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Former Editor of Russia's RBC Says Political Pressure Behind Dismissals

By The Moscow Times

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The former chief editor of the RBC media holding has said that political pressure on the company resulted in the dismissal of top staff members, the Meduza news website reported Thursday.

RBC's work on the Panama Papers was like waving a "red rag" at the Kremlin, Yelizaveta Osetinskaya said in an interview published by The Financial Times.

Reporters at the paper were told to "dig for information" following the Panama revelations, which leaked details of thousands of offshore accounts, Osetinskaya said.

The information included details on Sergei Roldugin, a close friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The cellist owns a number of offshore companies with cash flows of $2 billion.

RBC newspaper editor-in-chief Maxim Solyus was dismissed from his position on May 13. Osetinskaya and chief editor of the RBC website Roman Badanin resigned in protest, along

with several other staff members.

Osetinskaya also dismissed claims from Deputy Communications Minister Alexei Volin that the dismissals had taken place for economic reasons. Volin told reporters that the RBC editors had been “fired for idiocy,” as well as “incompetence and lack of professionalism.”

Their work had driven the media holding into debt to the sum of 1.5 billion rubles ($22.5 million) he said, the Interfax news agency reported.

RBC general director Nikolai Molybog said that the journalists left due to “disagreements on important issues.”

The RBC media holding has allegedly drawn Kremlin displeasure on a number of occasions. The company published several articles on Russian President Vladimir Putin's alleged family members, as well as an article on an oyster farm next to the Black Sea mansion dubbed “Putin's Palace,” Reuters reported.

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