The Moscow Times
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Interview Claiming Putin Will Leave Kremlin in 2017 Disappears Suddenly From National Newspaper

November 11, 2016



Kremlin Press Service

An interview with a prominent political analyst has disappeared from the website of the Moskovsky Komsomolets newspaper, one of Russia's largest national print publications. In his interview, Valery Solovei predicted that Vladimir Putin will call early presidential elections in Russia. Solovei also said that Putin has encountered certain "problems" recently that will require him to pass the reins of power to a successor.

Valery Solovei, a professor at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, is known for being well-informed about internal Kremlin politics. Earlier this year, for instance, he accurately predicted that Anton Vaino would replace Sergei Ivanov as Putin's chief of staff.

Solovei has refused to speak to reporters about the disappearance of his interview from Moskovsky Komsomolets' website.

In the now vanished interview, which is still available on various Internet archives, Solovei said the Kremlin might call for a snap presidential election in the spring of 2017 — a year earlier than scheduled. Putin will not run for another term in office, Solovei argued.

According to the professor, the Putin administration will make its future plans clear next month in December. Solovei said that Putin is facing certain "problems" that will necessitate his absence from the public for several consecutive months. Putin is disappointed with his current cadres, Solovei claims, and has doubts about their ability to lead Russia on the world stage and develop the country's relationship with the West.

Solovei said he believes Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's current prime minister and the one-time placeholder chief executive between Putin's presidencies, is being groomed for a return to the Kremlin, but the country's hardliners are reportedly resisting the move.

As in 2008, when Putin last stepped away from the presidency, the other potential successor is Sergei Ivanov, the man who was recently booted from Putin's administration, but who still retains powerful political influence.

The interview with Solovei disappeared almost as soon as it was published. The newspaper's chief editor and owner, Pavel Gusov, told the U.S.-government-funded media outlet Nastoyashchee Vremya (Current Time) that the interview was taken down after several factual errors were discovered in the text. It will take several days to make necessary corrections, Gusov said.

Original url:
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