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Fantasies of Being Abused in a Putin Costume

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One of the organizers of Saturday's rally against the adoption of Russian children by U.S. citizens was Irina Bergseth, head of the Russian Mothers movement.

The path Bergseth has taken in life is typical for a very specific segment of Russia's female population. She met a foreign man through an Internet matchmaking service, traveled to his home in Norway, married him, gave birth to a baby boy and soon afterward divorced her husband.

The good-hearted Norwegian justice system awarded custody of the child to the mother but also granted visitation rights to the father. Apparently, that did not suit Bergseth, and she claimed that the father beat the boy. In Norway, a country obsessed with children's rights, that is an extremely serious allegation. But the authorities doubted its veracity because the boy had no bruises on his body. Next, Bergseth claimed the boy told her that the Norwegian father had threatened to drive with the child on the hood of the car, run over him when he fell off and then do the same to Bergseth and her eldest son.

The police again took no action. That forced Bergseth to reveal the heartbreaking details of this tortured father-son relationship. According to Bergseth, the father had raped the boy and had not done so alone. He was joined by a dozen others.

After that, rather than place the father behind bars, Norway's children's services declared Bergseth insane and deprived her of custody of the children.

Naturally, according to Bergseth, the children's services workers were also pedophiles. She claims they dressed children in animal costumes with drawings of reproductive organs on them. After that, she says, they covered the children in light blue paint and raped them. This was all recorded on video, she asserts.

After that, Bergseth took her son to a hospital to have him examined in hopes of proving the whole story. But the doctor who heard her story refused to cooperate.

Just prior to Saturday's rally, Bergseth made an important clarification to her prior claims. It turns out that the workers at the "Red House" did not dress the children in animal costumes but in outfits made to resemble President Vladimir Putin.

"They dressed my son in a Putin costume," she told the rally participants. "And people lined up to rape my 4-year-old son. And I have to keep silent about it because if I don't, they will declare me insane," the leader of the Russian Mothers movement said.

You might say Bergseth is clinically insane, but I don't think so. The bit about the Putin costume is what bothers me. Suppose she was thinking to herself, "If I claim it was a Putin costume, the government will take my side." Well, she said it, and the government did lend her support. And you still say the woman is crazy?

In my opinion, this is a question of psychological norms, and they differ in each society. In a shamanistic culture, the shaman is said to walk in the heavens, and nobody considers him crazy. In Putin's Russia, a woman who claims that her son was dressed in a Putin costume and gang-raped by social workers becomes the leader of a social movement and wins support from the ruling regime. This is much less a question of Bergseth's psychological health than it is of the authorities' sanity.

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