
Interview by the Chairperson of the Russia's Investigative Committee Alexander Bastrykin to Rossiyskaya Gazeta

Prisoners of video camera

Head of the Investigation Committee Alexander Bastrykin comments on investigation into 6 May mass riots

Yesterday the Chairman of the Russia's Investigative Committee Alexander Bastrykin was the guest of our editorial office. Telling about investigation of the most celebrated cases, he also answered those embarrassing questions about his agency, widely discussed in Internet and media.

Any notorious case causes boisterous reaction in media. Like it or not, investigation comes under pressure – first by journalists and then by public opinion. This was the exact reaction on the investigation into Kushchevskaya massacre – slaying of 12 people by a local gang. One of the newspapers little short of openly accused investigators of covering up the murderers.

Alexander Bastrykin: You know, I'm always grateful to journalists as I really get many critical remarks out of media.

I have read a lot of uncomplimentary things about myself and never did I persecute anybody, as I am

used to respecting another's opinion. In this sense I am a tolerant person.

But regarding the article you mentioned, in point of fact, it made us mafia. It is a serious accusation and a way of pressure as well. Such articles provoke us to think, that sometimes it's better for the image not to solve the case, than to solve it. The case of Kushchevskaya village was solved in record time.

Within two weeks we found all the gang and got its 4 members, who had escaped abroad – two from Egept and two from Ukraine.

I invited the author of the article to come with me there and see for himself.

Eventually, the newspaper made official apology to me.

Now one of the most discussed by media and global network topics is a sentence to one of the Kushchevskaya case “characters” Sergey Tsepovyaz, who for covering up the murder of 12 people got away with only a fine of 150 thousand rubles.

For this verdict the journalists severely criticize everybody: local authorities, court and you among others. What can you say?

Alexander Bastrykin: Sergey Tsepovyaz was convicted for covering up the crime, the maximum penalty provided for this is two years in prison. This crime (article 316 of the RF Criminal Code) falls into category of mild offences. Tsepovyaz spent 8 months in pre-trial prison while the investigation was rolling on. He admitted his guilt. In trial the prosecutor demanded to fine him 200 thousand rubles. The judge took into account extenuating circumstances (assistance to investigation, little children) and cut the fine down to 150 thousand rubles. The public prosecutor considers the verdict lawful and well-reasoned. According to amendments to the RF Criminal Code, mild crime committed for the first time can be punishable with prison only in case of aggravated circumstances, which the court did not find here.

I should say that the convict was not a member of Tsapok gang. He was accused of burning the compromising documents on the purchase of petrol which had been used to burn down the murder scene.

But I should also stress that, in my opinion, all this agitation about the sentence is connected with the fact that the family name of Tsepovyaz is associated by many with his namesake – also Tsepovyaz – who, according to our information, really was a member of Tsapok’s gang. The convict is Sergey, but the first name of other Tsepovyaz is Vyacheslav. But they are not related. By the way Vyacheslav Tsepovyaz is accused of many grave crimes – murder, attempted murder, swindling, arbitrariness, unlawful abstraction of another’s property and others.

So, the investigation into Kushchevskaya tragedy is not complete. It also should be reminded to those not agreeing with the verdict, that investigators have no right to intervene with the court or prosecutors, and the public prosecutor agrees with the sentence.

Two of Tsapok’s gang members have already been sentenced to 20 years in prison. The rest have started to read the files of the case. And as soon as they read it, the case will be tried on merits.

The arrests after disorders on Bolotnaya Ploshchad on 6 May are also very widely discussed. This case is also investigated by the Investigative Committee. Will there be more arrests?

Alexander Bastrykin: Not revealing the secret of investigation, I will say that the probe is rolling on and there will be more arrests, though I won't tell how many.

There were rumors that mass arrests would follow the first detentions.

Alexander Bastrykin: Before touching anybody we have to have serious proofs of their unlawful actions that would convince the court. We made an examination of first three people arrested, which proved that they were the same people who were running riot and breaking the laws. It was an extremely sophisticated forensic examination of pictures and video records. By the way, one of the arrested has admitted his guilt on seeing the materials, another one has also admitted though only in part. These people were not simply resisting the policemen. They were attacking them. This is a crime in any part of the world. And if tomorrow the riot policemen start rallying? There was a similar situation a couple of years ago in France when extremists were looting one of the blocks on the outskirts and the policemen said: "We're leaving". The result is well-known – the hooligans burned down the block.

There seem to be no people suffered from the authority among the detainees.

Alexander Bastrykin: One of them has indeed surprised me, he is a businessman with the swindling record. I was wondering, if there were some problems with his business, someone was coming down on him. It turned out that everything was OK with his business. But why then did he start strangling a policeman? We are only interested to detain those people actively organizing the attacks on the policemen, violently resisting to or beating them. I won't even mention how concerned I am over the coming 12 June.

I think, you should say about it.

Alexander Bastrykin: Maybe as a preventive measure I really should mention it, so that people think about it. Think, that all that happens is really serious. The more so, as far as I understood, maybe you'll be able to correct me if I'm wrong, I heard yesterday on TV Udaltsov saying that even if they fail to agree the rally with the Moscow authorities, it still would be held on Sadovoye Koltso. That was the statement?

Yes, that's right.

Alexander Bastrykin: This means, that somebody ahead of time is ready to commit wrongdoings. And it means that the police have to use measures stipulated by law. Then there will be clashes again. And this may lead to very serious consequences to which the young people are often driven absolutely concisely. Moreover, the organizers, knowing and understanding everything, will then step aside and ordinary "soldiers" will take responsibility, "soldiers" that were only pushed to do violence.

I would like to remind that participation in mass riots and attack on the policemen lead to criminal charges. The punishment is respectively from 3 to 8 years in prison and from a fine to up to 5 years in prison. So those who think that throwing a stone at a policeman is a small prank are very much mistaken.

The complete text of the interview with Alexander Bastrykin read in coming issues of Rossiyskaya Gazeta.

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