The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Dismissed Radio Journalist Likens Governor to Hitler

By Natalya Krainova

February 28, 2011



A talk show host who lost his job on state radio after likening St. Petersburg Governor Valentina Matviyenko to Nazi leader Adolf Hitler stood by his on-air comments Monday, telling The Moscow Times that a groundswell of support for him showed the public was "fed up" with the authorities.

The dismissal may raise new fears about free speech in a country where the state holds a tight monopoly on national media.

Dmitry Gubin, host of a three-hour morning show on Vesti FM, said he told listeners on Friday that Matviyenko was "continuing Hitler's business because she is destroying the city."

Gubin, who had returned to Moscow after a visit to St. Petersburg earlier in the week, also accused Matviyenko of failing to maintain the city "in decent condition."

Two hours after his show ended, one of his superiors informed him that he had been fired, Gubin said by telephone. He declined to identify the superior.

Anatoly Kuzichev, Vesti FM's general producer, said by telephone that Gubin was fired for "impermissible on-air style."

Many Vesti FM journalists use critical rhetoric, he said, but they speak more politely.

Asked what Gubin had said that particularly angered station management, he pinpointed Gubin's description of St. Petersburg as "the hole of a rural loo instead of the window to Europe" and his remark, "Sieg Heil, dear Valentina Ivanovna [Matviyenko]."

Kuzichev refused to say who decided to fire Gubin.

A request for comment left with a secretary at Matviyenko's press office went unanswered Monday.

A video record of his Friday show was not available on the radio station's web site Monday, and a blogger wrote where it formerly had been posted that the show had been edited.

Gubin has made two posts on his LiveJournal blog about his dismissal and received more than 1,000 comments, most of them sympathetic.

"The uproar provoked by my case shows that the people are fed up and they are using my case as a mouthpiece to express their discontent," Gubin said.

On his blog, he wrote that St. Petersburg is "dirt," has "no sidewalks" and is covered in the "[expletive] of road works."

"Housewifely governor-woman, wipe up your household," Gubin wrote to Matviyenko.

Gubin, 46, who had hosted the show from late August, said he had criticized Matviyenko on previous shows. He said station management had warned him a couple times against "cursing" at the governor and asked him to "use constructive criticism."

"Is it possible to constructively criticize Adolf?" Gubin retorted on his blog over the weekend.

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