The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

These Uncensored Questions Gatecrashed Putin's Annual Call-In Marathon

"Putin, do you really think the people will believe this circus of fake questions?"

By Katie Marie Davies

June 15, 2017



Kremlin Press Service

Russian President Vladimir Putin's annual phone-in marathon is a carefully orchestrated affair. The annual event features pre-selected guests who call on Putin to fix their roads, comment on world affairs and smite corrupt local officials.

This year's pageant stretched for a staggering four hours, with the president doling out withering comebacks, promises to aid beleaguered citizens, and unending lists of averages and statistics.

Related article: Audience Rehearse at Health Resort Ahead of Live Show with Putin

More than 2.6 million questions were submitted before the show, but Russians were still encouraged to send messages to the president by text or by phone while the phone-in was live on air. Questions were then automatically shown on large screens around the studio. What the producers seemingly didn't expect, was the kind of unvetted messages that began on appear on the screens.

A few minutes into the four-hour marathon, social media exploded when one on-screen message asked: "Putin, do you really think the people will believe this circus of fake questions?"

Embed:

> Внимание, вопрос! pic.twitter.com/BqSnDSFH0E
>
> — Ходорковский.ру (@khodorkovsky) June 15, 2017

A few other viewers hinted they were keen on regime change.

"When will you give power back to the Communists?" one message asked.

Embed:

> Question on screen: "When will you give back power to the communists?" pic.twitter.com/w8XDlsJwBs
>
> — Ola Cichowlas (@olacicho) June 15, 2017

Another simply told Putin: "All of Russia thinks you've sat on your throne for too long."

Embed:

> Перестали задавать вопросы, начались утверждения от телезрителей pic.twitter.com/mVw69Doe6u
>
> — Телеканал Дождь (@tvrain) June 15, 2017

Putin himself stopped short of confirming whether he would run in Russia's presidential elections in 2018. When asked who his successor would be, the president replied that "the

people of Russia would decide."

Related article: Putin Stops Short of Confirming Re-Election Campaign

Others viewers hoping to gatecrash the program looked further afield for information.

"When will Trump come to Moscow?" one asked. "He promised!"

Putin did not discuss meeting Trump, but did field a question from a man in Arizona who said he was concerned about anti-Russian sentiment in the United States.

"I know that Russia has many friends in the United States," said Putin, "but anti-Russia hysteria in the press has an impact." He said that both the Kremlin and the White House wanted better U.S-Russia relations.

Embed:

> "When will Trump come to Moscow? He promised!" pic.twitter.com/DpqYirIRig
>
> — Ola Cichowlas (@olacicho) June 15, 2017

Turkish President Recep Erdogan also earned a special mention, with one viewer asking, "Have you taken revenge on Erdogan yet?"

Embed:

> "Have we taken revenge on Erdogan yet?" pic.twitter.com/LMfrSOf9U0
>
> — Ola Cichowlas (@olacicho) June 15, 2017

Turkey-Russia relations were not discussed during the show, though a Russian agriculture representative did commend Putin for his ban on Turkish tomatoes. "Sanctions have been a gift to farmers," the audience member said, reassuring Putin that Russian tomatoes had "never been better."

Despite Putin's pledges to provide better care for cancer patients and to rehouse families neglected by local officials, some viewers remained unimpressed.

Or as one onscreen messaged asked: "Why are you the only one who can fix our problems?"

Embed:

> Onscreen questions now blocked after this popped up: “Why problems only get fixed after your direct interference?” #PutinDirect2017 pic.twitter.com/D4r5c90TJy
>
> — Alexey Kovalev (@Alexey___Kovalev) June 15, 2017

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/06/15/the-uncensored-questions-gatecrashing-putins-annual-call-in-marathon-a58203