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Former RBC Editor Blames Kremlin For Dismissal

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A former editor from the independent Russian news outlet RBC has claimed that pressure from the Kremlin led to his dismissal, the Reuters news agency reported Wednesday.

Roman Badanin, the former editor of the RBC website, said that coverage of politically sensitive issues had caused the Kremlin to target the group's billionaire owner Mikhail Prokhorov.

Badanin said that RBC's reporting on the Panama Papers — a leak which showed that cellist and childhood friend of Putin, Sergey Roldugin, was holding billions of dollars in offshore accounts — had provoked the the Russian government. Reports of the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine and the business affairs of Putin's friends and family had also drawn official anger, he said.

Prokhorov's holding company ONEXIM, was raided by police shortly after the RBC story on Roldugin, while the head of a ONEXIM utility company was arrested for fraud on June 22. Pro-

Kremlin demonstrators also staged protests outside the newspaper's offices, accusing them of spreading Western propaganda.

RBC announced Badanin's dismissal on May 13, along with the firing of RBC editor-in-chief Elizaveta Osetinskaya and the editor of RBC's daily newspaper, Maxim Solus. The move caused the mass resignation of a number of RBC journalists. The company announced on July 7 RBC Elizaveta Golikova and Igor Trosnikov, both recruited from state news agency TASS, would take over as a joint editorial team.

Badanin, who has since become chief editor of independent television channel Dozhd, said that the move was designed to make RBC's editorial policy "more cautious."

A recording of a meeting between RBC journalists and their new editors discussing new editorial policy was leaked to the Meduza news website on July 7.

In the recording, Gorlovka uses the analogy of driving a car to answer questions from journalists on editorial policy and why the previous editors had been fired.

"If you drive over a solid double line, they [the police] take away your license. Does this mean you'll stop driving your car and that you'll start travelling by plane or something?", she said.

The pair refused to discuss specific "no-go" topics, when asked where such a line may be, saying that, "nobody knows where the solid double line is."

RBC's general director Nikolai Molibog later lashed out at those who recorded the meeting, writing on Facebook that "those at RBC who did this or think it's acceptable can f**k off to hell."

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