

50 Ways to Leave Your Government

The Word's Worth

[Michele A. Berdy's The Word's Worth](#)

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Вылететь с работы: to get canned

Wednesday was what we call a Big News Day in Moscow. First, in his annual address President Putin broke from his predictable speech and suggested changing the entire structure of governance. Then another молния (news flash, literally a lightning bolt): Правительство России ушло в отставку (The Russian Government resigned.) Then the newly named prime minister was no one anyone expected. And finally, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov was taking a leave for health reasons. For a federal government that likes to maintain an image of calm stability, this was the news equivalent of an explosion in a fireworks factory.

I thanked my lucky stars I wasn't on breaking news detail and concentrated on the fun stuff: the many ways to resign, be fired, and be shown the door in Russian.

At the very top of the job ladder, resignation is generally called *отставка* (resignation, retirement, dismissal), the noun derived from the verb pair *отставлять/отставить* (to put aside, to leave). If you are the person leaving, you either put in your resignation (*подать в отставку*) or resign (*уйти в отставку*). If you are the person ushering someone into retirement or unemployment, you send them off (*отправлять в отставку*) or accept the resignation proffered to you (*принять его отставку*). This allows for a bit of drama as one person sends in *заявление об отставке* (written resignation) and the other tosses it on the floor: *Я его не принимаю!* (I don't accept!)

Отставка is also used in the military, although even after an officer is puttering in the dacha garden he might still be referred to by rank: *капитан в отставке* (retired captain). *Отставка* is also used to describe someone's departure due to age: *Через три года он достигнет возраста отставки* (In three years he'll reach retirement age.)

Another decorous word for being fired is *отрешение* (removal). Lately you hear this in Russian newscasts about the American president, since *отрешение от должности* (removal from office) is the way to say "impeachment" in Russian. However, most of the time Russian commentators just say *импичмент*, perhaps to emphasize the unsavory foreignness of lawmakers removing an elected president from office for "high crimes and misdemeanors," whatever they are. As one Russian wit has it: *Ни взятки, ни бездействие, ни коррупция не являются в России поводом для отставки* (In Russia, not bribes, nor negligence, nor corruption are cause for dismissal) — which is, I guess, the appeal of Russia for certain presidents.

Освобождение от должности or *работы* (relieving someone of their job) can be temporary or permanent. In the latter category, it's what you write when you resign and are not, say, prime minister: *Прошу освободить меня от занимаемой должности по собственному желанию* (Please relieve me of my position at my own request). In officialese, this can be used when you give someone time off for, say, their annual medical check-up: *Надо оформить сотруднику день освобождения от работы для диспансеризации* (We have to do the paperwork to give an employee a day off for her annual physical.)

You can also use the similar term *отстранение от работы* or *должности* (removal from office), although this is harsher and more dire: it is used as a temporary or permanent measure when the employee has been up to no good. This can even be applied to attorneys general, even if they complain: *Можно согласиться с г-ном Скуратовым, который назвал свое отстранение от должности "абсолютно незаконным"* (You have to agree with Mr. Skuratov, who called his removal from office "absolutely illegal.")

If you are prone to fancy language, are 150 years old, or are German, you might use the term *абшид* (abschied, a leave, retirement or resignation). *Ах, голубчики, давно пора в абшид...* (Oh, my little darlings, I should have retired long ago...)

Now for most of us mortals, the words we use when we are getting a pink slip or giving notice ourselves are: *увольнение* (dismissal); *увольнять/уволить* (to dismiss); *увольняться/уволиться* (to quit). Sometimes you get fired for behavior not related to work:

Губернатор решил увольнять курящих чиновников (The governor decided to fire all the officials who smoked.) Sometimes you are forced to quit for behavior not related to work: Женщины должны были увольняться с работы, если выходили замуж (Women had to quit if they got married.) And sometimes you are fired when everyone is sure you won't be: Большинство аналитиков уверены, что Касьянову увольнение не грозит (The majority of analysts are certain that Kasyanov won't be fired.)

Of course, sometimes you are let go as part of a larger purge of workers. This is called сокращение (cutbacks) or is expressed with the verb pair сокращать/сократить (to curtail, shorten, cut). If one of your friends ever announces, “Меня сократили” (I've been laid off), this is cause for a long night of boozing, commiserating, and plotting.

On the slangier end of job redundancy is the verb снять (to fire, literally to take away). In the Bad Old Days, a book with a reference to a forbidden person was cause for instant unemployment, as described by a famous editor: Был шум. Редактора сняли с работы. Книга вышла. У автора прибавилось седин. (There was an uproar. The editor was fired. The book came out. The author got more gray hairs.)

Finally, there are a lot of verbs with the prefix вы-, which indicates “motion outward,” as in getting kicked out the door. Вылететь с работы (literally to fly out of work) is what happens when you goof up: Естественно, он не пересмотрел и вылетел с работы (Naturally, he didn't double check and is out of a job).

Вышвыривать с работы (literally to be shoved out of work) is being given the bum's rush, especially if you have legal problems that you didn't tell your employers about. Меня постоянно вышвыривают с работы, после того, как узнают о моём прошлом (I'm always shown the door as soon as they find out about my past.)

Вышибать с работы (to sack someone) is very expressive — вышибала is a bouncer — and very final: Как он лжёт! Только за одну эту фразу надо вышибать его с должности! (Boy, does he lie! For just that one phrase he ought to be tossed out on his butt!)

In the case of the Russian government's resignation, the local wits have been having a grand time. Alas, they are puns and not funny in translation, but I hope you can enjoy them anyway. The first joking response was based on the word распуститься, which means both to dissolve and to bloom: Из-за аномальной тёплой погоды в России распустилось правительство (Due to the anomalous warm weather in Russia, the cabinet broke into bloom/was dissolved). The second joke is based on the two meanings of the word сидеть — to sit (preside, stay) and to be in jail. Всё правительство разогнали и только Улюкаев как сидел, так и сидит (The whole Cabinet has been dismissed and only Ulyukayev hasn't been let out.)

Governments may come and go, but Russian humor always remains.

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