

Inter RAO Fires Opposition Leader

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Marat Davletbayev

State-owned power giant Inter RAO fired a midlevel executive who helped lead an opposition party outside of office hours.

Marat Davletbayev left the company after being a fixture of the recent street protests and taking a leading role at the opposition December 5 Party. On Sunday, he and other party members rallied against the ban on the adoption of Russian children by U.S. citizens.

In losing his job, Davletbayev became part of a trend that reveals the employment risks of standing up to the Kremlin. In one of the similar cases, Vladimir Ashurkov said goodbye to his executive position at Alfa Group last year.

When Davletbayev agreed in June to help organize the December 5 Party, he predicted troubles at work, said a fellow party co-leader, Denis Bilunov.

"I trust that all this is not in vain!" Bilunov said on his LiveJournal page Wednesday,

commenting on the fellow activist's career setback.

Davletbayev said through another senior party member, Alexander Larenkov, that he wouldn't comment on the dismissal. Larenkov, however, told *The Moscow Times* that "if it had been his desire to leave, he wouldn't be sitting around doing nothing now."

The firing, which took place Dec. 29, remained unreported until late Tuesday. Inter RAO denied that politics were a reason for the pink slip, stating that the executive stepped down "by mutual agreement."

"The company didn't — and couldn't — have any complaints in connection with his political activity," an Inter RAO representative said, *Interfax* reported.

Sources in the company, however, said that Davletbayev's bosses were not amused by his elevation to the opposition firmament, the report said.

At Inter RAO, Davletbayev was director of a department that provided the country's third-largest power producer with legal support in running its domestic and international projects. The projects he oversaw included the acquisition of Turkish power plant Trakya and assets from Russian power company Bashkirenergo, an Inter RAO representative said.

In his political capacity, Davletbayev was a member of the standing committee of the December 5 Party, named after the date in 2011 when people took to the street in the first of the series of large protests over the tainted State Duma elections.

The party held its founding congress on Dec. 8. It seeks to bring together the protesters and their sympathizers, calling for fair elections, freedom of assembly and a handover of some powers from the president to the parliament.

Its platform is similar to those of some other new liberal parties, such as the Republican Party–People's Freedom Party, co-led by such figures as Vladimir Ryzhkov and Boris Nemtsov.

Sergei Davidis, a fellow member of the party's standing committee, doubted that Inter RAO had no politically driven motives for getting rid of the activist.

"As far as I can judge, they had no professional issues with him," he said. "The last straw for the employer was when he enlisted as a co-founder of the December 5 Party."

Davidis said employees at state companies and businesses that depend on state contracts and regulation should realize they could also have to forfeit their jobs if they get too involved in opposition to the powers that be.

Socialite and television host Ksenia Sobchak had to abandon her shows last year, including the one on MTV Russia, after she joined the protest movement. Davidis said Mikhail Shats and Tatiana Lazareva left CTC television in a similar scenario.

In November, business daily *Vedomosti* published an opinion piece by Davletbayev in which he likened President Vladimir Putin's rule to the reign of China's self-described first emperor, Qin Shi Huang, who cracked down on dissent and had many of his achievements destroyed

by revolts that erupted after his death.

Davletbayev, 33, had worked at Inter RAO for almost three years. His previous employment was at investment company V-Holding. Before that, he joined Gazprom in 2002 and worked for the gas giant until 2006.

He graduated from the prestigious Moscow State Institute of International Relations.

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