

Independent Radio Station Ekho Moskvyy's Founding Editor Quits Amid Scandal

By [Ivan Nechepurenko](#)

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Over the course of more than two decades, Ekho Moskvyy has been widely lauded as a symbol of free speech and independent reporting in Russia.

The founding editor of Ekho Moskvyy, Russia's leading talk-radio station, has resigned from his post citing the deterioration of journalistic standards at the station, which in the past has enjoyed widespread praise for its balanced and independent editorial policy.

"The radio station that we created in 1990 is no longer there. Its body is still working, but its brain is already dead," editor Sergei Korzun wrote in a LiveJournal blog post Saturday.

Korzun was among the group of rogue journalists who revolutionized the Russian airwaves by establishing Soviet Moscow's first independent radio station. He served as its chief editor from its 1990 founding until 1996, at which point he stepped down from the helm, but

continued playing a key editorial role in the organization.

In his blog post, Korzun attributed his resignation to a disagreement with the station's current editor-in-chief, Alexei Venediktov, over the editorial policies of Ekho Moskvy's website. In particular, he cited issues with blog posts published by Venediktov's outspoken 23-year-old personal assistant, Lesya Ryabtseva.

By way of an example, Korzun cited one post penned by Ryabtseva that referred to the members of Russia's political opposition as a group of "merciless — and at the same time spineless — jerks who lie to themselves."

Korzun then quoted another Ryabtseva post where she griped that "at work we are surrounded by morons, who neither know nor understand anything." Korzun speculated that in this statement, Ryabtseva had been referring to him personally. Both posts were published this month.

Before resigning, Korzun spoke about these various issues with Venediktov, but the two failed to reach an agreement.

"Of course I am sad about him leaving. But his belief that different points of view can be presented by Ekho Moskvy has changed," Venediktov told RIA Novosti on Sunday.

Ryabtseva, herself an aspiring journalist, began serving as Venediktov's personal assistant in 2013.

Due largely to her outspoken blog posts, she has become a controversial figure, provoking the ire of critics who have accused her of capitalizing on her privileged access to Venediktov — a key figure in the Russian media — in order to advance her career.

Korzun has left the radio station several times before. In an interview with RIA Novosti, Venediktov expressed hope that Korzun would return again in the future.

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Contact the author at i.nechepurenko@imedia.ru

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