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Dutch Translator Refuses Pushkin Medal, Blaming Putin

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The Medal of Pushkin is given for achievements in the arts and culture, education, humanities and literature.

Citing his lack of regard for President Vladimir Putin, a Dutch translator known for bringing some of Russia's greatest literary works to Dutch bookshelves has refused to accept the coveted Medal of Pushkin, Dutch NRC news website reported on Saturday.

"I would with great gratitude accept this honor if it wasn't for [President Vladimir Putin], whose behavior and way of thinking I despise. He represents a big threat to freedom and peace on our planet," translator Hans Bolland wrote in response to an invitation to the Kremlin to receive the award from Putin himself in November.

"Every connection between him [Putin] and me, his name and the name of [Alexander] Pushkin, is disgusting and intolerable for me," Bolland wrote in his letter.

Bolland sent his strongly worded rejection letter to the Russian Embassy in The Hague.

Bolland would have been the first Dutch national to receive the Medal of Pushkin, which was established by the Russian government in 1999 to commemorate extraordinary individual achievements in arts and culture.

Bolland is Holland's foremost translator of Russian literature, having brought Dutch readers the works of such literary greats as Pushkin and Lermontov, as well as contemporary authors. Between 1992 and 1996, he taught Dutch language and literature at St. Petersburg State University.

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