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Russian Oligarchs Attend Closed-Doors Meeting at The Atlantic Council in D.C.

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Pyotr Aven, Mikhail Fridman / MT

Two Russian billionaires have held a controversial meeting at the Atlantic Council think-tank in Washington D.C. behind closed doors in what critics said were "friendly" talks with "oligarchic emissaries."

Alfa Bank co-founders Mikhail Fridman and Pyotr Aven featured as guests at the off-the-record roundtable on Monday. Russian dissidents including former chess champion Garry Kasparov criticized the think-tank for not opening the talks to the public.

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At the discussion, the two businessmen said they expected Russia's economy to continue to decline despite rising oil prices, the Ekho Moskvy radio station reported Thursday, citing unnamed sources familiar with the talks.

“The reasons for this are irreversible structural changes, a brain drain and Vladimir Putin’s extreme short-sightedness,” Ekho Moskvy wrote.

When asked about the meeting, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that neither Fridman nor Aven could be called “Putin’s emissaries,” citing a term used in a letter written by Russian emigres critical of the roundtable, the state-run TASS news agency reported.

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