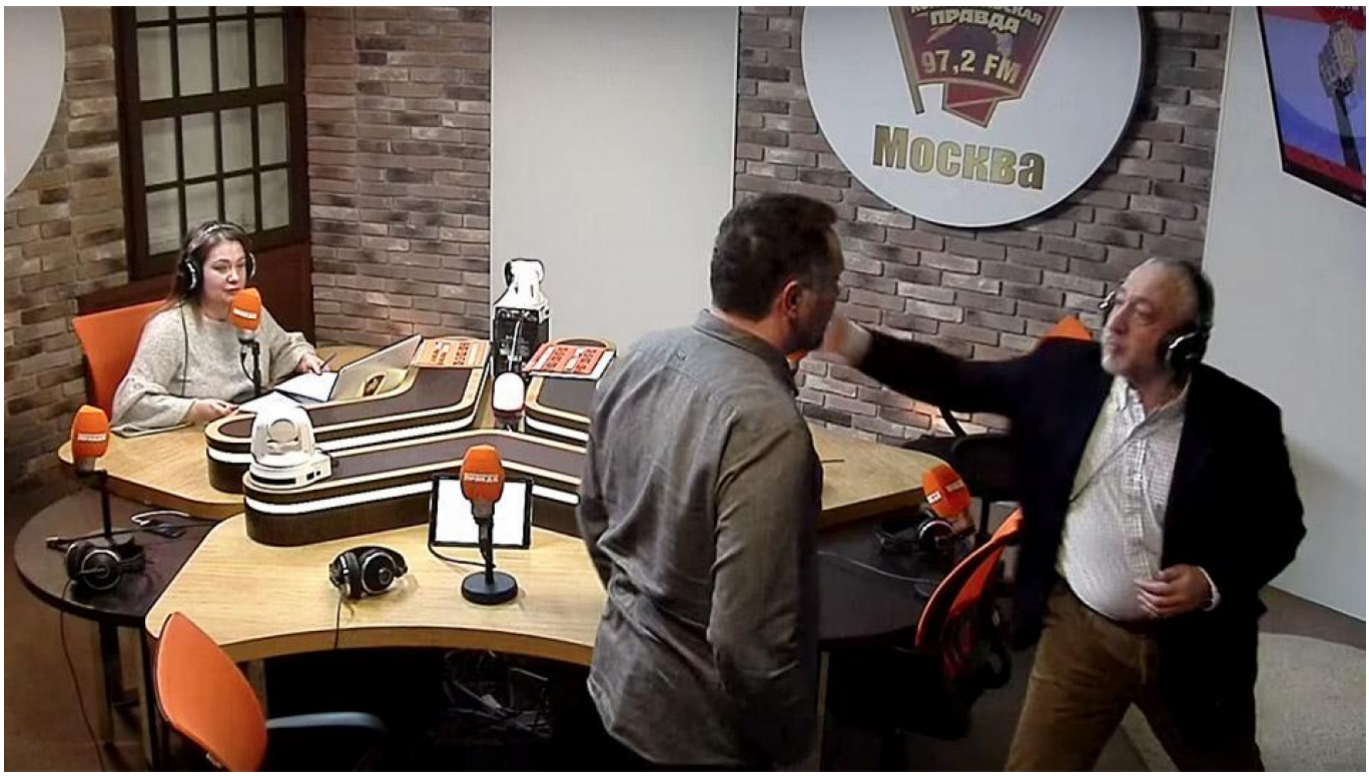
The Moscow Times
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Russian Journalists Brawl on Air Over Stalin

January 31, 2018



Radio "Komsomolskaya Pravda" / Youtube

Russia's ambivalence toward the legacy of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin has spilled into an on-air fistfight between two prominent journalists less than a week after a controversial satirical film about the Soviet leader was pulled from movie theaters.

Nikolai Svanidze and Maxim Shevchenko engaged in a heated debate on Tuesday over whether credit for the Soviet victory in World War II should go to Stalin or the Soviet people. As the closing minutes of the Komsomolskaya Pravda radio station show approached, Shevchenko accused his counterpart of "spitting on the graves of those who died near Moscow."

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"You are a scoundrel for saying that I spit on their graves. I'd hit you over the head were you any closer," Svanidze retorted.

“Go ahead, I’m right here. Get up and hit me, you coward,” Shevchenko, 51, taunted his 62-year-old colleague.

The live YouTube stream showed Svanidze slapping his counterpart before being punched back and knocked to the ground. The opponents were separated by the radio station’s staffers, but the scuffle continued until the host ended the broadcast.

The fisticuffs broke out less than a week after Russia’s Culture Ministry revoked the distribution license of the British satirical movie “The Death of Stalin” on grounds that it offended the memory of the dictator.

According to the Kremlin, the fight between the two journalists was a good example of why the culture ministry decided to pull the controversial Stalin movie from screens.

“If those dinosaurs can’t keep their emotions in check, then what is there to say about everyone else?” Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov was cited as saying by the state-run TASS news agency Wednesday.

Svanidze refused to apologize to Shevchenko on Wednesday but dismissed the brawl as a one-off.

“We’re not small children after all. We couldn’t hold back our emotions once, but it doesn’t mean that we’ll rush at each other with fists every time we meet,” he told the Govorit Moskva radio station.

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