamous manifestations of the campaign.

Other participants in the effort, primarily bloggers and journalists, receive payouts in exchange for negative coverage of the church, the program alleges, and others come across

as repulsive people.

Adagamov, for example, is said to be willing to accept 150,000 rubles ($5,000) for a blog post, and the show repeats allegations recently made by his ex-wife that he is a pedophile.

The blogger responded by saying that he was proud to be grouped with Pozner and controversial curator Marat Gelman, and criticized NTV for failing to mention his pro-Church activities.

"Where's the part about how I used my blog to help Father Vladislav from Belgorod, who had adopted an orphan, raise money for a new house?" Adagamov wrote on his Facebook page, adding that the film was a "piece of crap."

Parfyonov, a former host on NTV, directed his anger at filmmaker Boris Korchenikov, a journalist and actor best known for his role in "Kadety," a television drama about military cadets.

"What is this shoddy, pompous heap of nonsense? Do you think Orthodox patriotism atones for the sin of wretched journalism?" Parfyonov wrote on his Live Journal blog.

Church spokesman Vsevolod Chaplin defended the film, saying it accurately reflected the general public's mood, not including certain urban "cliques," RIA-Novosti reported.

Past NTV exposes have accused opposition leaders of being paid foreign agents bent on weakening Russia and have even led to criminal investigations.

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