

Ranting the Russian Way

The Word's Worth

[Michele A. Berdy's The Word's Worth](#)

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Рвать и метать: rant and rave

Last week I went on a rant, and after the dust settled, someone asked: How do you go on a rant in Russian?

The answer is, of course, that there are many ways to rant in Russian, from barely heated grouching through medium-level indignation right up to a red-hot tirade that rivals Zeus tossing bolts of lightning from atop Mount Olympus. There are lots of ways to express fury in Russian because there are lots of ways to be infuriated in Russia. The weather alone is enough to make you blow a gasket.

Most rants start slow and relatively quietly. For example, you might simply complain (жаловаться): Родители во всём мире жалуются на то, что детей невозможно оторвать от компьютера (Parents all over the world complain that they can't tear their kids away from their computers.) Or you might be peeved by the actions of your local utilities company: Мои соседи негодовали по поводу повышения квартплаты (My neighbors were really annoyed about the hike in their communal services bill.) You might bemoan some aspects of your fate: Анечка сетовала на одиночество (Anya lamented her solitary life). Ваня роптал на условия работы (Vanya grouched about his working conditions).

As you begin to get hot under the collar, you become indignant. You find yourself muttering phrases like Как он смеет! (How dare he!) Ну надо же! (Can you believe it?!) And then you declaim: Я хочу выразить свое возмущение по поводу его выступления (I want to express my indignation over his speech.) After a while you begin to speak out: высказываться (to say your piece), like this person: В семье, естественно, я высказываюсь (In my family, naturally I speak my mind.) I'll bet she does... But высказываться по поводу... (to say your piece about something) is already heading into rant territory. Я высказывалась по поводу его поведения (I spoke my mind about his behavior.) Someone got an earful.

Medium-high ranting can be long, loud, but still relatively decorous — the sort of diatribe you hear at meetings of august international organizations or your local parent-teacher conference. You start out with criticism: Он беспощадно критиковал конституционные проекты (He ruthlessly criticized the drafts of the constitution). Родители подвергают острой критике директора школы (Parents are really taking the school principal to task.)

Sometimes you go on and on and on. Нам пришлось слушать его долгий и занудный скулёрж по поводу некомпетентности молодых сотрудников (We had to listen to his long and obnoxious whining about how incompetent the young staff members were.) Ноет часами на тему молодёжи и плохой профессиональной подготовки (He whines for hours about young people and their poor professional qualifications.)

You know you are starting to lose it when someone tells you to calm down: Да ты не кипятись! (Now take it easy! Don't get all hot under the collar, literally "don't boil"). And then you might raise your voice. Он устроил громкую сцену, повышал голос, долго возмущался по поводу поведения детей (He made a scene, raised his voice and went on and on about the way the kids were behaving.)

One of the best words for a rant is тирада (tirade), which can be гневная (furious), бранная (insulting) or нецензурная (obscenity-filled). And the best word for bursting into a rant is разразиться (to explode). Я разразилась тирадой о несовершенстве нашего городского транспорта (I launched into a rant about problems with public transportation in the city.) Он разразился долгой и гневной тирадой, в которой содержался намёк на особую благосклонность судей к своим соотечественникам (He blew up and went on a long and enraged tirade, hinting that the judges were particularly lenient to their compatriots.)

Now the most annoying response to a good rant is condescension. You are filled with self-righteous fury and indignation, but your co-worker, friend or spouse calls it брюзжание (grouching); демагогия (bombast); нытьё по поводу зарплаты (whining about your salary);

or типичное ля ля по поводу начальников-шовинистов (the same old same old about your chauvinistic bosses). Слушаю бесконечное брюзжание: Горбачёв ☒ трепач... Ельцин ☒ пьяница... народ ☒ быдло... Сколько раз я уже это слышала? (I hear the same old endless grousing: Gorbachev is all talk, Yeltsin is a drunk, the people are sheep... How many times have I heard this already?)

So you snap. Пошло-поехало! (All hell broke loose). Понеслось! (She let it rip.)

Ругаешь его на чём свет стоит (You rake him over the coals!) Жители района начали ругать власть на чём свет стоит и требовать наказания виновных (The people who lived in the neighborhood began to rant at the authorities and demand that they punish the guilty parties.)

And when you are really on a tear, you can take a page out of Zeus' book. You might start by shooting sparks from your eyes. Её глаза метали молнии ☒ в данный момент она протестовала против всей несправедливости, творившейся в мире (Her eyes flashed and at that moment she was protesting against all the injustice in the world.) And then you can call down thunder and lightning (гром и молнии), at least metaphorically: Как могло случиться, что президент, метавший гром и молнии против соглашения, через шесть месяцев сам подписал его? (How could it be that the president who ranted and raged against the treaty, went and signed it himself six months later?)

Finally, you can blow your stack, lose it, and raise hell. Включи телевизор ☒ сам поймёшь. Просто хочется рвать и метать (Turn on the TV — I don't have to tell you. You just go ballistic.)

Well, better out than in, I always say.

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