
Interview by the Chairman of the Russia’s Investigative Committee A.I. Bastrykin to the newspaper Izvestiya

Alexander Bastrykin: “I have no time to go to the nature“

Head of the Investigative Committee explained the scandalous situation with the journalist of Novaya Gazeta to the editor-in-chief of Izvestiya Alexander Patapov.

- Mr Bastrykin, this third degree in the forest is a new way of communicating with journalists?

- Come on. At least you don’t want to repeat silly things and insinuations of your negligent colleagues. Now to the point. First – I haven’t been in the forest for God knows how many years. I have so much work that there is no time to go to the nature.

Second: the conflict with the Novaya Gazeta occurred after utterly rude and scandalous article by Sokolov about the investigation of the Investigative Committee the case of Tsapok gang the members of which are accused of mass murders in the village Kushchevskaya. I won’t deny that I had an emotional reaction to the article.

It was just unfair – not to me, but to the investigators who often risk their lives to do their job. It was my idea to invite Sokolov to look in the face of the people investigating the Kushchevskaya much-

talked-of case. The press-service of the Investigative Committee tried to talk me out of it. And as I can see now, they were right. But I insisted. I couldn't even imagine that the journalists and the editorial board of Novaya Gazeta would debase themselves by direct lie.

- You scolded the journalist in the presence of investigating group. There is an audio record of this scolding...

- I don't deny it. My reaction to the journalist's hypocritical attempt to apologize was really harsh. But he said: "Ok, I will apologize, but I will also prove that you are rogues and sold out to Tsapoks". How could I react to that? I reacted in this harsh manner and in the presence of the journalists I had invited myself. But I still think that it was mean and despicable of Novaya Gazeta to accuse the Investigative Committee of selling out to murderers Tsapoks...

- People think that a person with such power as you have, don't have the right to behave like you did with the journalist. Not speaking about taking him to the forest... This is beyond the bounds.

- I repeat again: Nobody took anybody to the forest – this is nonsense of a disturbed mind. There was a heated conversation in a more excited tone.

But I would like to draw your attention to the manner it was presented in. The incident happened more than a week ago. If you've been taken to the woods and threatened with murder, what would be your reaction as a person and a journalist? Rush to turn in the police, sound the alarm – even more so, as the journalists have the opportunity to let the whole world know. And what we have here? A week of silence, some kind of separate negotiations with Duma deputies, with SK press-service, attempts of Novaya Gazeta leadership to have some tea with me and to put things right. After the apology had been printed in the paper, I considered the incident was settled.

- But the journalists have a habit of preparing the publication, looking for proofs, carrying out investigations...

- But there is no and has never been any investigation. There is only a letter by the editor of Novaya Gazeta where the facts are very efficiently mixed with outright lying. And, curiously enough, the letter appeared immediately after the searches of Investigative Committee at the leaders' of non-system opposition.

- Again intrigues by Gosdep?

- I don't say that, but the facts are stubborn things, they are impossible to disprove. But there was a big stir, of course. Novaya Gazeta has again a new share of glory of fighters against authorities. But this whole mess isn't worth one thin dime.

- So you don't feel any guilt?

- I agree, that I can't afford showing emotions. I should have been more patient and shouldn't have to explain to the dishonest journalist what is good and evil. I have nothing to apologize for to Novaya Gazeta. The only thing I want to say, and I am convinced of that: the most of journalists are very decent and honest people, doing their job in difficult conditions, like the Investigative Committee as well.

14 June 2012

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