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1/25 In deze vatniksoep zullen we het hebben over Sergei Rudolgin, deze cellist en goede vriend van Poetin speelt een sleutelrol in de witwasmachine van het Kremlin. Hij verdiende er de bijnaam Poetins Portemonnee mee.



2/24 Sergei Roldugin zag het levenslicht in Siberie maar groeide door de militaire loopbaan van zijn vader op in Letland. Zijn militaire dienst vervult hij in Sint-Petersburg waar hij eerder aan het conservatorium al begonnen was met een studie.

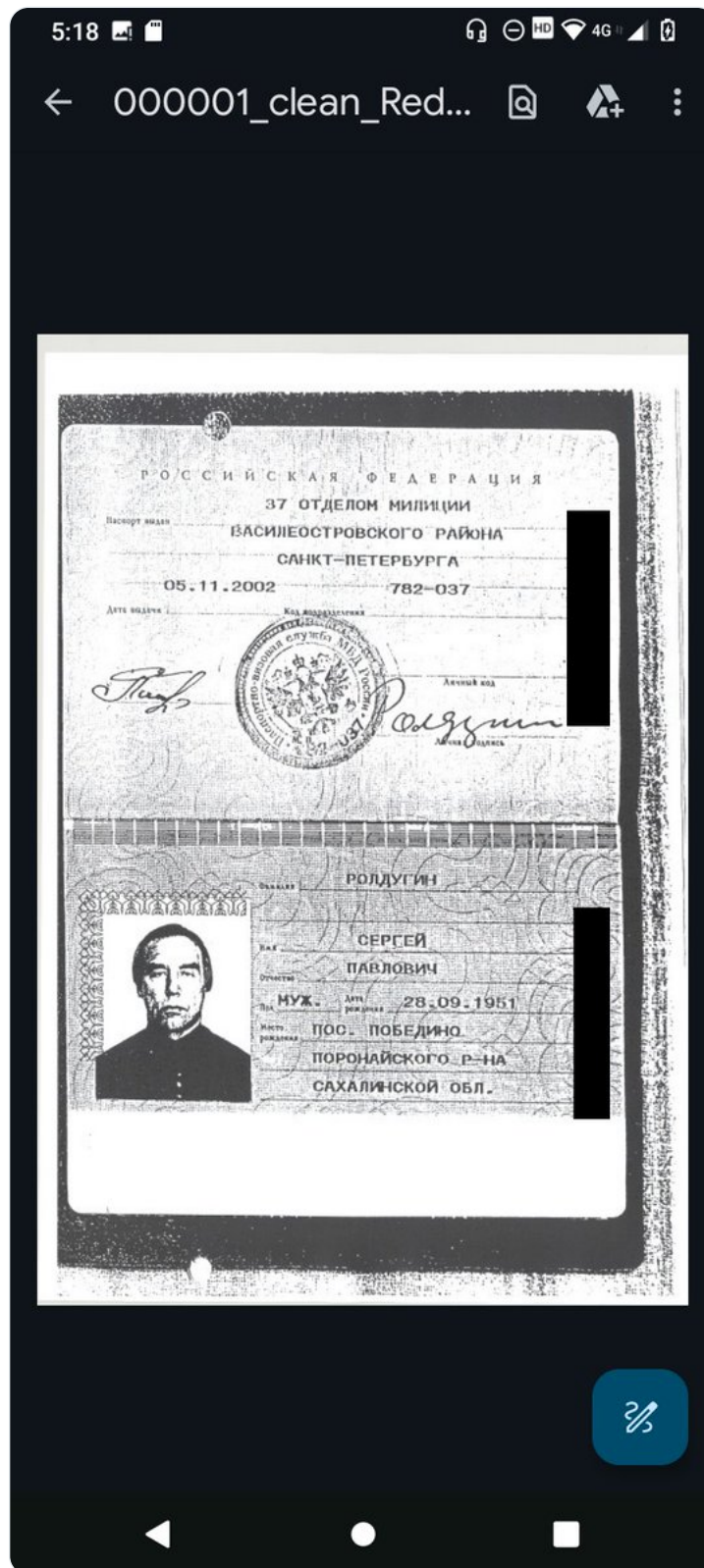
Sergei Roldugin: Background

Roldugin's early life began in Sakhalin, where his father served in the military. However, at a young age, his family relocated to Riga, Latvia, providing him with the opportunity to attend and master the Latvian language at the Latvian School. In Riga, he still has family connections, and his parents rest in peace there.

During his mandatory service in the Soviet Army stationed in Leningrad, an intriguing incident unfolded. Roldugin decided to go AWOL from the base, and, through his older brother Evgeny Roldugin, who was a KGB agent and had attended the KGB school alongside Vladimir Putin, he managed to establish contact with Putin using a phone number provided by his brother.

3/25 Rodulgin studeert in 1975 af als cellist. Roldugins broer volgt een opleiding aan het KGB instituut en zo leert de rebel Sergei Vladimir Poetin kennen.

Beiden zijn vanaf dat moment in '77 onafscheidelijk. "Ik zie hem als een broer" aldus Roldugin.



4/25 Rodulgin stelt Poetin ook voor aan Lyudmila, een stewardess van Aeroflot, met wie hij later zal huwen. Om de vriendschap te onderstrepen wordt Rodulgin in 1985 de peetvader van Poetins dochter Maria.



Lyudmila and Vladimir Putin during the 2010 census

5/25 Toch hebben beide heren een ander carrierepad voor ogen als het ijzeren gordijn valt. Poetin stapt na zijn KGB dagen de gemeentepolitiek in terwijl Rodulgin verder bouwt aan zijn muzikale loopbaan. Hij schopt het tot ceremoniemeester van de lokale concerthal.



6/25 Roldugin is ook een van de weinige figuren die openlijk mag spreken over Poetin in zijn jonge jaren. De Kremlindictator heeft zijn imago zorgvuldig geconstrueerd. Roldugin draagt met zijn louter positieve anekdotes bij aan de mythevorming.



Meanwhile Roldugin, a professional cellist, had risen to become lead soloist at the Mariinsky theatre and rector of St Petersburg's conservatory.

One had chosen art, the other politics and the pursuit of power.



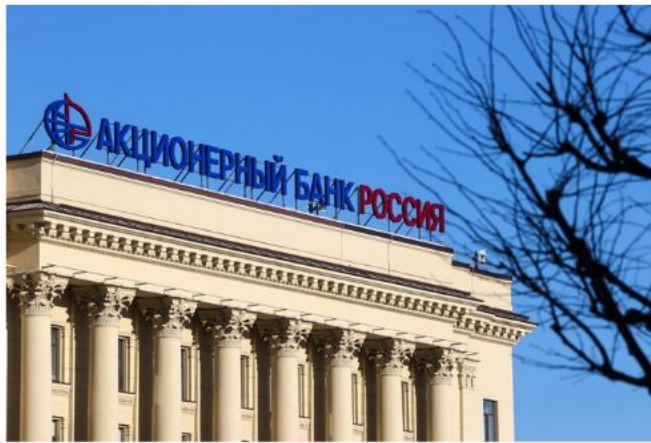
▲ Sergei Roldugin at a meeting of the Mariinsky theatre's board of trustees last year. Photograph: Mikhail Metzel/Itar-Tass/Corbis

In the numerous profiles and biographies of Russia's president, it is Roldugin who gives approving quotes and anecdotes about the young Putin. Now 64 and 63 respectively, they have known each other since their mid-20s. Roldugin still enjoys the president's trust. The modern Putin myth is sustained in part by his friend's potent storytelling.

7/25 Begin jaren '90 krijgt Poetin de opdracht om de Rossiya bank te laten herstructureren. Met de val van het communisme hadden vele partijbonzen de bank gebruikt om illegaal geld weg te sluizen. Rossiya is een chaos en moet klaargemaakt worden voor het kapitalisme.

The Kremlin didn't respond to requests for comment about the relationship between the two men or about government involvement in media decisions. Mr. Putin has described Mr. Kovalchuk as a friend and has criticized the Western sanctions against business leaders close to him.

Messrs. Putin and Kovalchuk, both from St. Petersburg, go way back. In 1991, Mr. Kovalchuk and some partners acquired Bank Rossiya after its owner, the St. Petersburg Communist Party, was disbanded. Mr. Putin, then one of the city's deputy mayors, steered business to the bank, according to the 2014 book "Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?" by Karen Dawisha.



8/25 Poetin schuift het klusje door naar vriend Yuri Kovalchuk die de bank inderdaad hervormt. In ruil voor zijn werk krijgt hij een riant aandelenpakket in bezit. Ook Poetin wordt beloond, later zal blijken dat Roldugin - waarschijnlijk via Poetin - 3,9% van de bank bezit.

Six years ago, Roldugin owned 3.9% of the bank's shares, an incredible investment for a man whose profession pays six-figure salaries to just a very few. He told the New York Times he got his stake “a very long time ago” “when Putin was here [in St Petersburg]”.

Kovalchuk remains the linchpin of a **bank** that now has assets of almost \$11bn. A White House official described him as “essentially the personal banker for many senior officials in the Russian Federation, including Putin”. In Moscow, Bank Rossiya is known as “Putin's wallet”.

9/25 Poetin zorgt goed voor zijn vrienden, Roldugin is zelfs even kandidaat voor de ministerpost van cultuur in 2004. Roldugin wordt in 2005 onderscheiden met de "Artiest van het volk medaille." Ook wordt op zijn verzoek een peperdure concerthal gebouwd in Sint-Petersburg.



Not everything in the paperwork for Roldugin's account was untrue. By 2003, with his friend in the Kremlin, Roldugin was tipped as a possible future culture minister. This did not happen, but instead Roldugin asked Putin to endow a new House of Music in St Petersburg. The president agreed. A 19th-century royal palace was made available and refurbished at a cost of about £15m. In 2009, Roldugin gave Putin and Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's temporary president, a tour. The bank forms describe Roldugin as the house's artistic director and the recipient of state medals - People's Artist of Russia (2005), and Laureate of the Order of Honour (2011).

10/25 In tegenstelling tot veel andere Poetinvrienden loopt Sergei niet te koop met zijn fortuin, in een interview in 2013 stelt hij helemaal niet zo bemiddeld te zijn. Ondanks dat hij tot Poetins innercircle behoort slaan sanctielijsten hem in 2014 over, onterecht zo zal blijken.

The inner circle



The documents reveal the extent to which Vladimir Putin in effect controls state resources via a large network of friends



Sergei Roldugin

Roldugin met Putin in 1977 and introduced him to his future wife, Lyudmila. A professional cellist, he is at the centre of a billion-dollar offshore scheme



Maria Putin

Putin's elder daughter. Sergei Roldugin is her godfather



Yuri Kovalchuk

Putin's friend and 'personal banker'. Kovalchuk owns the biggest share of Bank Rossiya and a media empire, including major holdings in pro-Kremlin TV companies



Gennady Timchenko

St Petersburg friend of Putin, put on sanctions list in 2014. The US says Putin has investments in Timchenko's former oil trading firm Gunvor, and 'may have access' to Gunvor's funds. The company denies it has any outside shareholders



Boris and Arkady Rotenberg

Friends of Putin since childhood and his former judo sparring partners. Both are now billionaires. They own a huge construction empire and many intermediary companies. The US estimates they received \$7bn in contracts for Russia's 2014 Sochi Olympics



Shaun Walker in Moscow

Sun 10 Apr 2016 12.26 EDT



🕒 8 years old

The Russian cellist linked by the Panama Papers to a money trail of billions has spoken out for the first time since the story broke.

In a story published by the Guardian last Sunday, the musician Sergei Roldugin was identified as an old friend of Vladimir Putin linked by documents from the leak to a number of offshore companies with cash flows of up to \$2bn (£1.4bn).

A week later, in a 20-minute segment aired on Russian state television, Roldugin dismissed the idea that he was fabulously wealthy or was safeguarding money and assets for Putin.

More on this topic
Revealed: the \$2bn offshore trail that leads to Vladimir Putin

Without directly answering the allegations that he personally controls a series of assets worth at least \$100m, Roldugin insisted his “wealth” was merely a series of donations from rich businessmen in order to purchase expensive musical instruments for young Russians.

11/25 Met het lek van de Panama Papers in 2016 komt de aap uit de mouw. Roldugin heeft met dubieuze bv's zoals Sandelwood geld via de Rossiya en Gazprombank weggesluisd naar Poetins familie. De bruiloft van Poetins dochter op een skiresort wordt er mee bekostigd.

The Panama Papers show that in 2009-2011 the Igora resort was handed three unsecured loans worth £8m, at a remarkably generous 1% interest. It is unclear if the money given to Ozon was ever returned. Further payments went to a Kovalchuk-linked yacht club.

The cash came from Sandalwood, the offshore company linked to Putin's other close friend, Roldugin.

The complexities of these arrangements are probably designed to hide what is really going on here. But stripped back, it's simple enough.

Thanks to the Panama Papers, it is now possible to see how vast amounts of money flowed to Putin's circle - and in turn, how some of that money has been used to invest in places Putin holds dear.

Igora, Putin's home from home

Not far from the Ozero dacha community is the ski resort of Igora. The resort is home to 13 runs, a state-of-the-art spa, and an ice arena. There is an avenue of cottages where guests can **stay**, and a lake. The name Igora combines two Russian nouns - *igra*, play, and *gora*, mountain.



The Igora ski resort. Photograph: Anatoly Maltsev/EPA

One of the resort's fans is Putin. A keen skier, the president attended its 2006 launch, where he was filmed scooting along the snow. He returned in 2011 for a private visit, his bodyguards trailing down the mountains behind him in dark glasses. Then in February 2013 Igora was the venue for a very special - and private - wedding. The bride was Putin's daughter Katya. The groom was Kirill, the son of Putin's old Ozero friend Nikolai Shamalov. Shamalov is a Bank Rossiya shareholder.

4. The Web of Sanctions: A Tale of Defiance and Justice

In the aftermath of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, a wave of sanctions swept the globe. The European Union led the charge by imposing sanctions on Roldugin in March. Soon after, in June 2022, the US followed suit, invoking Executive Order 14024 to sanction not only Roldugin but also prominent figures like Alexey Mordashov and Vitaly Savelyev.

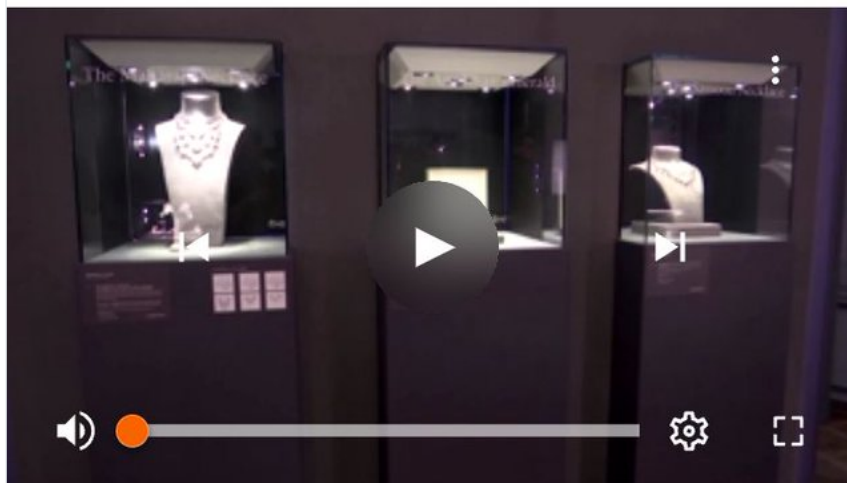
As the world watched, the noose tightened around those involved in evading sanctions. Early in March 2023, four employees of Gazprombank Switzerland faced trial for aiding Roldugin in his evasion tactics, shedding light on the consequences of breaching [international sanctions](#).

The Zurich-based law firm Dietrich, Baumgartner & Partner was also caught by the Panama Papers. According to an investigation published in 2016 by The Guardian, one of its founders, Andres Baumgartner, allegedly told employees that he “had relationships with people from the KGB. Right up to Vladimir Putin.” The British daily newspaper recounts how, in 2014, the study helped cellist Sergey Roldugin – a close friend of the Russian president and godfather to his older daughter – to open an account at Gazprombank (Zurich). In the bank’s application form, the question whether Roldugin was a “politically exposed person (PEP)” was answered with a “no”.

The firm was instructed directly by Bank Rossiya – the Russian bank controlled by people close to President Putin, which had been sanctioned by Europe and the United States because of Russia’s annexation of Crimea – to transfer millions of dollars to this account and then redistribute the money to offshore companies. The transactions were carried out by Mossack Fonseca.

ZURICH, June 25 (Reuters) - Four bankers who helped a friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin move millions of francs through Swiss bank accounts have lost their attempt to overturn convictions for failing to perform due diligence in financial transactions.

Zurich High Court on Tuesday upheld an earlier judgement against the men who assisted Sergey Roldugin, a concert violist who has been dubbed "Putin's wallet" by the Swiss government.



Roldugin, who is godfather to Putin's eldest daughter, deposited millions in a bank account with the Swiss branch of Gazprom Bank ([GZPRI.MM](#)) in Zurich between 2014 and 2016.

Swiss law meant that clarifications were needed into how Roldugin's accounts received dividends of 5 to 7 million Swiss francs (\$5.60 to \$7.83 million) per year and how he acquired a 20% stake in a media company with a value of more than 100 million francs, the court heard on Tuesday.

13/25 Dat de malversaties al enige tijd gaande waren blijkt uit de oprichtingsdata van de brievenbusfirma's van Roldugin: 2006. Bij sommige bv's ging het in opgetelde bedragen om meerdere miljarden dollars. Jarenlang werden winsten van Russische staatsbedrijven afgeroomd.

The Panama Papers, or the importance of Swiss gatekeepers

Switzerland has always occupied a special place in this vast market of non-financial services. In 2016, the Panama Papers (an investigation by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ)) proved it. Data from a hacking into the server of the firm Mossack Fonseca (one of the most famous Panamanian providers of financial services) revealed that 1,339 lawyers, financial advisers and other Swiss intermediaries had set up more than 37,000 offshore companies – over a sixth of all the organisations identified by the ICIJ – during the last 40 years, providing services to tax evaders, powerful elites, politically exposed persons (known as PEPs) and even criminals. As a result, Switzerland ranked second in the list of countries providing such services, behind Hong Kong and ahead of the United Kingdom.

\$231m

Value of loans that Arkady Rotenberg, Mr Putin's judo partner, gave to companies linked to Sergei Roldugin, one of a series of loans given to the firms linked to the cellist by Russian businesses





The Panama Papers investigation revealed that Rodulgin's companies bought and sold shares in state-owned Russian businesses such as Rosneft, the energy giant, and often benefited financially even when contracts were canceled. However until now, the scale of these operations was unknown.

The Troika Laundromat leak reveals that Roldugin-linked offshores received more than US\$69 million from a multi-billion financial network operated by the investment bank Troika Dialog, a system used by Russian elites in part to move money out of the country, buy luxury goods, and avoid taxes.

Between June 2008 and September 2010, a company connected to Roldugin through a business associate received \$31.7 million from the Troika Dialog system, including almost \$5.8 million in compensation for canceled share deals. Sandalwood Continental Ltd., based in the British Virgin Islands, was the recipient. Also during that time frame, Roldugin's International Media Overseas was paid \$37.5 million by Troika-controlled companies, including \$5.8 million in compensation for canceled share deals.

14/25 Roldugin is een spilfiguur in het Trojka schandaal. Het is een witwasoperatie op een enorme schaal die rijken hielp met belastingontduiking. Hij pompt in opdracht miljarden rond met zijn netwerk van schaduw bv's, zelf houdt hij er niet minder dan 69miljoen dollar aan over.

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15/25 Roldugin blijft grote moeite doen zijn rijkdom te verhullen. In 2016 koopt hij een Stradivarius cello voor ettelijke miljoenen. De opbrengst wordt na afloop uit de veilingresultaat geschrapt en zoveel mogelijk buiten de media gehouden.

Auction House Removes Details of Cello Bought by Putin's Friend Roldugin

April 22, 2016



Auction house Reuning & Son Violins has deleted information on the sale of a cello reportedly bought by Sergei Roldugin, a close friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Slon news website reported Friday.

The website of the U.S. auction house — based in Boston, Massachusetts — currently mentions three cellos by famous maker Antonio Stradivari, but does not provide sale details for the third, the “Stuart.”

16/25 In 2015 krijgt het Roldugin's Talentenfonds meer dan 100 miljoen dollar om begaafde kinderen te begeleiden. Ondanks dat een staatsrapport in 2017 concludeert dat het twijfelt aan de doelmatige inzet van middelen blijft de geldkraan doorlopen.



17/25 Op Cyprus heeft Poetin ondertussen een andere illegale operatie lopen, via de marginale zakenman Vladislav Kopylov worden enorme bedragen witgewassen met de Ermira BV. Het geld wordt onder andere gebruikt om Poetins exorbitant dure paleis te financieren.




The building where Vladislav Kopylov's apartment is located

It seemed that things were starting to look up for the fifty-year-old lawyer: just three months before acquiring his new property, Kopylov had become the owner of the Cypriot company Ermira Consultants. At first, Kopylov's firm did not conduct any business nor did it have much money. However, very soon millions of dollars would start flowing through this company, and its owner would therefore have to become a rich and famous businessman. He wouldn't actually become one, though. The fact is that Kopylov is a figurehead who uses his name to conceal the real owner of these millions: Russian President Vladimir Putin.



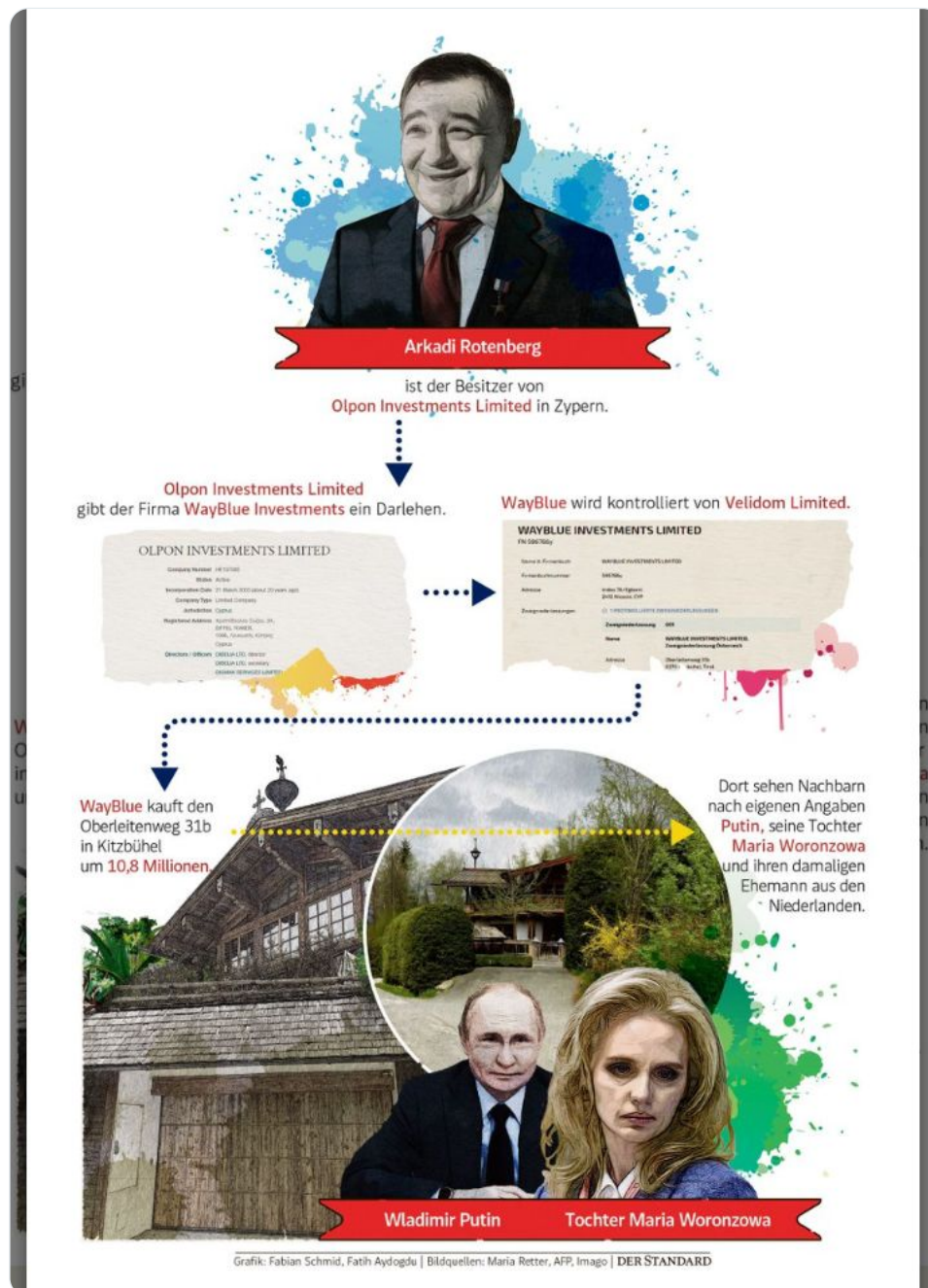
18/25 Uit onderzoek van Proekt Media blijkt dat Kopylov ook banden onderhoudt met Roldugin. Niet toevallig zijn ze samen aandeelhouder van 'The Baltic Media Group', ook participeert de cellist in de non profit van Kopylov 'Support for Childrens Sport' waar ook geld gewit wordt.

Having become a nominee once, Kopylov could not stop. Already as the “owner” of Ermira, he also became the founder of the nonprofit partnership “Support for Children’s Sports” and a shareholder in the Baltic Media Group.

Kopylov’s partners in both cases were other, more famous nominees — Sergey Roldugin and Oleg Rudnov, respectively. Roldugin is a friend of Putin’s youth, famous not only as a cellist but also as the front man who owned offshore companies in Putin’s interests. Rudnov, now deceased, was also a friend of Putin’s. Some assets important to Putin were registered in his name, including the St. Petersburg-based media outlets that formed the basis of the National Media Group, the president’s vacation villa near Vyborg, and the house of his father in the village of Pominovo near Tver  (we will return to Rudnov in the next installment of the Iron Masks series).

19/25 Ermira kende overigens eem opvallend lid in de raad van bestuur; Poetinmaitresse Alina Kabajeva. De gymnaste leeft nu in een riante villa in Zwitserland. Ook Maria Putina en Jorrit Faassen hadden er een optrekje. Roldugin was zijdelings betrokken bij die financiering.





20/25 Dat men in het Kremlin niet blij was met alle datalekken zoals de Panama Papers mogen duidelijk zijn. Volgens Dimitri Alperovic van Crowstrike waren de generieke hacks van de Amerikaanse presidentsverkiezingen in 2016 een vergeldingsactie vanuit Rusland.

release of the Panama Papers, known as OffshoreGate in Russia. The leaked documents exposed a network of offshore holdings, including **Roldugin's staggering \$2 billion** in assets, closely linked to Russian President Vladimir Putin. As a repercussion, a quid pro quo seemed to unfold, leading to suspected cyberattacks that aimed to influence the US presidential elections.

Dmitri Alperovitch, a co-founder of CrowdStrike, suggested that the hackers cast their net widely without a clear understanding of the potential gains. The series of tactical operations, driven by the hackers' growing excitement over their success, allegedly targeted Hillary Clinton, her party, and others in support of Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

These events sparked widespread concern and speculation, with many questioning the integrity of the electoral process and the **involvement of foreign entities** in shaping the destiny of a nation. The alleged hacking underscored the critical need for enhanced cybersecurity measures and safeguarding democratic institutions against external interference. The Panama Papers' far-reaching impact serves as a reminder that transparency and accountability are fundamental pillars of democracy.

21/25 Tijdens een concert in Palmyra (Syrie) zijn de spotlights opnieuw op Roldugin gericht. Het is een propaganda optreden. Er zijn meerdere steden platgebombardeerd, toch noemt Poetin het evenement een 'humanitaire act' die symbool staat voor de bevrijding van terroristen.

By Alexey Eremenko

PALMYRA, Syria – An associate of Russian President Vladimir Putin implicated in the "Panama Papers" performed a classical piece on the ruins of a historic Syrian city on Thursday.



■ FRANCE

■ AFRICA

■ MIDDLE EAST

■ AMERICAS

country.

Issued on: 05/05/2016 - 22:38

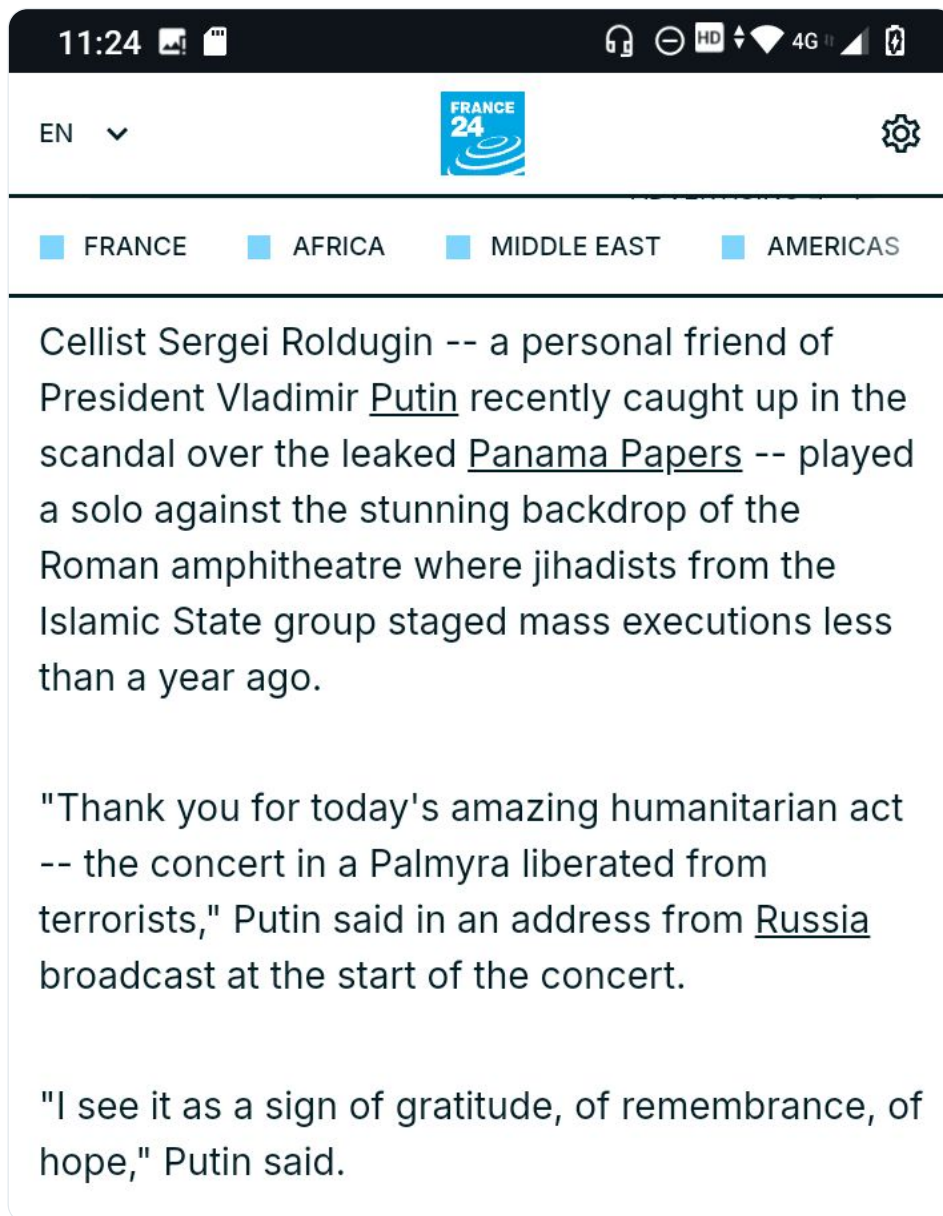


By: NEWS WIRES



France 2 | Screen grab from France 2's transmission of a concert played in an ancient theatre in Palmyra, Syria, on May 5, 2016

Famed conductor Valery Gergiev led Saint Petersburg's celebrated Mariinsky orchestra through pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach, Sergei Prokofiev and Rodion Shchedrin in front of a crowd of Russian soldiers, government ministers and journalists.



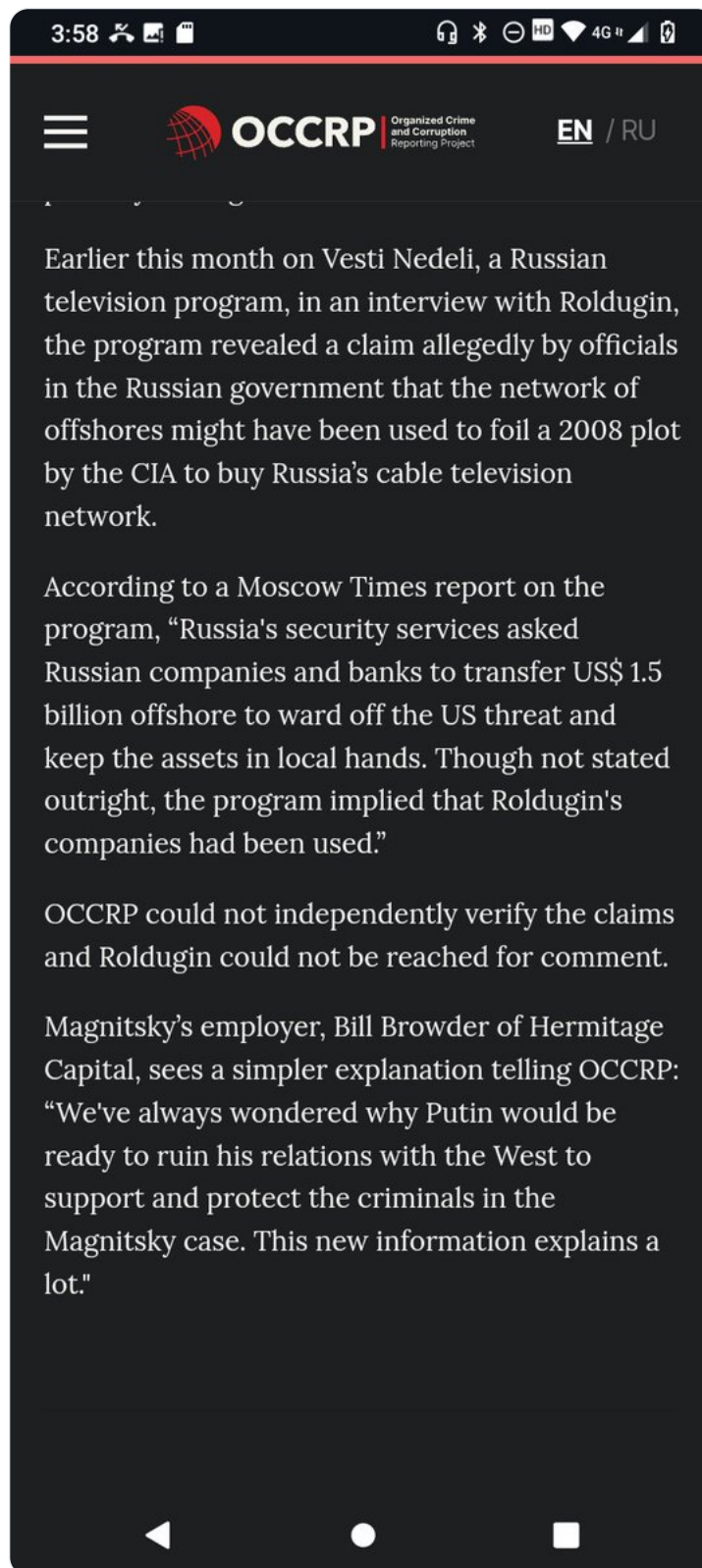
22/25 Advocaat Sergei Magnitsky werd doodgemarteld omdat hij weigerde een verklaring in te trekken over overheids corruptie. Daarbij lijkt een link met Roldugin te bestaan. Zijn verklaring voor het geld is ongeloofwaardig 'Het was om instrumenten te kopen voor rijke Russen.'



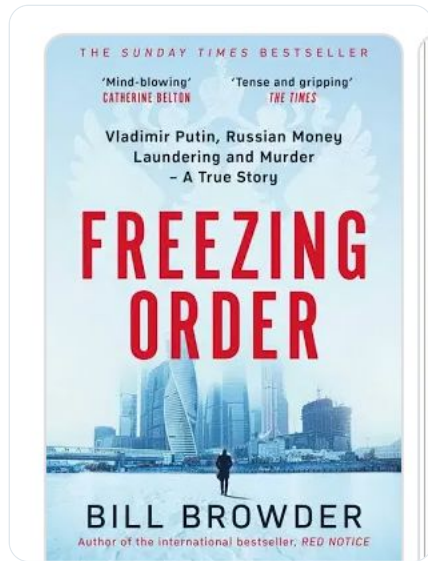
Roldugin has told Russian media that the money was donations from Russian businessmen which he used to purchase expensive musical instruments. Russian officials, however, seemed to acknowledge that the state had in fact knowingly used the criminal networks, including possibly Roldugin's offshores.

Earlier this month on Vesti Nedeli, a Russian television program, in an interview with Roldugin, the program revealed a claim allegedly by officials in the Russian government that the network of offshores might have been used to foil a 2008 plot by the CIA to buy Russia's cable television network.

According to a Moscow Times report on the program, "Russia's security services asked Russian companies and banks to transfer US\$ 1.5 billion offshore to ward off the US threat and keep the assets in local hands. Though not stated outright, the program implied that Roldugin's companies had been used."



23/25 Het is om moeilijk om een cijfer te plakken op de schaal waarin geld onttrokken is aan de Russische economie door Poetin en zijn vrienden. Bill Browder spreekt in zijn boek Freezing Order over een duizelingwekkend bedrag van minimaal 1000 miljard dollar.



24/25 Als vertrouweling is Roldugin van onschatbare waarde voor Poetin, hij kent de geheime financiële constructies en kan in opdracht geldstromen naar de juiste personen laten vloeien. We moeten daarbij niet uitsluiten dat daar ook buitenlandse propagandisten tussen zitten.

25/25 Wie de financiële sporen van Roldugin naloopt zal zien dat onder elke steen die je omdraait nieuwe malversaties opduiken. Wat tot nu toe bekend is betreft hoogstwaarschijnlijk slechts het topje van de ijsberg.

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