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# Reading Comic Books Is ‘Pathetic,’ Says Russia’s Culture Minister

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Vladimir Medinsky **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

It’s “pathetic” for adults to read comic books, Russian Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky has said, sparking backlash among the country's comic book fans.

Mainstream comic book culture began to catch on in Russia earlier this decade after years of lingering Soviet-era stigma that placed "serious literature" on a pedestal at the expense of disdained mass culture.

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“Comics are for those who can’t read well,” Medinsky was quoted as saying by the Moskva News Agency.

“I think it’s pathetic for adults to read comic books,” he told reporters when asked whether history could be told through graphic novels.

Speaking at a Moscow book fair last week, Medinsky said “it’s like chewing gum, it’s not food. Comic books are aimed at children who are only learning to read.”

An earlier quote that Moskva attributed to Medinsky had called comic book readers “morons.” While the news agency has since corrected his words, Russian comic fans have launched a social media campaign in response with an ironic #ядебил (#I’mAMoron) hashtag.

Russian comic book stores also took offense at the culture minister’s remarks.

“I know many people were really offended by these words. They interpret it as Medinsky insulting them in plain text,” Ivan Chernyavsky, who co-owns the Chuk and Geek comic book store in Moscow, told BBC Russia. The shop wrote "We are not idiots" on its Facebook page in response to Medinsky.

“It’s very phantasmagoric,” Dmitry Yakovlev, the head of the “Bumkniga” comic book publishing house in St. Petersburg who runs a graphic novel festival, was quoted as saying.

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