

that Putin is ready to be a partner with the West... as long as they respect Russian interests as well.

The current consensus in the United States is decidedly against Professor Cohen. News outlets regularly attack Putin's and Russia's actions. Critics rebut Cohen point by point, saying that Ukraine's economy and military is such a mess that it wouldn't stand a chance at joining the European Union or NATO in any case, so what is Russia afraid of? They

give examples where the US has conceded to Russian interests, and say that far from "NATO expansionism," some former Soviet Republics are so desperate to shield themselves from Moscow's bullying tactics that they have begged for more NATO involvement.

Meanwhile, candidates for the 2016 US presidential election talk about who is going to be the strongest and most resolute president, best able to "stand up to Putin." Jeb Bush (now out of the race) has explicitly renounced

a nuanced approach to the problem: "[Putin's] a bully... And you enable bad behavior when you're nuanced with a guy like that."

Is Vladimir Putin and the Russia he is recreating in his image a menace to world peace? Or is he simply a bold leader in a world of weak-willed, self-delusional professional politicians who would do well to learn from the way Mr. Putin tries to protect and promote the interests of his nation?

Time will tell. ■



Deputy Prime Minister Nemtsov (left) in discussion with Minister of Internal Affairs Anatoly Kulikov at a cabinet session in 1997. Nemtsov, a prominent Putin critic, was mysteriously gunned down in 2015.

The Man Who Solved His Own Murder

Moshe Holender



The Iron Curtain has long since come down on the world theater, yet Russia's President (and former KGB officer) Vladimir Putin continues to live in its shadow. Many people who questioned Putin's human rights violations have been eliminated, their murderers never brought to justice. However, when Putin ordered the assassination of Alexander Litvinenko using an expensive and rare poison available only to Russian authorities, he went too far.

Litvinenko, a former Russian spy, identified his murderers from his deathbed and even the means by which he was poisoned. He also revealed that none other than Vladimir Putin himself had ordered the assassination.

It was a cold day as two Russian agents in the heart of London laid plans for their secret mission: the murder of one of Russia's President Vladimir Putin's greatest enemies.

The Millennium Hotel is a very unlikely spot for a political assassination. It is located near London's Grosvenor Square and next door to the US Embassy, where the CIA

allegedly maintains its central station for England on the 4th floor.

During World War II, the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces, US General Dwight D. Eisenhower, made his military headquarters at 20 Grosvenor Square in order to be near the American Embassy. During that period the entire square was popularly known as Eisenhower Platz. In a mark of appreciation to the US for assisting in overcoming the Nazi monster, an imposing statue of US President Franklin Roosevelt was erected in the square, along with the legendary commander, and later US president, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

In 2011, another statue was erected in the same place of former US President Ronald Reagan, as a tribute to his role in bringing down the Soviet Union. The statue also bears an inscribed greeting from the last leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, which reads: "With President Reagan, we traveled the world from confrontation to cooperation."

Those words provide some absurd comic relief to the very serious event that took place in Grosvenor Square less than 10 years ago. This is especially true in light of the steps taken by the present Russian president (and former KGB officer) Vladimir Putin to turn back the clock and return to the days when Soviet leaders maintained absolute control over their subjects and used the KGB to make their enemies disappear.

On November 1, 2006, two Russian agents sat down in a restaurant just 500 yards from the statue. There they finalized their plans of murder. They probably did not take the time to contemplate the significance of the cooperation between Russia and the West that Gorbachev praised so highly.

The agents were Andrei Lugovoi and Dmitry Kovtun. The man they were out to get rid of was Alexander Litvinenko, a former officer in Russia's FSB spy agency (the successor to the KGB of the Soviet era). Litvinenko fled Moscow in 2000, and while in exile in London he became one of Putin's

most outspoken opponents. He became a journalist and writer, and from 2003 on he also became a British agent, getting paid for his services by England's MI6 intelligence service.

Recently, Litvinenko had begun giving Her Majesty's agents, as well as Spain's intelligence service, shocking information regarding the intricate connection between the Russian Mafia in Spain and high-ranking Russian politicians, reaching all the way up to the president's office. The contacts with the Russian Mafia began during the tumultuous 1990s, when Putin, then an aide to Mayor of St. Petersburg Anatoly Sobchak, worked hand-in-hand with underworld thugs. Litvinenko was preparing to testify about the subject one week later before a Spanish prosecutor. The Kremlin was under pressure to take care of Litvinenko, and fast.

The two agents from Moscow were carrying a deadly and costly poison that was hardly known in the Western world: polonium-210, a highly radioactive element that is hard to detect. When swallowed, even a small amount is fatal. The poison had been produced in a nuclear reactor in the Ural Mountains, and was processed in



Russian President Vladimir Putin was once a KGB officer.

a secret FSB laboratory so that it could be transported in a tiny flask.

From KGB to Berezovsky

Alexander Litvinenko began his career, like virtually every other brilliant mind in Russia at that time, under the supervision of the infamous KGB. After communism fell, he went to work for the FSB. In the early 1990s, he rose in rank, becoming an important officer in the internal intelligence service that controlled all matters of internal security. This included the Russian Mafia, which had developed into a powerful network even under communist control. It became especially powerful in the final years under Gorbachev, when the winds of reform permitted the underworld to rear its ugly head in the open.

Among Litvinenko's tasks was to protect wealthy Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky, and the two became close friends. Boris Abramovich Berezovsky belonged to a group of Russian oligarchs, some of whom were Jewish (Berezovsky considered himself Jewish, although he is not recognized as such by *halachah*) and who became fantastically wealthy in the years immediately after the downfall of the Soviet Union.

A central tenet of communist ideology is that nothing should be private. All businesses and business activities should be controlled by the state, which then distributes the wealth equally among all the citizens (a false dream that never materialized). When communism collapsed and Russia officially switched over to a democratic political system, one of the most significant events was the transfer of business ventures to private hands.

The corrupt administration of Russia's first democratically elected leader Boris Yeltsin oversaw the process of privatization. The government sold numerous industries that had been previously under its control. The normal course of action, which a legitimate government would have followed, would be to put these businesses up for auction. This would create competition and guarantee the



London's Grosvenor Square.



The US Embassy in London with the statues of Presidents Eisenhower and Reagan.