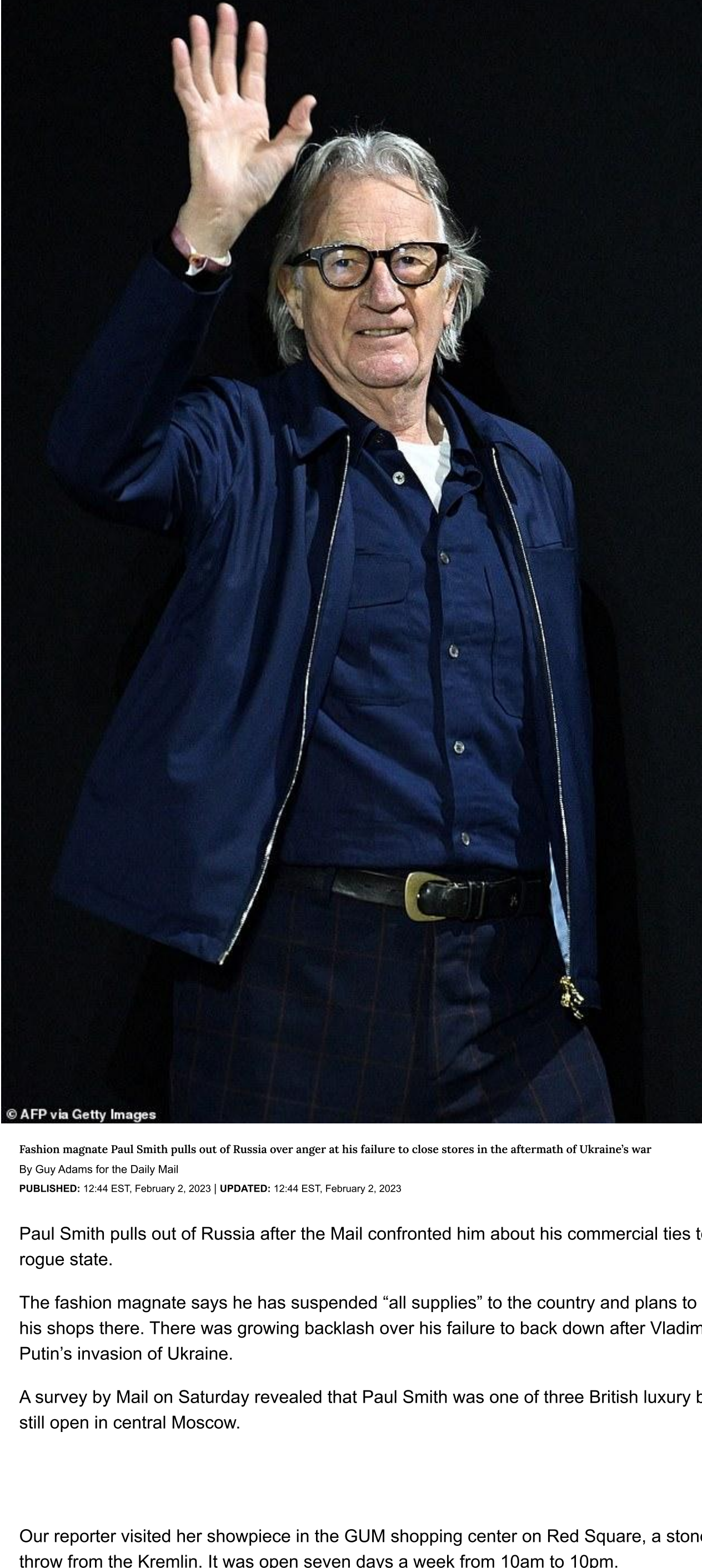


Fashion tycoon Paul Smith pulls out of Russia following fury over his failure to shut shops

Jacky

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Fashion magnate Paul Smith pulls out of Russia over anger at his failure to close stores in the aftermath of Ukraine's war

By Guy Adams for the Daily Mail

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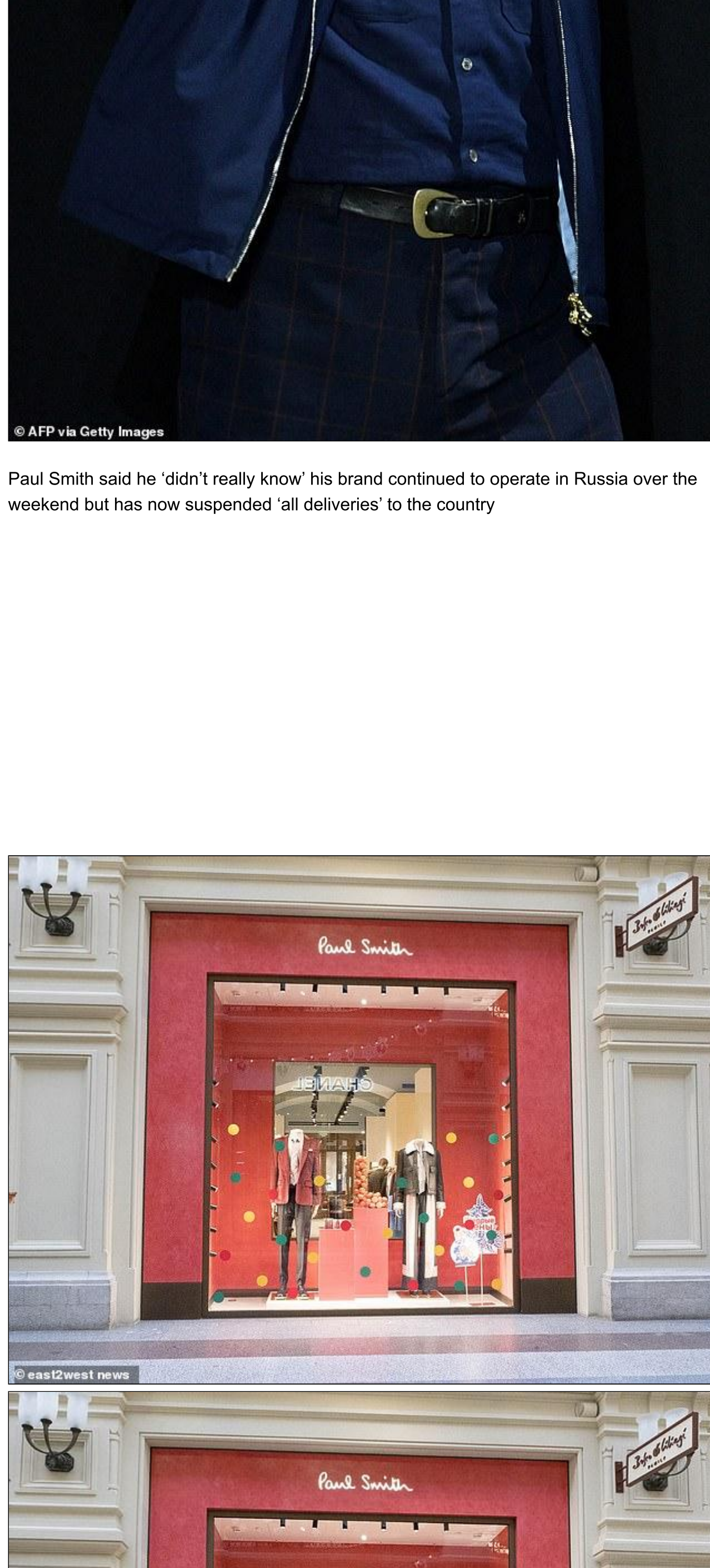
Paul Smith pulls out of Russia after the Mail confronted him about his commercial ties to the rogue state.

The fashion magnate says he has suspended "all supplies" to the country and plans to close his shops there. There was growing backlash over his failure to back down after Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

A survey by Mail on Saturday revealed that Paul Smith was one of three British luxury brands still open in central Moscow.

Our reporter visited her showpiece in the GUM shopping center on Red Square, a stone's throw from the Kremlin. It was open seven days a week from 10am to 10pm.

We found shelves full of many of the very latest Paul Smith products, including £197 ties and a £1,050 embossed leather folio from the new seasonal range, which only recently went on sale in the UK.



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Paul Smith said he 'didn't really know' his brand continued to operate in Russia over the weekend but has now suspended 'all deliveries' to the country



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A Paul Smith store in Moscow, Russia, where it was revealed last month along with lingerie brand Agent Provocateur that they still have stores open in Moscow

Sir Paul's company, which he founded in 1970, initially refused to discuss his presence in Russia. Both the stores and a lucrative online store operation are run through a franchise agreement with a politically connected oligarch named Mikhail Kusnirovich.

For his part, the British magnate feigned ignorance by saying he "didn't really know anything" about the Moscow store when The Mail paid a visit to his £7.5 million London mews home this weekend.

But Sir Paul reversed course yesterday and admitted that he had indeed supplied supplies to Mr Kusnirovich during the war in Ukraine. He promised to end the commercial relationship immediately.

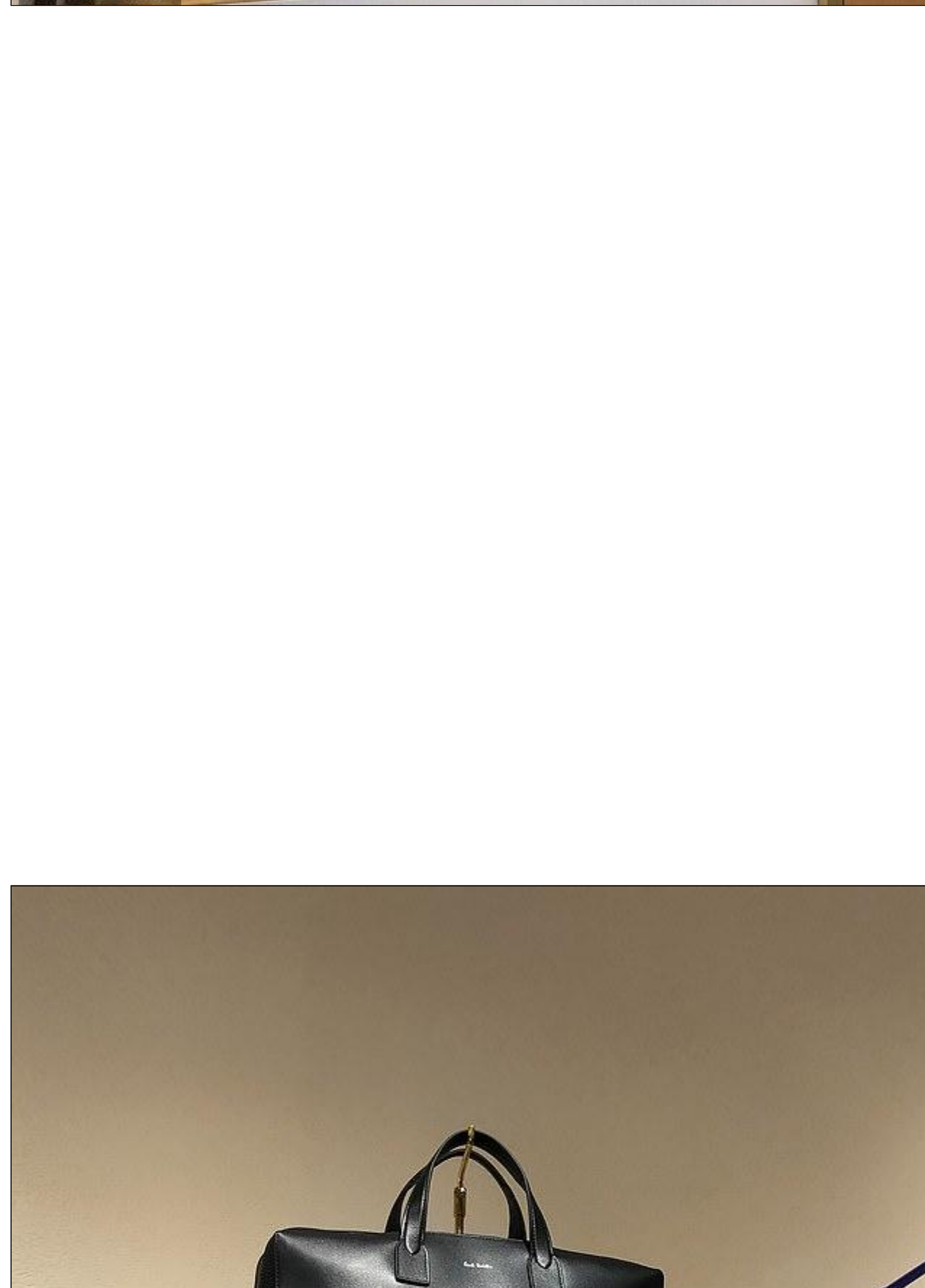
"The company does not trade directly with Russia, but we have had a franchise partner operating stores in Russia for two decades," a spokesman said.

"We now realize that it was a mistake to allow these stores to act on our behalf against the background of the war in Ukraine.

"We have asked for these stores to be closed and we have now stopped all deliveries to the distributor."

Hundreds of outraged customers have bombarded his company's social media accounts with criticism, calling him a "greedy traitor" who made "blood money."

Several MPs added to the chorus of disapproval, describing the revelation that Sir Paul's Nottingham-based firm was trading in Russia as a "matter of great concern".



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A look at some of the items you can buy at the Paul Smith store in Moscow



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One of the UK shops open in Moscow was Paul Smith (pictured), the Nottingham-based purveyor of striped scarves and fashionable menswear that the eponymous multi-millionaire founder and owner likes to describe as "classic with a twist"

There were even calls for Sir Paul, who was made a CBE in 1996, knighted by Tony Blair in 2000 and made a member of the Order of the Companions of Honor in 2020, to have his titles revoked.

The Moral Rating Agency, a lobbying group campaigning against Western companies trading in Russia, had said, "Unless Russia is stripped of Paul Smith shirts, Paul Smith must be stripped of his knighthood." It's a simple moral equation. No honor for dishonour."

Yesterday the bureau said: "We are withdrawing our campaign and revoking Sir Paul's knighthood. He moved quickly to clean up his act. It's sad that it takes such threats to get people to do the moral thing."

Bob Seely, a prominent Tory MP and former soldier who has campaigned successfully against law firms that have profited from Putin's cronies, also welcomed the move.

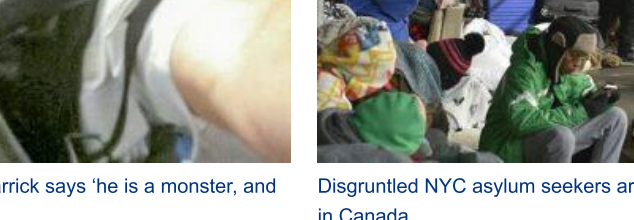
He said: "Thanks to Paul Smith for finally doing the right thing and doing well for the Mail for bringing this scandal to the attention of the public through yet another outstanding investigation."

Mr Seely insisted that the two other companies still operating in Moscow, according to the Mail – car maker Rolls-Royce and Mike Ashley's lingerie retailer Agent Provocateur – would now follow suit by withdrawing.

"This is a very important topic," he added. "We shouldn't be helping an authoritarian neo-fascist state go to war.

"This should be a warning to other Western brands that continue to trade in Vladimir Putin's Russia."

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