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Death of an oligarch



Vladimir Potanin told the [Financial Times](#) that his seven months as deputy PM of Russia in 1996 was a vaccination against power. He learned "that you can never convert business power into political power." If you do, he said, you'll die. He was the brains behind the loans-for-shares scheme that left him and six other original oligarchs holding what one of them, Boris Berezovsky, referred to with some exaggeration as 50% of the Russian economy. Potanin now sees the event as the biggest PR tragedy of his career. His image is in tatters, yet he is still Russia's sixth-wealthiest man and was able to convince Vladimir Putin to hold the Winter Olympics in Sochi (according to Mikhail Zygar in *All the Kremlin's Men*). Far from dying, Potanin thrived, if the bottom line is what counts. Unless he plays his cards well, Potanin's closest Czech counterpart, Andrej Babiš, could find out in the next few months whether the death of an oligarch-turned-politician is always so cozy.

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