



## Putin Recharged: What Now for Russia — and the World?

Vladimir Putin claimed victory in Russia's presidential election on Sunday, March 4. "I promised you we would win, and we won — glory to Russia!" he proclaimed to a throng of supporters at Moscow's Manezh Square, in front of the Kremlin, as tears rolled down his cheeks.

"We won an open and honest fight," he told the crowd that chanted "Putin, Russia, Victory!"

"We will work hard and in good faith. We will be successful. We won. Glory to Russia!" Putin declared before he headed off with the outgoing President Dmitry Medvedev by his side. He is scheduled to begin his six-year term on May 7 and will be eligible for another after that, which means he could be Russia's head of state through 2024.



Putin, the career KGB agent and head of the KGB's successor agency, the FSB, was virtually unknown to most Russians and the rest of the world before being appointed Prime Minister by Russian President Boris Yeltsin in August, 1999. The State Duma quickly approved the appointment. When Yeltsin resigned on December 31, 1999, Putin became Acting President. In March 2000 Putin won his first presidential election in the first round, and on May 7, 2000 he took the presidential oath with Yeltsin at his side.

In 2004 Putin was again declared the winner in the presidential election. His reign was marked by a [huge influx of operatives from the KGB](#) and its successor police/intelligence agencies into the government, more so than at any other time, including the Soviet era.

Barred from a third consecutive term as President, Putin was appointed Prime Minister of Russia by the newly elected President, Dmitry Medvedev, who had served as Prime Minister under Putin. Medvedev, according to many Russia watchers, was merely a temporary place-holder for Putin, the man with the real political power in the Kremlin. Medvedev was expected to relinquish the presidency back to Putin after a four-year interim. That view has proven correct and that is precisely what has happened. If Putin, now 59 years old, remains in office for another two terms (12 years), as he undoubtedly expects to, he will have held power longer than any Soviet or Russian ruler since Stalin.

### **"Open and Honest" Election?**

Charges of rampant voter fraud in the March 4 presidential voting have come not only from various Russian political parties but also from Russian and international election monitoring organizations. GOLOS, the election-monitoring group, said in a March 5 press [statement](#) that it had received approximately 5,000 calls from its observers throughout the country concerning irregularities and abuses at polling stations. Many reports have charged that "carousel" (merry-go-round) voting was widespread, with voters — especially young voters, it appears — being taken by car, bus, or van to vote



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multiple times for Putin.

Reuters reported on journalist Sergei Smirnov who joined a group of carousel voters that had agreed to vote four times for Putin, in exchange for 2,000 rubles (\$70).

There was also the intimidation factor, especially notable in Moscow, where Putin has never been popular. "With hundreds of military trucks, menacing police vans, hovering helicopters and tens of thousands of soldiers and riot police in full gear, Moscow felt like an occupied city last night," the British journal *The Economist* [reported](#).

This was the culmination of several months of an intensified clampdown by the FSB and other Russian police organizations against political dissidents, bloggers, Internet websites, and independent media. Human Rights Watch and other monitoring groups have [reported](#) on the extensive use of harassment, intimidation, beatings, abductions, arrests, threats, and arbitrary forced shutdowns of websites.

The Committee to Protect Journalists has [reported](#) on the continuing state repression and intimidation against non-conforming journalists in Russia. With the brutal murders of [Anna Politkovskaya](#), Anastasia Baburova, [Natalia Estemirova](#), Paul Klebnikov, and other journalists still relatively fresh in mind, the recent wave of intimidation has had a decidedly chilling effect on political discourse in Russia.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) points out that in addition to the overwhelming advantage given to Putin by the very restrictive registration requirements and his ability to use government resources, Putin enjoys a virtual monopoly on access to the media, which is either state-owned, or owned by Putin cronies. Either way, Putin is far and away the media favorite, with the other government-approved candidates receiving only sufficient news coverage to provide a fig leaf of "democracy" to the process.

The outcome of this year's presidential election was really never in doubt, since genuine political opposition parties are not allowed and the four controlled opposition candidates served only to give the show about as much legitimacy as a WrestleMania match. Putin reportedly received 63.64% of the vote. Gennady Zyuganov of the Communist Party came in second, with 17.14%, followed by young billionaire oligarch Mikhail Prokhorov, who ran as an independent and garnered 7.94%. Vladimir Zhirinovsky, representing the Liberal Democratic Party, received 6.22% of the vote, and Sergey Mironov of the A Just Russia Party received 3.85%.

### **Controlled Opposition**

All of the above-mentioned approved candidates were formerly members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Putin, of course, has been a life-long Communist Party apparatchik, officially joining the Communist Party of the Soviet Union while a college student in the early 1970s, before joining the KGB in 1975. Zyuganov joined the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1966, after having already joined the Komsomol, the youth arm of the Communist Party. Zyuganov's Communist Party activities and his appeals to nostalgia for the Soviet Union and theatrical denunciations of Putin have been custom-designed to make Putin's "conversion" from communism appear more believable.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky's "ultra-nationalist" Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), which serves a similar function, has long been known as a KGB-created and KGB/FSB-directed phony party. *Der Spiegel*, Germany's largest circulation magazine, has [reported](#):

In 1991 the Russian intelligence service, the KGB, played a major role in the establishment of the LDPR, which Zhirinovsky has led ever since. The artificial party was launched by the Communist rulers of the day in an effort to channel the votes of the disadvantaged and the disappointed.



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Sergey Mironov is a former member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and leader of the left-wing party, A Just Russia, which calls for a “New Socialism for the 21st Century.” It is a consultative member of the [Socialist International](#), the global organization of communist and socialist parties. Like Zyuganov and Zhirinovskiy, Mironov falsely attributes the many evils besetting Russia — violent crime, inflation, unemployment, widespread poverty starkly contrasting with the opulent wealth of the oligarchs, etc., — to “capitalism.” However, the capitalism they denounce is not true free market capitalism, but the state-run and state-favored “crony capitalism” that has transferred trillions of dollars in state assets to a coterie of “former” Communist Party functionaries, who are now dubbed “businessmen” and “entrepreneurs.”

Mikhail Prokhorov, the 46-year-old playboy billionaire, is the prototype for the new politically active, politically savvy western-style Russian oligarch. Best known in the United States as the owner of the New Jersey Nets NBA basketball franchise, Prokhorov, with an estimated worth of \$18 billion, was listed by *Forbes* in 2011 as Russia’s third richest man and the 32nd richest man in the world.

The *Los Angeles Times* [reported](#) on March 3:

Prokhorov has visited cities and towns across the nation, attended dozens of meetings with all kinds of audiences — but mostly young and middle-class people.

Prokhorov promises if elected to free jailed tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovskiy, open classified communist-era archives, dissolve parliament and urgently hold new parliamentary elections, and reverse the decision to make the presidential term six years instead of four.

He also pledges sweeping political and economic reforms such as splitting Gazprom, the giant natural gas monopoly, into several competing companies; reducing the bureaucratic corps by 30 percent; making the European Union an economic partner; and opening Russia much more widely to foreign businesses.

### **Rise of Prokhorov: Oligarch/Playboy/Politician**

Although he came in third and took only 8% of the total vote in his political debut, Prokhorov finished second in Russia’s two biggest cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg. He accomplished this with only a few months of campaigning. He is setting up a new “reform” political party and he has the financial wherewithal to make it into a major force.

Garry Kasparov, the former world chess champion and founder of the United Civil Front opposition movement in Russia is not one of Prokhorov’s starry-eyed fans. “I don’t doubt for a second that Prokhorov is a Kremlin project, and he is the worst of the four because of his charisma,” Kasparov said.

The evidence supports Kasparov’s evaluation of Prokhorov as “a Kremlin project.” As we reported back in 2009 ([“Dangerous Connections: NBA and the KGB”](#)):

Prokhorov, the charming, brilliant wunderkind is the front man for a ruthless underworld run by the KGB-FSB and its minions in the Russian mafia. Russian oligarchs like Prokhorov, Kalmanovich, Boris Berezovskiy, Roman Abramovich, Alexander Lebedev, and Mikhail Khodorkovskiy did not become billionaires virtually overnight because of their business acumen and financial genius. They were provided with special privileges and massive state assets to serve a strategic political agenda.

Mr. Prokhorov is playing an important role in a long-running Kremlin-directed strategy for economic and political “convergence” with the West — but on Marxist-Leninist terms. A major part of that



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strategy involves penetration, compromise, and co-opting of Western banking and financial institutions. In [testimony](#) before the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services, on September 21, 1999, Richard L. Palmer, president of Cachet International, Inc., presented considerable detailed evidence of a long-term plan begun by the Soviet KGB in the 1980s (as part of Gorbachev's Perestroika) and continued by the successor Russian FSB, to use billions of dollars in Soviet/Russian assets to effect this economic convergence. Mr. Putin, of course, is the key transition individual in this scheme, bridging the Soviet KGB/Russian FSB changeover, as well as the changeover from the rule by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the new rule by Putin's United Russia Party.

Mr. Prokhorov is also a key transition individual and will likely play an increasingly important role both in Russian politics and in the Kremlin's convergence strategy with the United States and the European Union. A member of the Komsomol and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Prokhorov was made chairman of the Onexim Bank while only in his mid twenties. Onexim Bank is one of the Russian banks mentioned by Mr. Palmer in his testimony referenced above concerning the joint KGB-Politburo-Russian Mafiya effort to subvert and co-opt our financial system. Through Onexim Bank, Prokhorov was one of the few privileged Communist Party members who was allowed to participate in the phony "privatization" of Russia's government-controlled natural resources, mines, transportation, telecommunications, banking, energy, etc.

The long-range Kremlin convergence strategy has been most meticulously exposed by KGB defector Anatoliy Golitsyn, in his books [New Lies for Old](#) and [The Perestroika Deception](#).

For years, Mr. Golitsyn's ongoing cogent analysis of developments in the continuing Kremlin strategy of deception under Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin was made available by British publisher and economic/intelligence analyst Christopher Story, through his authoritative newsletters: *Soviet Analyst*, *International Currency Review*, *Economic Intelligence Review*, *Arab-Asian Affairs*, and *Eastern Europe Analyst*. Christopher Story died in 2010, but his three-part interview with *The New American* magazine on Golitsyn and the Soviet/Russian perestroika strategy for conquest through convergence is even more relevant today than when it was published.

The Christopher Story interview can be accessed at these links: "[Dispelling Disinformation](#)"; "[Leninists Still Leading](#)"; and "[Red March to Global Tyranny](#)."

*Photo of Vladimir Putin: AP Images*

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