

United Russia Purged Ads, Prokhorov Says

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Right Cause's billionaire leader Mikhail Prokhorov accused United Russia officials on Tuesday of orchestrating the removal of more than 200 billboards bearing his portrait in three cities.

Campaign advertising for the State Duma elections in December is not allowed until the fall, but Prokhorov has financed hundreds of billboards, nominally to promote his web site, [made-in-russia.ru](#).

Fifty billboards were taken down by local authorities in Yekaterinburg last week, and another 180 in Novosibirsk, Prokhorov wrote on his blog. This week, the removals reached Moscow, where two billboards were taken down, a Right Cause spokesman said Tuesday.

The street advertising company that handled installation and removal of billboards has provided no explanation for the move and may face "economic sanctions" if it fails to do so, the spokesman told Interfax.

Prokhorov blamed the removal on local authorities loyal to the ruling United Russia party. "They're afraid we'll not let United Russia get its planned percent" of votes in the elections, he said, adding that his party would fight back in courts and media.

Prokhorov became the leader of Right Cause in June and has promised to give the party, widely seen as a Kremlin project to sweep liberal voters, the second-biggest faction in the new Duma with 15 percent of the vote.

His unceremonious campaigning may indeed have irked United Russia, which is starting to see Right Cause as a serious rival, not a "friendly spoiler," said Alexei Makarkin, an analyst with the Center for Political Technologies.

"United Russia would like him to speak about an increase in working hours and deference to company bosses, but he has started to touch on other topics," Makarkin said by telephone.

Prokhorov, roundly criticized by ordinary Russians last year for proposals to tighten labor legislation in favor of employers, has cautiously courted moderate nationalists lately. Although he has denied giving the party a patriotic slant, he got self-professed nationalist Yevgeny Roizman, a noted anti-drug activist, to join Right Cause last month.

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