The Moscow Times
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Russian Pranksters Claim 'Letter From Serebrennikov' to German Actor

September 05, 2017



Pranksters Vladimir "Vovan" Krasnov and Alexei "Lexus" Stolyarov **Alexander Shcherbak / TASS**

A letter supposedly penned by prominent theater director Kirill Serebrennikov to be published in the case of his arrest has been claimed by two famous pranksters.

Alexei Stolyarov and Vladimir Kuznetsov, who go by the monikers Lexus and Vovan, told Russian state television on Monday that they had dictated the letter to German actor Lars Eidenger posing as Serebrennikov. They also asked him to pretend it had been given to him during a recent trip to Berlin.

“I ask you not to incite hatred in attempts to intercede for me and not turn people against each other," the English-language text published by Eidenger on his Instagram page on Sunday read.

Serebrennikov’s lawyer on Monday denied the existence of the letter, calling it “a provocation.” Eidenger has since removed the post from his Instagram.

The prank received widespread coverage on Russian state media, with the Vesti.ru news program airing segments of what appeared to be a phone conversation between one of the pranksters posing as Serebrennikov, and Eidenger.

Lexus also appeared on the Vesti.ru news program saying it was “strange” that Eidenger, who knows Serebrennikov personally, had not caught wind of the scam or picked up on the letter’s “strange” elements.

The stunt appears to be a stab both at Serebrennikov — who appeared in court on Monday to review the terms of his arrest — and Eidenger, who has a central role in an upcoming biopic on Tsar Nicholas II. The film has come under attack from Orthodox activists who describe it as offensive to the feelings of believers.

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The Vesti.ru presenter also pointed out the supposed letter had “spread like a wildfire on Ukrainian social media, which did not care to double-check its origins,” failing to mention it made headlines on most Russian media as well.

In the contested letter, Serebrennikov allegedly writes he “received an offer from Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to head a Ukrainian theater and shoot a propaganda film with the financial support of the state."

Vovan and Lexus, who some suspect of ties of the Russian security services because of their choice of targets and the protection they appear to enjoy, are famous for their high-profile pranks, having earlier tricked Elton John into believing he was talking to Putin and Poroshenko.

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