

Beat: Politics

RUSSIA TO EXHUME THE REMAINS OF TSAR ALEXANDER III

TO RESOLVE RIDDLE OF ROYAL CHILDREN

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USPA NEWS - Russian investigators say they plan to exhume the remains of Tsar Alexander III, father of murdered Tsar Nicholas II, at the request of the Orthodox Church. The move will try to ascertain whether remains believed to be those of Alexei and Maria, two of Tsar Nicholas II's five children,...

Russian investigators say they plan to exhume the remains of Tsar Alexander III, father of murdered Tsar Nicholas II, at the request of the Orthodox Church. The move will try to ascertain whether remains believed to be those of Alexei and Maria, two of Tsar Nicholas II's five children, are genuine and can be laid to rest in St Petersburg.

'The state does not want a conflict with the Russian Orthodox Church,' said Nikolai Svanidze, a prominent historian and member of Russia's Public Chamber. 'It's not a historical or a genealogical question but a political one.'

All seven family members, including Nicholas's wife Alexandra, were murdered by the Bolsheviks in 1918 along with their servants in the city of Yekaterinburg in the Urals. The exhumation is likely to take place in the second half of November, senior investigator Vladimir Solovyov said Monday, news agency Interfax reported.

The exhumation was reportedly backed by the Russian Imperial House, an organization that represents living descendants of the Romanovs. 'This inspires hope that the mistakes of the past will be taken into account,' Alexander Zakatov, a representative of the organization, was quoted as saying by Interfax.

The Russian government had earlier floated the idea of burying the remains of Alexei and Maria in St Petersburg this year alongside those of their three sisters and their mother and father. That plan was put on ice after the church objected.

The Church canonized Nicholas II, his wife and their five children (including Maria and Alexei) in 2000 after a debate over the family's role in hastening the onset of revolution.

'The Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation together with representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church plans to exhume the remains of Emperor Alexander III, who was buried in 1894 in the Peter and Paul Cathedral,' the investigators said in a letter to the museum complex.

'The Investigative Committee is always ready to help the Church,' investigator Solovyov told state-owned Rossiiskaya Gazeta earlier this month. 'Orthodox Church representatives have announced more than once that there are doubts about the authenticity of the remains because Church scholars were not involved in the process,' he said.

The wife of Tsar Alexander III's late grandson Tikhon, Olga Kulikovskaya-Romanova, said she was categorically opposed to the idea of exhuming the remains of Nicholas's father.

As part of the probe, Nicholas II and his wife were exhumed last month in the presence of senior Orthodox officials in St. Petersburg. Investigators have also taken samples from a blood-soaked coat that Tsar Alexander II (Maria and Alexander's great-grandfather) was wearing when he was fatally injured by the terrorist's bomb in 1881, and are reportedly seeking access to the remains of the last empress' sister, Grand Duchess Elisabeth of Russia, which are currently in Israel. (The Moscow Times)

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