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Assassination of Boris Nemtsov

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Assassination of Boris Nemtsov

Abstract

"Understanding the death of Boris Yefimovich Nemtsov, the former Deputy Prime Minister of Russia."

Posting about the assassination of Boris Nemtsov from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/the-assassination-of-boris-nemtsov>

Keywords

In All Things, Boris Nemtsov, Russia, Vladimir Putin

Disciplines

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

The Assassination of Boris Nemtsov

 [all in allthings.org/the-assassination-of-boris-nemtsov](https://allthings.org/the-assassination-of-boris-nemtsov)

Mark McCarthy

It was with a real sense of grief and sadness that I heard about the murder of Boris Yefimovich Nemtsov on Friday, February 27. I had met Nemtsov back in the summer 1994 when I and a group of Dordt students had been working with the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.) on questions of land privatization and farming. At that time, Nemtsov had been the 35 year old governor of the Nizhny Novgorod region, which had been one of the chief centers of Soviet state-owned manufacturing. Nemtsov, however, had wanted to change all that and he invited the I.M.F. to Nizhny to help advise on methods of privatization of state factories and free market reforms. After this process had been completed, Nemtsov had asked the IMF to help start the privatization process of the large collective farms as well.

For his work and success in turning around the economy of the [Nizhny Novgorod](#) region Nemtsov was appointed by [Boris Yeltsin](#) as Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation in 1997. At one point Nemtsov was even seen as a leading contender for succeeding Yeltsin as President, but the 1998 Russian financial crash forced a change in government. It was shortly thereafter that Vladimir Putin was appointed Prime Minister and then became President after Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned on December 31, 1999.

From about 2000 onward, Nemtsov became one of the leading members of the democratic opposition to Putin and an outspoken critic of Putin's growing reliance on nationalism and authoritarianism. In the days leading up to his murder, Nemtsov was organizing a public protest in Moscow against Russian actions in Ukraine that was scheduled to take place on Saturday. Just hours before his assassination Nemtsov gave an interview to [Echo](#) of Moscow, one of the last voices of independent journalism left in Russia, in which he basically said Putin was unfit to be President of Russia because of his action in Ukraine.

Now the murder or untimely deaths of critics of the Russian state is nothing new. There is a tragically long list of reporters, human rights workers, even dissident FSB (KGB) agents who have been assassinated or died in mysterious ways after publicly criticizing the Russian state or Putin. Some of the more notable murders were that of [Anna Politkovskaya](#), a dissident journalist, [Alexander Litvinenko](#), a former state security officer who was living in London and [Paul Klebnikov](#), the editor of the Russian edition of *Forbes Magazine*. What makes Nemtsov's murder so different, however, is that for the first time one of the former governmental elites was killed, and killed in such a way as to send a definite signal to the rest of the country. If they are willing to kill Nemtsov just outside the gates of the Kremlin, then no one who criticizes the government is safe.

In some ways, this killing has a very familiar feel to it. By the mid-1930s [Sergei Kirov](#) had risen to the head of the Communist Party system in Leningrad. While still a dedicated communist, Kirov had begun to express concern that the state might be pressing the peasantry too hard in their drive for collectivization



Photo by [M.McCarthy](#) (1994).

and dekulakisation. Though no direct evidence has ever been found, most historians agree that [Joseph Stalin](#) probably ordered Kirov's assassination. It was early December of 1934 the assassin struck, killing Kirov while he worked in the communist party's headquarters building. After the killing Stalin announced that he would take personal charge of the investigation. Over time the Soviets advanced many different theories about who killed Kirov. Most of them seemed to suggest this was the work of foreign spies and traitors to the Soviet cause and these theories gave political cover to the start of Stalin's terror and purges.

Now I do not mean to suggest that Putin is about to restart the terror and the purges in which millions were either killed outright or sent to die in the camps, but there are unsettling parallels between the two murders. Just as Stalin took charge of the Kirov murder, so too has Putin announced that he is personally overseeing the investigation into Nemtsov's murder. In addition, Russian authorities have started to suggest all sorts of potential guilty parties ranging from Nemtsov's own supporters for the sympathy his murder might give them, to mysterious foreign forces that seem to imply countries like the United States. When one steps back from the horror of this murder though, it does seem like a clear signal was being sent. Step out of line, challenge the government, you will be dealt with. From now on no one is safe, not even former deputy prime ministers.