The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Television Channel's Bleeping Classic Soviet Film Puzzles Viewers

By Anna Dolgov

April 14, 2014



A shot from Eldar Ryazanov's film "Garage".

A Russian television channel has bleeped a mild expletive during the late-night airing of a Soviet-era cult classic, director Eldar Ryazanov's film "Garage," prompting bewilderment and ridicule from artists and viewers.

The offensive word — which can be loosely translated as "humbug" — was deemed too coarse during the broadcast on Friday night by the Moscow city-owned TVTs television channel, Ekho Moskvy radio reported.

"It's hard to comment on idiocy," Ryazanov said, adding that the film has a government rating as suitable for children over the age of six, so "what is there to bleep?"

The 1979 comedy about a garage-construction cooperative even survived Soviet censorship, despite its satirical pokes at the regime.

Another Ekho Moskvy reader commented in an approximation of Soviet-era rhetoric, reminiscent of some of the film's satirical lines: "Soviet censors fell short, but we shall correct it."

Actor Valentin Gaft, who played one of the lead parts in the movie, criticized the commonplace use of expletives in everyday Russian speech, but called the bleeping of the mild expletive "horrible" and an instance of "over-zealousness."

"This is not some tragedy that one should shout about," he said. "There are stupid people, insufficiently educated ones. There are bureaucrats who are afraid to lose their seats. That is humanly understandable. And that's what happened."

Another reader said that bleeping the innocuous expression has allowed viewers to imagine a stronger word in its place.

Russian law bans several expletives from the use in media or on television, requiring them to at least be bleeped. According to the government list of offensive words cited by Izvestia, the word censored out of the "Garage" film is not one of them.

Ryazanov declined suggestions that he might sue the television channel for an infringement on his intellectual rights as pointless and hardly worth the effort.

"There are a lot of idiots in the country, can't sue all of them," he said.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/04/14/television-channels-bleeping-classic-soviet-film-puzzles-viewers-a33913