

ARE KREMLIN OFFICIALS DOING DRESS REHEARSALS FOR PUTIN'S FUNERAL?

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A Funeral Speech for Putin?

A trickle of whispers has become a firehose of rumors as Kremlin watchers spot multiple signs that Putin may have died, or that he may do so very soon.

“Let me comment like this: Something very strange is going on in the Kremlin,” says distinguished Russia expert Anders Aslund in describing Putin’s alleged death.

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s health has been a contentious point of speculation as his public appearances routinely trigger rumors of cancer, Parkinsons, bathing in deer antler blood, or simply having a steroids habit developed from his obsession with body-building.

As many rumors as there are, there is not much concretely known about how Russia’s leader, for more than two decades, lives – or if he is still living.

Unlike earlier times, the recent rumors about the 71-year-old having died, something which the Kremlin denies, comes in tandem with several other signs that some Russia-watchers believe may be a configuration in the tea leaves indicating a political change is afoot in Moscow.

Conceding that the “Kremlin is really very isolated today, so we know so much less than we used to,” some of Putin’s recent behavior, argues Aslund, does not fit the profile of Putin who has been on the public stage for more than two decades.

Aslund does believe that the “Kremlin is using a double of Putin because too many strange things have occurred with ‘Putin’, which are not at all typical of Putin,” and notes that Putin “seems out of control.”

“The real Putin lives in complete isolation, presumably because of some immunity deficiency, while the double mingles with people and pats people on their backs, which the real Putin would not do,” says the Kremlinologist.

The current rumor being circulated, which began on a Russian Telegram channel, is that Putin’s heart stopped, and despite efforts to revive him, the leader perished.

Confirming this story, Valerii Solovev, formerly of the FSB, gave interviews in which he gave allegedly inside knowledge of the precise hour and location of Putin’s death.

During the same timeframe that the rumors of Putin’s death were unfolding, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, known for his love of releasing videos of himself speaking, has been noticeably absent.

Meanwhile, the Kadyrov’s 15-year-old son, Adam, was appointed as a top security personnel for his father which some sign as a signal that he could be preparing to take the helm of Chechnya.

Recently, a video of the younger Kadyrov assaulting a man for allegedly burning a Quran was released in what some saw as proving the youth’s credentials as a defender of the faith.

Earlier, Kadyrov had released other videos demonstrating his sons’ bona fides, including claiming that they had fought in Ukraine and a video of them bringing him Ukrainian POWs as a gift.

Secretary of Russia’s Security Council Nikolai Patrushev, who many see as Putin’s possible successor, is known to not get along with Kadyrov, with some news sources claiming that Patrushev’s son, Dmitri, the current Minister of Agriculture of Russia, had gotten into a dispute with him.

Mark Katz, a Kremlinologist and professor at George Mason University says that if “Patrushev does come to power, I think he will move to get rid of all his rivals, including Kadyrov.”

The current Chechen leader, whose own health rumors have swirled as his face has become bloated at the same time that his voice and breathing are noticeably strained, is said to suffer from liver problems, or from being poisoned, depending on the source of the story, has not seen publicly since Oct. 9.

Katz notes: “Getting rid of Kadyrov will not be easy since the Chechen strongman has his own security force which Russian security services would have to subdue—something that they might not be able to accomplish due to the exigencies of Russia’s war against Ukraine.”

On November 10, Patrushev added more smoke to the Kremlin house of mirrors. Charter 97 reported that Patrushev publicly delivered a “funeral eulogy” of Putin while dressed entirely in black and referring to Putin only in the past tense:

“Tired of the violent 1990s, society was waiting for solutions to socio-economic problems, for the strengthening of national security. A leader was needed who could put the people’s welfare at the center of the agenda. Putin became such a leader... He had a detailed knowledge of the situation in the country, a clear program of action, a vision of the goal... At the same time, he understood the importance of an evolutionary approach, as opposed to revolutionary leaps that always weaken the Russian state. He believed in people.”

Aslund believes that “Patrushev’s speech about Putin in past tense while dressed in black was a trial balloon, as I see Professor Valery Soloviev’s many statements. It looks as if the Kremlin is preparing Russia for Putin’s death.”

So, is Putin dead?

Neither Katz nor Aslund believe Putin has expired, though Katz offers insight as to what the telltale sign of the Russian leader’s demise will be, saying to keep an eye out for “open competition among [Putin’s] top henchmen,” as they vie for power in the post-Putin world.

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