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Sponsors Refuse to Fund Pro-Kremlin Camp

By The Moscow Times

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Putin's face is ever-present at the yearly Seliger event. **Maxim Stulov**

The government will entirely fund this year's pro-Kremlin youth camp near Lake Seliger after sponsors refused to fund the event, the camp's director said.

"In the past, sponsors and partners have helped compensate our costs. This year we have partners, but they aren't giving money, they are giving their goods. It just so happened that no one gave any money," camp director Alexei Volokhov told Kommersant-FM radio.

Sergei Belokonev, newly installed head of the Federal Youth Agency, earlier claimed that 280 million rubles ($8.64 million) would be spent on this year's summer camp and that 60,000 would attend. Two hundred million rubles of budget money was allocated to the camp in 2011.

Organizers' failure to secure private funding comes on the back of similar failures last year, when car manufacturer Mercedes-Benz and notebook producer Moleskine refused to be

linked with the Seliger project, which has a controversial reputation.

In 2010 camp leaders sparked outrage when members of Nashi's radical wing Stal organized an exhibit that featured portraits of former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, veteran rights defender Lyudmila Alexeyeva and opposition leader Boris Nemtsov mounted on stakes and wearing hats with swastikas.

Seliger 2012 has already been in the spotlight following organizers' decision to choose well-known photo blogger Dmitry Ternovsky to lead the camp's political session. Ternovsky said he intends to invite opposition leaders.

The camp is scheduled to run in four sessions from July 1 to Aug. 2. The camp's website lists President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and Central Elections Commission head Vladimir Churov among a list of high-profile invitees from the political, business, arts and culture worlds.

According to a Public Opinion Foundation survey released Friday, more than 60 percent of Russians had never heard of the yearly Seliger event.

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