

Movie Putin Lands on Hollywood's Cutting-Room Floor

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Jennifer Lawrence plays a seductive Russian spy in "Red Sparrow," due to hit screens in March 2018.

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HOLLYWOOD — Vladimir Putin is having a tough time staying in the movies. Actually, it is not the Russian president himself. It's his film character.

At least two films have nixed his appearance on the silver screen. They are "Red Sparrow," a highly anticipated Hollywood film starring Jennifer Lawrence, and "Kursk," a European production.

"Sparrow" is based on former CIA operative-turned-novelist Jason Matthews' book of the same title chronicling the adventures of a Russian ballerina seductress recruited to enlist a CIA agent, played by Joel Edgerton.

The film was shot in Budapest and is currently in post-production. It is scheduled to be

released on March 2, 2018.

So, what happened to President Putin when the novel was turned into a movie script? As they say in the movie business, the Russian leader landed on the cutting room floor.

There are all kinds of explanations and theories for this. The book was bought by 20th Century Fox Film in 2013, which intended to turn it into a major screen event. To that end, they signed on Lawrence.

But for some reason, the story line was switched from modern-day Russia to 1970s Budapest, sans Putin. Soon after, its director was replaced and the story was returned to present day. But the Russian president's character was not restored.

Studio insiders are attributing the decision to "creative forces."

Filmmakers are always on the lookout to cash in on news events, and Putin has certainly been in the headlines every day lately. For that reason alone, the exclusion of the Putin character does not make sense. A film trade publication speculated that Fox Film feared that this episode might result in a retaliatory Russian hack.

Studio executives remember how Sony Pictures was attacked by hackers after the release of "The Interview," a spoof about the North Korean dictator.

But Putin isn't only being axed in Hollywood. His film character met the same fate in Europe Corps' "Kursk," a true account of a Russian submarine that sank in the Barents Sea in 2000.

Both movie companies had no comment on the controversy, other than Fox commenting that the Putin segment was never in the script.

Meanwhile, the Putin character might have a better shot at stardom when Matthews' next novel "The Kremlin's Candidate," due Feb. 13, 2018, gets picked up for the big screen.

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