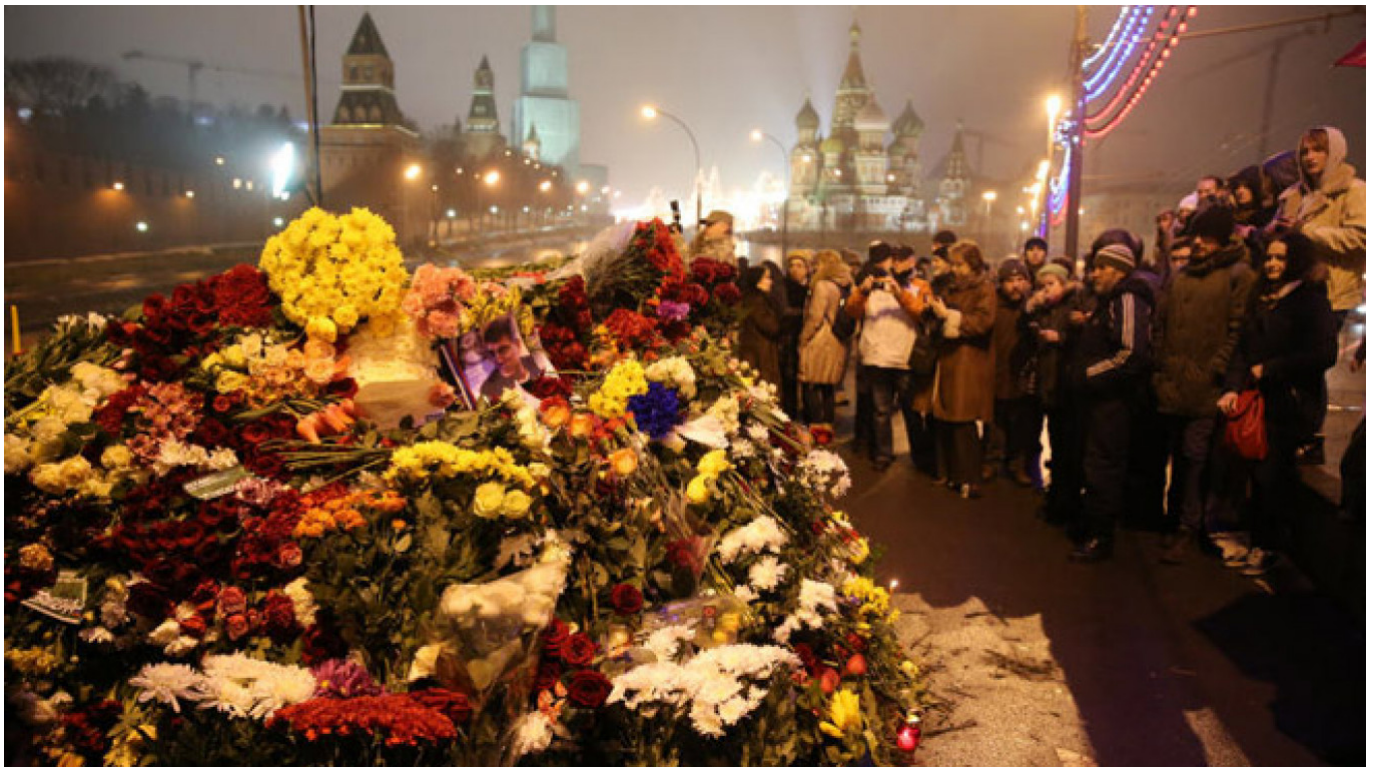


# Nemtsov's Brutal Murder Benefits the Kremlin

By [Vladimir Ryzhkov](#)

March 10, 2015



The detestable murder of Boris Nemtsov shocked all of Russia. It was the first time in post-Soviet Russia that a high-profile political murder was committed in the heart of the capital, under the walls of the Kremlin and in an area under the tight control of the Federal Security Service and the police. Observers counted more than 10 surveillance cameras on the bridge alone where Nemtsov was shot in the back.

It was also the first murder of such a high-ranking politician. Nemtsov had served as governor of the large Nizhny Novgorod region, as deputy prime minister, energy minister, deputy speaker of the State Duma, a leader of a parliamentary party and faction and was a deputy in the Yaroslavl regional Duma at the time of his death.

The murder itself was carried out in extremely cold-blooded fashion by a highly professional and organized group. Judging from the information available, this group kept Nemtsov under constant surveillance, monitoring his every movement.

Was it an accident that on the fateful bridge where he was shot a lone snowplow machine was at work in the late evening, and that it momentarily blocked his killer from view? And was it just by chance that the getaway car appeared at the same moment as the snowplow and, after collecting the killer, drove through the center of Moscow and disappeared without encountering the least resistance?

The driver of the snowplow and the young woman who was with Nemtsov both said they "recall nothing and saw nothing." And did the passing man who subsequently knelt over the fallen politician merely check for a pulse as he later claimed, or, in fact, finish off Nemtsov with a final gunshot?

Since the murder, investigators have apprehended a few suspects, without throwing any light on who ordered the killing. Worse, investigators have already issued what turned out to be deliberate misinformation, thereby undermining the credibility of the authorities and deepening suspicion that they have no real interest in solving this crime.

And even worse, immediately after the assassination, the Kremlin issued official statements to the effect that the murder was a "provocation." Kremlin spin doctors then went into action, looking for a source of this "provocation" that they alleged was designed to destabilize the country and cast a shadow over President Vladimir Putin.

Among their list of suspects: the United States, the West, the Islamic State and even the opposition itself, in what the authorities described as an attempt to turn Nemtsov into a "sacred sacrifice."

In Russia, this usually indicates that senior officials have pre-determined the results of the investigation and ordered investigators to tailor the facts to fit.

Of course, the official version excludes the obvious advantage that Putin and the Kremlin derive from Nemtsov's death and official propaganda hastily announced that, to the contrary, the opposition leader's murder in no way benefits Putin because it only casts a terrible black shadow over him.

However, looking at the matter objectively, it is clear that Nemtsov's death does benefit the Kremlin and Putin personally.

Boris Nemtsov was the toughest Russian critic of the president and he never pulled punches. His anti-corruption reports "Putin. Corruption," "The Life of a Galley Slave," "Winter Olympics in the Subtropics" and others dealt a huge blow to the reputation of Putin and his oligarch friends.

It was Nemtsov who told Russia and the world of how Putin's fellow Ozero dacha cooperative residents had accumulated fantastic wealth, of the virtual giveaway of valuable Gazprom assets, the colossal graft at Olympic construction sites and the luxurious lifestyles of Kremlin luminaries. It was from Nemtsov's reports that millions of Russians first learned about the total corruption in the highest echelons of the Russian authorities.

During his final days, Boris Nemtsov was preparing a new report providing evidence that regular Russian troops were participating in the war in Ukraine. As far as I know, Nemtsov had

exclusive information on the subject.

The publication of that report could have discredited the Kremlin's official story that only local militias and Russian volunteers are fighting in Ukraine. It was possibly the authorities' fear that such a report would see the light of day that cost Boris Nemtsov his life.

In addition to all this, Nemtsov was a key figure in the Russian opposition. He brought all of the differing groups together and encouraged them to work in unity. He was the main initiator and organizer of the mass protest rallies.

He traveled around the world telling foreign media and politicians about what was happening in Russia and insisted that they respond with actions aimed against corruption and human rights violations in Russia. He actively supported the "Magnitsky Act" and explained to Western politicians which sanctions would hurt the Kremlin without compromising the interests of ordinary Russians.

And now the authorities are free of a man who could competently and fearlessly identify their greatest weaknesses and dirtiest secrets and hold them up to the light of day.

Vladimir Putin has a lot of work to do if he wants to convince the country and the world that the Russian authorities have no connection to this cynical and terrible murder — a murder carried out on the very day of Putin's new holiday devoted to special operations forces and the one-year anniversary of the "liberation" of Crimea.

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*The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.*

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