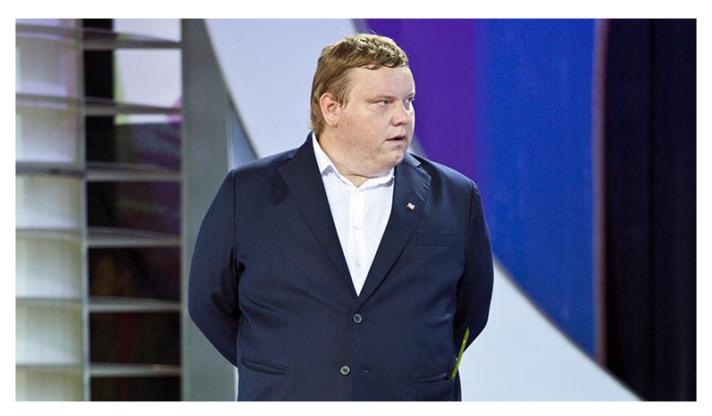# Russian Sketch-Comedy Caved to State Censorship, Says Former Writer

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Dmitry Kolchin **KVN**

A former editor and actor in Russia's leading humor television show revealed in a Sept. 11 Youtube interview that the show's content passes through several rounds of censors before being broadcasted.

Since it first aired in the Soviet Union, the KVN comedy game show has been broadcast on state-run Channel 1, Russia's most popular TV network, whose shares are divided between the Russian government and businessmen loyal to the Kremlin.

In an interview on the Youtube channel Wanna Banana, award-winning comedian Dmitry Kolchin described numerous instances when the show's content was cut or filtered by Channel One editors.

According to Kolchin, neither the show editors nor its prominent host Alexander Maslyakov would make the final judgment call about the content of an episode before airtime.

Instead, the show would undergo a series of "channel filters" that removed jokes forbidden on particular subjects, Kolchin said. "You can't joke about this, you can't say this last name, this needs to be removed."

Jokes concerning the president have become increasingly scarce, the comedian said. "Nobody writes about the meeting between Putin and the president of Kazakhstan," the former editor said, "something like this will never air."

Kolchin described an incident when a Channel One representative came to a rehearsal and barred the show from airing an "entirely apolitical" rendering of *Peremen* ("Change"), a song by the late Russian musician Viktor Tsoi, written on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union, whose lyrics anticipated the massive political shift.

Kolchin recounted how the television network representative said the song was banned from Channel One's airwaves for "its direct association with dissatisfaction with the authorities."

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