The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

United Russia Slams Ekho Moskvy Over Blog Post

By Oleg Sukhov

February 11, 2014



Columnist and writer Viktor Shenderovich compared the Winter Olympics in Sochi with the 1936 Summer Olympics in Germany. **A. Astakhov**

Vladimir Vasilyev, leader of United Russia's faction in the State Duma, on Tuesday urged Ekho Moskvy, an opposition-friendly radio station, to apologize for a blog post by columnist and writer Viktor Shenderovich, accusing him of "fascism."

"We already have one campaign that appeals to public opinion — the situation around [television channel] Dozhd," Vasilyev said, referring to criticism of Dozhd over a poll related to World War II. "Now information has been published on Ekho Moskvy for which someone will have to apologize."

Ekho Moskvy hosts a blog in which Shenderovich compared the ongoing Winter Olympics in Sochi with the 1936 Summer Olympics in Nazi Germany on Monday.

"If only you knew how much Berliners liked shot putter Hans Woellke, Germany's first track and field champion, a smiling and beautiful man who symbolized the youth of new Germany!" Shenderovich wrote. "But something prevents us from rejoicing in his victory. This is because we know about the final price of this sports achievement, which includes Dachau, Coventry, Khatyn and Leningrad..."

Shenderovich also said that the Sochi Olympics and other events in "the incessant hysterical line of patriotic festivals accompanying Putin's illegitimate rule" resembled the 1936 Olympics because they were intended to legitimize what he sees as the the regime's crimes.

Reacting to Vasilyev's statements, Shenderovich told The Moscow Times by phone that the United Russia member's words were "rudeness."

"If we lived in a country with independent courts, he would be a defendant in court and would pay a fine," Shenderovich said. "But we're living in Putin's Russia and dealing with scoundrels and demagogues."

Last month pro-Kremlin politicians lambasted another independent outlet, the opposition-leaning television channel Dozhd, for posting a poll asking whether it would have been better to surrender Leningrad, now called St. Petersburg, to save hundreds of thousands of lives lost during the Nazi siege of the city.

Dozhd quickly removed the question and issued an apology for the poll, which United Russia lawmakers claimed that the poll vindicated Nazism. As a result of the outcry, however, most major cable operators dropped Dozhd, and the channel's leaders say that it may have to shut down.

Some Dozhd supporters, more than 40 of which were detained at a protest supporting the channel over the weekend, argue that the poll that the cable operators' actions are part of a Kremlin-driven plan against Dozhd because of its independent and critical coverage of Russian politics.

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