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Russian Pop Icon Feuds With RT Chief Editor Over Exiled Anti-War Star

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Singer Filipp Kirkorov. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Russian pop star Filipp Kirkorov has slammed the editor-in-chief of state-funded broadcaster RT for questioning the sexual orientation of his ex-wife's current husband, Maxim Galkin, who fled Russia in protest of the war in Ukraine.

Observers describe the latest feud between Kirkorov and RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan as signs of cracks within the pro-Putin elite. Kirkorov supported Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, endorsed Donald Trump as a pro-Russian U.S. presidential candidate and celebrated his 55th birthday with a show in the Kremlin last week.

He became the latest figure to openly call out Simonyan after she insinuated on state television that Galkin, 45, married 73-year-old pop icon Alla Pugacheva as a "distraction." Galkin married Pugacheva in 2011, six years after her and Kirkorov's divorce.

"The person known to be gay married an elderly woman as a distraction and for personal

enrichment," Simonyan said on a political talk show last Tuesday.

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Galkin, who has settled with Pugacheva in Israel after Russia invaded pro-Western Ukraine on Feb. 24, dismissed Simonyan's claims as "false rumors."

Galkin, an entertainment TV show host who gained fame for his comic parodies of other celebrities, often took to Instagram to speak out against Russian attacks on Ukrainian cities.

Kirkorov spared no words in his criticism of Simonyan.

"Margarita, you're the editor-in-chief of our country's mouthpiece. You have no right to sow discord," Kirkorov said in an Instagram video Sunday.

"You're a journalist, not a lewd woman in a bazaar who spreads filthy rumors and gossip," Kirkorov added. "Who gave you the right to publicly humiliate people?"

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Simonyan took doubled down on her insinuations with a foul-mouthed tweet.

The Kirkorov-Simonyan feud is not the first to spill out into the open in recent days.

Igor Albin, a former cabinet minister, regional governor and federal member of parliament, took issue with Simonyan's support for nuclear war on the same episode of the talk show.

"Crazy 'propagandists' will burn in hell," Albin wrote on his Telegram channel last Thursday. "You don't scold your own in times of war, but you shouldn't be proud of them either. There will be no winners in a nuclear war!"

The talk show's host, pro-Kremlin pundit Vladimir Solovyov, previously feuded with Sverdlovsk region Governor Yevgeny Kuyvashev over his characterization of Sverdlovsk's administrative center Yekaterinburg as "the center of filthy liberal scum."

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