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Russian Lawmaker Wants Companies to Disclose Past Nazi Ties

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A Russian lawmaker has proposed legislation that would require the commercials of foreign companies that once fostered ties with Nazi Germany to contain notices about their somber past, the Izvestia newspaper reported Monday.

Alexei Zhuravlyov, who represents the governing United Russia party in the State Duma, has proposed that companies which entertained ties with the Nazi leadership or the fascist regime in Italy should disclose their past in their advertisements, Izvestia reported. The proposed legislation states that these companies' radio commercials should contain at least three seconds about their ties to these regimes. For television advertisements, the notice should last at least five seconds and take up no less than seven percent of the frame, the report said.

The proposal comes amid Russia's renewed efforts to glorify the Soviet Union's role in the Allies' defeat of Nazi Germany and criminalize the rehabilitation of Nazism. Offenders of Russia's anti-Nazism law can face up to five years in prison. The controversial law has prompted apprehension among journalists and historians, who fear they could be targeted

by its broad interpretation.

Zhuravlyov could not be reached on Monday to elaborate on his proposal. It remains unclear when Russian lawmakers will review his initiative.

"For our history not to be distorted, the younger generation needs to remember and know what happened in the 20th century and that there are companies in Russia today that actively worked for the Third Reich, producing toxic substances that poisoned our people, weapons and airplanes," Izvestia quoted Zhuravlyov as saying Monday.

Zhuravlyov dismissed speculation that his initiative could lead to a ban on these companies' products, Izvestia reported. The lawmaker told the newspaper that his bill, if adopted, could make Russians reluctant to purchase these companies' products and stop Western companies from "corrupting" Russian officials.

Ironically, Zhuravlyov declared last year that he owned a Mercedes-Benz ML63, while his wife was the owner of a BMW X3, according to the Duma's website. Both these German car manufacturers have divulged their past ties with the Third Reich.

"If BMW produced aircraft that bombed our towns, our citizens need to know about this and not be ashamed," Izvestia quoted Zhuravlyov as saying.

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