
Interview by Chairman of Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation A.I. Bastrykin to Izvestia newspaper

Alexander Bastrykin: If they find that I earned even 1 euro in profit, I will resign

The Head of Investigative Committee (SKR) told Izvestia all the details of the recent “Czech story”: Why he needs an apartment in the Czech Republic and why he doesn’t need a residence permit in a European country

- What does the top investigator of the country need an apartment in Prague for? Why did you buy it anyway?

- It was bought in 2000 as I remember, when I wasn’t an official, but a professor of North-Western branch of Russian Law Academy. I bought it in installments, paid it for two years (since 1998). It cost, if I’m not mistaken, 67 thousand USD.

- What was the aim to buy it?

- I will be honest: I had the plans to become visitor-professor –I wanted to work in Europe. At that time I had a lot of connections in scientific circles – in Charles University, in Sorbonne, in Bonn University, in Great Britain. Then I travelled a lot around Europe, and Prague is a very convenient

city in this sense. When you come to Prague, you are in the center of Europe. Wherever I went from this city, it took only an hour and a half by air. At that moment I didn't even think that I would return to government service and take such a high position.

- Is the apartment big?

- It's OK, 46 sq. meters, with a loggia.

- The opposition activist Alexey Navalny this week has published documents alleging that you have sold a real estate through men of straw, after it became known about the real estate in Russia (the material in 2008 was published by a journalist and now a State Duma Deputy Alexander Khinshtein). The documents mention the name of a certain Oksana Prokopova. Was it really a fake deal? How would you explain those documents?

- Explain what? How I sold it? Through a notary public. The information of some "men of straw" is absolutely untrue. Prokopova is an acquaintance of Igor Shutenko's, who was the director of my so called firm.

- What did you need the firm for?

- To receive a long-term visa in the Czech Republic. In Germany at that time you could simply buy an apartment and live there. And in the Czech Republic I bought it to get a long-term visa. As for this kind of visa, which is also called a residence permit, I don't know how it was before, but now my wife Olga Ivanovna Alexandrova has got a five-year-long Schengen visa. Today Schengen visa is

issued for five years.

- What is the address Navelny provides? («Hnězdenská 767/2c, Praha 8, Troja»)?

- This is the address the firm was registered at so that I could get the right to own the apartment.

- So did you have or do you still have a residence permit?

- No, I have only a visa and no residence permit. And I would like to stress that. As for my document, the only document I have had since 2008 is a diplomatic passport. Here it is (shows the passport - Izvestia). It was issued in 2008 and will be valid till 2013. It was actually issued in exchange of the usual passport. Here I don't have any visas at all. I travel around Europe without visas. I don't have any other foreign document. This way, at that time I bought an apartment to get a long-term visa and to have no problems traveling in the Czech Republic and around Europe.

- Did you get any profit from real estate? Did the company registered on your name do any business?

- I didn't do any business. What is commercial activity? It is activity aimed to get profit. If they find that I earned even 1 euro in profit, I will resign. It is easy to prove. They received easily all the documents except one – an income statement.

The same way they got all the documents, you can go to the appropriate agencies, the tax inspectorate of the Czech Republic and get my income statements for all the years since 2000, when I bought the apartment. Why don't they publish this document? Because there are only zeroes there. I didn't do any business. I registered the firm to buy the apartment. And it is very easy to get a document proving that the firm did not earn any profit. In Czech tax inspectorate you can get this information for \$5.

- They also accuse you that there are forged signatures on some of the documents.

- It is a complete nonsense to accuse me of forged signatures. I repeat once more, that all my actions to buy and transfer the apartment were within the pale of law, and the transactions were dealt with by my lawyer and Czech lawyer.

- Today the procedure to check the Head of Russia's Investigative Committee is extremely complicated. Besides, according to the law you are being checked by your subordinates from SKR. Will you agree to be subject to independent investigation in order to whitewash your name? If you have nothing to fear, are you ready to provide any information to the deputy commission, if it launches an investigation?

- Two or three years ago, when I was in the government, Khinshten asked me a question. And I, addressing the Presidium, in front of TV cameras, requested in this situation with Czech apartment to set up an independent deputy commission. There is still none. And I am ready once again to be checked by an independent deputy commission.

- Do you have any ideas why then, the first time, it didn't start its work?

- But what would they have found? One-room apartment in the Czech Republic which I don't even own anymore? The firm was sold to Prokopova, then I ceased to be a founder, and a year later the same did my wife Olga Ivanovna Alexandrova.

- And where is this apartment now?

- Now this apartment is registered on Natalya Nikolayevna Bastrykina. We haven't been living together for already 22 years. She has the family of her own, and I have mine – with Olga Ivanovna Alexandrova. We have two children. I didn't sell the apartment, but gave it to my ex-wife. We are still in friendly relationships. If I did not sell the apartment, I didn't have to pay any taxes.

- It is the second juicy scandal with your name over a month. What is it – your careless attitude or did you steal a march on somebody important?

- We are investigating a criminal case over mass riots on Bolotnaya Ploshchad, and all this is related to this investigation, as the earlier scandal (with a journalist of Novaya Gazeta - Izvestia) was exhausted. The newspaper published an apology. And for me this story is over.

Later, when we started searching and arresting over rallies, I had a new round of attacks on me. Then there was my speech at the meeting of Investigative Committee in Saint-Petersburg, where I publicly scolded our head of Kirov Region Investigation Department because he had secretly wrapped up the case against Alexey Navalny. But if I needed to do something on the sly, I would have invited the Kirov investigator and explained everything to him in private. But I said openly, from the platform, and in front of TV cameras that we were not going to hide anything, and that there would be no pity for heads or investigators, who lose heart or surrender to the pressure of persons involved in such

and other criminal cases, as well as there would be no pity for the persons involved in the cases.

Do you think it was easy for us to investigate the situation in Krymsk in the open? Of course, not. But we did it on purpose. Because we want the people of the country to know the truth. And this time they are attacking not me, but the Investigative Committee. Of course we are stealing a march on somebody. But we are going to go on leading the case actively and attack anybody who has committed unlawful acts against policemen. All of them will be liable by law.

- Navalny has appealed not only to Russian agencies, State Duma and President. He also wrote to Czech police. What results do you expect there? This is not the Russian jurisdiction there. Aren't you afraid of the investigation you can't influence?

- No, I'm not afraid. I have nothing to be afraid of anyway.

- Now, if you don't mind, we would like to go over to more important subjects – the situation in Krymsk. What are the conclusions of the investigation?

- The situation is the following: as early as 5 July there was received a very serious storm warning classified "dangerous phenomenon". There is such classification in meteorological system. And in accordance with this warning it was then when the operations center should have started to operate.

- This is a special organization which starts operation under head of a district. This organization was not set up on 5 July. There was an attempt to set it up on 6 July, when at 8:15 p.m. they received information about even more grave situation – a strong storm and torrential rains were expected. In

reality, the investigation found, that the center had not been set up. Most members of constant operations center couldn't come to the meeting. There was no official meeting and no official document. It was falsified post factum at 6 in the morning, when a lot of people were already dead.

We have checked this document, it contains 32 completely formal and unfeasible paragraphs. I made an example for the president right in front of the cameras. Paragraph 2: Provide 30 KAMAZ vehicles. Where to get them from, who has to provide them, where they should arrive – isn't clear. Who is responsible for this? Not clear. Even more so, within five minutes – that was the time stipulated in the document. And all the paragraphs are this way – completely formal. Then I flew there one more time, walked around the streets, talked to the people – they were extremely indignant. They said to me openly – if anybody had woken them up 10 or 15 minutes before the disaster, there would have been much fewer victims.

- Will the guilty ones be put in prison?

- Considering the gravity of what happened, and that the town's heads may resist the investigation by destroying the documentation and pressure on their subordinates, it was decided to detain them and later put under arrest. I think that restraining measure will be changed, if they start cooperating with and assisting the investigators. So far they don't do such steps and don't plead guilty.

- Is the information that the head of the district evacuated his family before the tragedy confirmed?

- I can neither confirm, nor deny this information. I have given instructions to check it. But using billing connections we have found that all three of them had been within Krymsk. However, they didn't take any measures. But there were many facts of heroism. We have nominated for an award an old man who saved a large family. He rushed out of his house and ran on the water to another house, banged on the windows, took out women and children, though he is over 70. I personally have

shaken his hand and hugged. The town is being restored. A lot is being done by militants, Tkachev is also doing a lot. He took almost all heads of districts there and appointed areas for them, there medical help is operating and all necessary services. All the country was helping in this difficult situation.

- What is now?

- We have set up 19 special examinations which should show why it is happening and what should be done in general to prevent repetition of the tragedy.

- What did trigger the disaster?

- We have examined the reservoir with the help of specialists. It fulfilled its functions. If not for the reservoir, and it was built 1957, there would have been total nightmare. It stood. Speculations that somebody opened something and the wave flooded the town are rubbish. When the reservoir was overflowed, it could not stand any longer. The first obstacle was highways and bridges. The specialists said that the bridge was low and the water was held back by the first “dam”. It started to rise. There was the second “dam” – a railroad embankment. The water was once again held back, but when it bent it, the wave flooded the town. So there should be done serious work, the same as in Europe, where there are fewer deaths during the floods. They construct their engineering structures considering such risks.

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