



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on March 2, 2015

Putin Critic Nemtsov Murdered; 100,000 March to Honor Him

Just hours before being murdered in Red Square Friday night, Boris Nemtsov (shown on right) [blasted](#) Russian President Vladimir Putin on the radio, charging him with his “mad, aggressive and deadly policy of war against Ukraine.” He added, “This country needs political reform. When power is concentrated in the hands of one person and this person rules forever, this will lead to an absolute catastrophe.”



Walking across Red Square after having dinner with a young female companion at about 11:30 p.m. Friday night, Nemtsov was shadowed by a gunman who waited for the couple at the bottom of stairs leading to his apartment. Once they passed him, the gunman fired several shots from a pistol, hitting Nemtsov four times in the back, killing him. His female companion, alleged to be a Ukrainian model some 30 years his junior, was uninjured.

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Almost immediately government investigators raided Nemtsov’s apartment, removing working papers, documents, and computers. He had been working on a report that he believed proved Putin was directly involved in the separatist rebellion in eastern Ukraine, and was just days away from addressing a public demonstration against Putin’s policies scheduled for Sunday.

Within minutes Putin claimed that the murder was likely arranged by Nemtsov’s supporters as a false flag, to damage his reputation and spark public dissent against Putin’s policies in Ukraine and Russia’s rapidly deteriorating economy. Said a spokesman for Putin, “The President [said] that it looks like a contract killing ... carrying all the signs of a provocation,” while adding that Putin said he would be taking personal control of the investigation into Nemtsov’s murder.

This is only one of several theories about the forces behind Nemtsov’s murder, every one of them pointing away from Putin and the Kremlin. Russia Today raised the spectre of an Islamist attack following Nemtsov’s comments after the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, and other theories were that it could have been related to a business deal gone bad or a “possible assault related to his personal life.” Reuters said investigators were looking into the possibility that he was attacked because he was a Jew, or that the hit was arranged to “blacken the president’s name.”

The Guardian was likely closer to the mark, noting that Nemtsov, once a deputy minister under Boris Yeltsin and a harsh critic of Putin ever since his election as president in 2000, had written a number of reports in recent years linking Putin and his inner circle of confidantes to corruption. One especially galling report tied Putin to the theft of some \$30 billion of the \$50 billion spent on the Sochi Olympics, and his claim that, thanks to Putin, “Russia itself is sinking into lies, violence, obscurantism and imperial hysteria.”

Although Nemtsov is the highest profile member of Putin’s opposition to die, he is certainly not the only one. When Anna Politkovskaya, a high-profile journalist and author of several books critical of Putin,



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was murdered in the elevator leading to her apartment (also in Moscow) on October 7, 2006, several were quick to note that this was Putin's birthday and that her murder was likely a "gift" to Putin by his supporters.

This was denied by Putin, of course, on the grounds that her influence was so minute as to not be worth the trouble or the publicity that would come with a direct hit ordered from his office. Said Putin at the time:

This journalist was indeed a sharp critic of the present Russian authorities ... but the degree of her influence over political life in Russia was extremely insignificant....

In my opinion, murdering such a person certainly does much greater damage [to my office] than her publications ever did.

Except for that strange series of circumstances that followed Anna Politkovskaya's murder, leading to the murder of other journalists with whom she was associated: Yuri Shchekochikhin, Galina Starovoitova, Sergei Yushenkov, and Artyom Borovik. The one name tied most closely to Putin's savaging of his opposition, however, became known internationally: Alexander Litvinenko, who publicly accused Putin of ordering Politkovskaya's murder. Within two weeks, Litvinenko was poisoned with radioactive polonium and, just before dying, wrote this for posterity:

[I will] name the bastard [responsible]. Anna Politkovskaya didn't ... so I will, for both of us: You may succeed in silencing one man but the howl of protest from around the world will reverberate, Mr. Putin, in your ears for the rest of your life.

May God forgive you for what you have done, not only to me but to my beloved Russia and its people.

An estimated 100,000 people attended a demonstration in Moscow on Sunday to honor Nemtsov. Some of them were crying. They were crying over not only the loss of one of the last remaining critics of Putin, but also the loss of a Russia that appeared, briefly, to be recovering from decades of communist rule.

Photo of Boris Nemtsov: [Lalekseev](#)

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics.



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