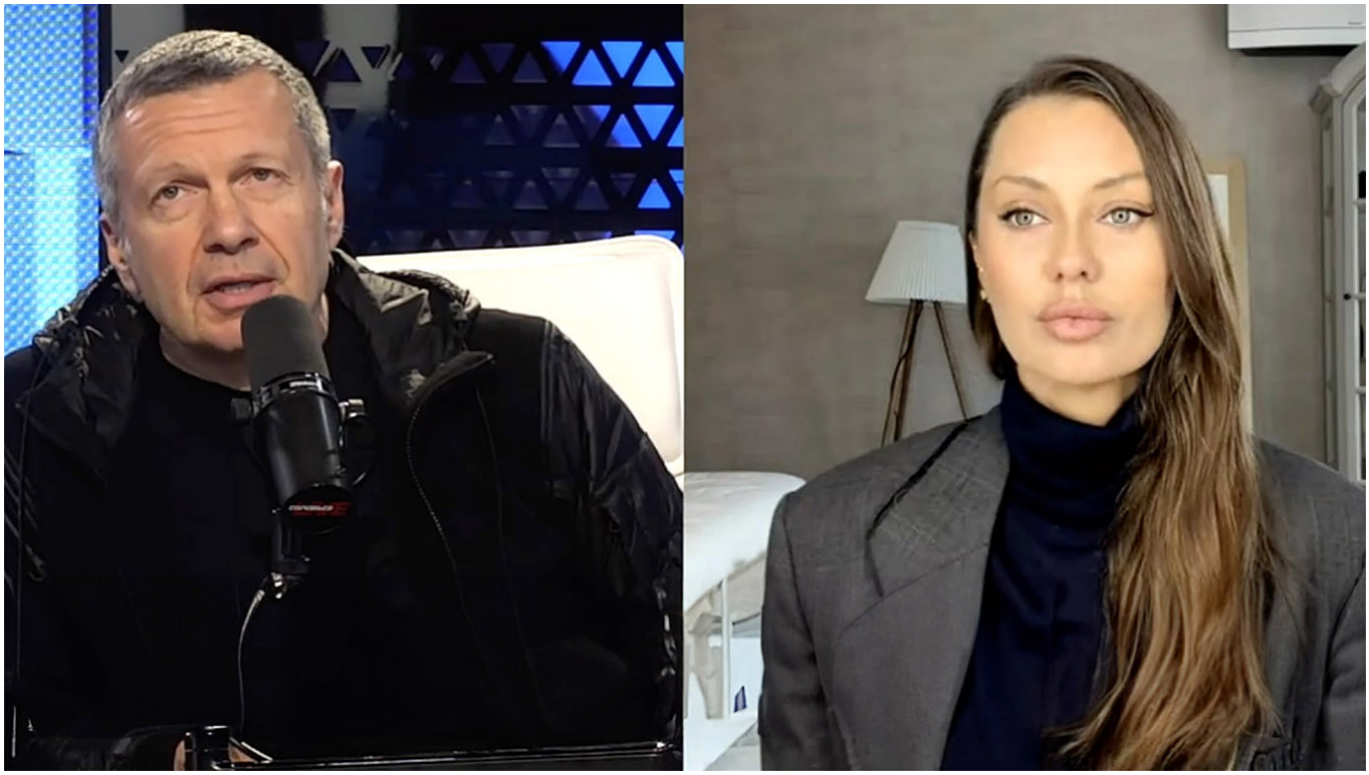
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# State TV Host Solovyov Apologizes to Bonya but Refuses to Retract Insult of Italy's Meloni

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**Video grab**

State television host Vladimir Solovyov apologized on-air to influencer Viktoria Bonya after previously insulting her, but refused her call to apologize to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, as the two sparred over criticism of President Vladimir Putin and problems inside Russia.

The exchange offered a rare moment when issues largely absent from state media — including an oil spill near the Black Sea town of Tuapse and mass livestock culls in Siberia — were raised during a live broadcast, highlighting the sensitivity around public criticism of the authorities.

Speaking on his Polniy Kontakt ("Full Contact") program, Solovyov said Western media had used Bonya's recent video appeal to Putin to portray Russia as lacking democracy.

“For them, it is important to show that there is no democracy in Russia, that Putin is not loved, that he is a dictator,” Solovyov said.

He said he felt “rage” after Bonya said in her appeal that governors, artists, bloggers and others were afraid of the president, insisting instead that “the people love Putin.”

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Solovyov also pointed out that Bonya lives abroad.

“Have there been drone strikes in Monaco where you live? We have had them here. We are at war,” he said.

During the broadcast, Bonya raised topics rarely discussed on state television, including the environmental fallout in Tuapse following drone strikes on oil infrastructure and the large-scale slaughter of farmers' livestock by authorities in Siberia.

She also suggested apologizing “on behalf of the whole country” to Meloni, whom Solovyov had previously called a “whore” and a “fascist creature.”

Solovyov refused, saying Italian politicians had described Putin as “worse than an animal.”

“Do they owe Putin an apology?” he asked.

Bonya replied that she had not heard such remarks and could not support that argument.

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At the start of the program, however, Solovyov apologized to Bonya herself after previously calling her a “washed-up slut.”

“I must apologize. You are absolutely right,” he said. “I was too emotional, and regardless of the motivation behind what I said, I should have been much stricter with my words spoken live on air.”

He added that it was “rather strange” to label him one of the country’s main misogynists, saying many women appear on his programs and that “70% of misogynists are women.”

Bonya went viral in mid-April when she published a video address to Putin “on behalf of the people,” listing five problems that she said no governor would raise and claiming that people were afraid of the president.

The video, which has received more than 30 million views, prompted the Kremlin to say work was being done on the issues she mentioned.

Bonya later tearfully thanked Putin and his spokesman Dmitry Peskov for watching her appeal.

Solovyov’s attacks on Bonya followed the widespread attention her video received.

[Read this article in Russian at The Moscow Times' Russian service.]

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