

## Local Paper in Siberia Accused of Being 'Foreign Agent'

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The building of a local newspaper in the Siberian town of Berdsk has been vandalized with graffiti denouncing the weekly as a “U.S. agent” and the “Fifth column,” the publication has reported.

Employees of the “Kuryer. Sreda. Berdsk” weekly newspaper saw the writing on the brick wall of their building when they arrived at work on Monday morning, the newspaper reported. It published a photograph of its building with the graffiti spray-painted in black.

The newspaper's editor-in-chief Galina Komornikova blamed the attack on the local authorities, accusing them of persecuting the weekly for its critical publications.

“We work as we do: We cover what happens,” she said, the paper reported. “True, we criticize some actions of the administration. But this is not a reason to hunt for enemies in our newspaper.”

She said the action may also be related to a series of professional training seminars employees of the paper attended that were sponsored by the NewEurasia network of blogs covering the

Caucasus and Central Asia.

The newspaper added in its report that it was among more than 300 local publications whose employees attended the seminars of the association, “which has ceased its activity as of two years ago.”

This was not the first time the Kuryer has been linked to foreign funding.

Earlier this year, a newspaper in the regional center of Novosibirsk published an article, “groundlessly” accusing the Berdsk weekly of “ties with the U.S. State Department,” Kuryer reported.

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