

Editor of Embattled Liberal Radio Station Plans Buyout From State Company

By [The Moscow Times](#)

November 19, 2014



Alexei Venediktov

Amid a fight for control of opposition-minded Moscow radio station Ekho Moskvyy, the station's editor-in-chief will lead an effort to gain full ownership from a state-owned media company.

The move is the latest in a tussle between Alexei Venediktov, Ekho's long-time editor, and Mikhail Lesin, the chief of Gazprom Media, an arm of Russia's natural gas giant Gazprom. Gazprom Media owns 66 percent of Ekho. The remaining shares are owned by the radio station's journalists, including Venediktov.

"We will make a written offer to Lesin to buy the stake," Venediktov was quoted as saying in a message on Ekho's website.

According to Venediktov, Lesin, who as press minister in the early 2000s oversaw

the renationalization of Russia's key television stations, said he would consider an offer "if the price is adequate."

Venediktov and Lesin have been at odds since Nov. 6, when Lesin fired Ekho Moskvyy journalist Alexander Plyushchev for violating "ethical norms" in a tweet about the death of the son of the head of the Kremlin administration. Venediktov contested the decision, saying only he can fire editorial staff under the radio station's charter. Despite pressure from Lesin, he has refused to offer up Plyushchev's head.

An extraordinary shareholder meeting will be held on Nov. 21 to discuss the fate of the station, its editor and its format. Venediktov, who will attend the meeting, has said he doesn't rule out that he could be fired.

The struggle over Ekho Moskvyy comes as Russian authorities tighten control over domestic media. Several editors of high-profile news outlets have been elbowed out of their posts in recent months over editorial policy, and a new law will cap foreign ownership of media at 20 percent from 2017, a move critics say is designed to bring in Russian owners the Kremlin can more easily control.

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