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Russian Actress Faces Backlash for Harvey Weinstein Comments

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Russian actresses Agniya Kuznetsova, Anna Chipovskaya, Lyubov Tolkalina

Russian social media erupted after an actress appeared to express sympathy toward disgraced Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein accused of sexual harassment.

Weinstein was forced out of his award-winning film studio and later quit its board as he faces multiple allegations of rape and sexual harassment. Similar accusations are now plaguing his brother and The Weinstein Company co-founder, Bob Weinstein.

Russian actor Lyubov Tolkalina described sexual harassment as a "beautiful" way for men to use their power over women in an interview with the Meduza news website.

"What does it matter how you got the part?" Tolkalina said Tuesday. "It's good for everyone: he feels good, they feel good, and most importantly the viewers feel good."

"How can you accuse a man of sexual harassment," she said. "Isn't that why he exists in the world?"

Another actress Agniya Kuznetsova echoed Tolkalina's victim-blaming, noting that "you either agree or refuse" romantic overtures.

"They have themselves to blame, they don't have to act like prostitutes," Kuznetsova told Meduza, referring to victims of abuse. "Poor man, I feel sorry for him."

Russian-speaking social media did not take kindly to the actresses' take, expressing their indignation in profanity-laced posts.

Writer and socialite Bozhena Rynska wrote ironically on Facebook she "learned a lot" from Tolkalina's interview.

A user named Sasha Zhilenko said she was "just sick" after Tolkalina's interview, while comments to her post expressed shock the interview was published in the first place.

Another Facebook user offered to launch a flash mob in the style of 2011's #IAmNotAfraidToSay campaign against sexual violence to fight the perception that harassment is inherent in men.

Related article: I Am Not Afraid to Speak: Russian Online Flash Mob Condemns Sexual Violence

Russian-speaking Twitter called Tolkalina's comments shameful, with one user suggesting Weinstein "flee immediately to Russia" because "there are many here of Tolkalina's ilk."

In an Instagram post that was later taken down, Tolkalina appeared to backtrack her pro-harassment position.

But Meduza later followed up with an audio recording of what it said was Tolkalina's interview "to avoid misunderstandings." In the 5-minute audio, the actress appears to giggle while making the controversial comments.

"Isn't it beautiful when a man of such great power sexually harasses you? I think their only big mistake was talking about it," Tolkalina is heard saying. "That's what I sincerely think."

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