

# THE RUSSIAN BEAR AND THE PUPPETS

By

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After the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 90s, the Russian Bear licked its wounds, wondering why it had lost so much territory. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Georgia, and others had declared their independence from the Soviet bloc.

During that time, I traveled on many humanitarian mission trips to Russia, and made one trip to the Republic of Georgia. I found the people of Russia and Georgia to be warm and friendly.

The Russians have experienced more freedom than ever except in the political arena. I use to watch a popular puppet show on Moscow TV. The puppets looked like Yeltsin, Gorbachev, Putin, Luzhkov and other figures in the government. I laughed my head off at the comedy show.

Vladimir Putin watched that show, but did not laugh. Since he has come to power, the puppet show disappeared, and the TV station is operated under government control. In fact, all TV stations in Russia are under the watchful eye of the Kremlin.

There are still puppets in Russia, but the new puppeteer is Vladimir Putin. He installed a puppet as the president of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev. Putin pulled a string, and President Medvedev appointed Putin as prime minister. He pulled another string recently, and Mikhail Gorbachev appeared on *Larry King Live*, defending the brutal invasion of the Republic of Georgia.

The Russian Bear, healed with the aid of oil as a salve for its wounds, flexed its muscles with more than 1,200 military tanks, and invaded the sovereign Republic of Georgia. The bear, mad at Georgia for being a true democracy and aligning with the United States, has burned villages,

bombed homes apartments and bridges, dropped cluster bombs on civilians and has caused more than 158,000 people to be homeless.

Now, the Bear threatens to nuke Poland for signing an accord to place an American Patriot Missile Defense system on its territory. The system will be moved from Germany and operated by the U.S. military. A Russian defense official, Gen. Anatoly Nogvitsyn, has said that such action “cannot go unpunished.”

Who will be the Bear’s next victim? The most likely next target will be Ukraine because it is a democracy seeking membership in NATO. Since the fighting in Georgia erupted, the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, himself a victim of poison a few years ago, told the Russians that he no longer wants the military ships of Russia to dock at the Ukrainian port of Sevastopol.

Anna Politkovskaya, the famous investigative journalist who was murdered in 2006, warned the world about Putin. In her book *Putin’s Russia*, she said: “...Putin, a product of the country’s murkiest intelligence service, has failed to transcend his origins and stop acting like a KGB officer.”

As I watch events unfold in the Republic of Georgia, I am watching a puppet show again—a puppet show by a master puppeteer, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. This time, there is no laughter on my part, only tears.

Note to readers: The above article was published by the Beaumont Enterprise on Aug. 23, 2008.

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