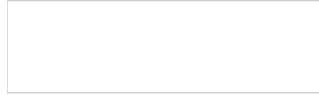


RUSSIA: THE TWITTER CRAZE. THIS TIME, IT'S A WORM...

LE 19 OCTOBRE 2010 YELENA OSIPOVA

Though Russian officials have become devout fans of Twitter, all it took was a worm to ensue a disproportionate political crisis



This article originally appeared on **Global Voices Online**,

and was written by Yelena Osipova.

I mean, a *real* worm.

The fact that Russian officials had become **devout fans of Twitter** is not news anymore. Their enthusiasm has even been credited for the explosion of the Russian “tweet-o-sphere” over the past several months, so much so that the administration of the microblogging website **has announced a plan** to launch a Russian-language interface for its users.



Yet, it was a different matter that topped the

Twitter-related news in Russia on Wednesday, October 13. Apparently, as the Kremlin was hosting an honorable guest – German President Christian Wulff – on Tuesday evening, the dinner menu for Governor of Tver region Dmitry Zelenin included an extra shot of protein: a live earth worm. The tweet-o-enthusiastic governor managed to take a picture of the unwanted guest and shared it on **his microblog** along with a comment which, **according to RIA Novosti** [RUS], read:



Things like this happen even in Alexandrovsky Hall. Along with beef you're also served lettuce with live earthworms.



The Moscow Times pointed out that the Governor had an additional comment:



It's an attempt of sorts to show that the salad leaves are fresh.



The Kremlin was certainly not happy with these comments. Sergei Prikhodko, President Medvedev's top foreign policy adviser, told **RIA Novosti** [RUS] that he found Zelenin's comments to be “irresponsible” and “stupid”:

“

Fortunately, I deal with foreign policy issues; however, I would, probably, advise my lawyer-colleagues to introduce a provision in the guidelines for the evaluation of governors' activities that would allow them to be fired 'on grounds of idiocy'.

”

Prikhodko also advised everyone to think twice, from now on, before inviting Zelenin over for dinner.

The photo along with the tweets have since been removed from Zelenin's feed. However, the story still managed to get several prominent mentions:

REUTERS reported on the incident, contextualizing it within the general issue of tweet-omania among Russian officials, as well as the convoluted relationship between the President and the regional governors in the country.

The Moscow Times picked it up, too, with a little follow-up, highlighting that Zelenin's spokeswoman declined to comment on why the governor removed the tweets and the photo. The article also featured comments by Kremlin's head chef, who was quick to clear himself of blame. (As a side note: it is worth pointing out that the piece mentioned that Prime Minister Putin's grandfather was the personal cook to Lenin and Stalin. Just a side note!)

The most interesting mention, however, is certainly that **by Russia Today TV**, which not only featured two separate segments on it, but also had managed to capture the actual photo, before it was removed (see the videos [here](#) and [here](#)). Weird public diplomacy: I guess they did not consult Prikhodko before airing or publishing these.

Another interesting comment on the matter came from the mock **@Kremlins_Wife** user on Twitter, who **wrote**[RUS]:



And just in case you are wondering (according to RT)...

“

...The fate of the worm is unknown.

”

UPDATE [12:40 p.m., EST]: The Kremlin worm is apparently live and well, and it has come out of hiding: later on Thursday it registered an official Twitter account of its own **@KremlinCherv**, posting comments and asking for attention. At the time of this writing, it already has 779 followers.

The first Tweet read:

“

@DZelenin Thank you, Dmitry Vadimovich. I am a star now!



The Celeb Worm also re-shared its previously removed portrait.

Yet, the most noteworthy update so far has been:



Brothers, eat salads. I'm the last worm of democracy!



@KremlinCherv
Кремлевский Червяк

Поедайте салаты, братья, я - последний червяк демократии!

2 hours ago via web ☆ Favorite ↻ Retweet ↩ Reply

As for Governor Zelenin,

Retweeted by [madvillain](#) and 96 others



apparently he has run into real trouble, with a full-scale investigation launched into the case. According to **Russian news agencies [RUS]**, a preliminary examination of the photograph has revealed that it did not correspond to the location and presentation of the plate at the table. If the photo is found to be indeed fake, Mr. Zelenin can “face charges based on the existing legal code.”

Credits: Flickr CC **Search Antigua**