

A close-up, high-angle portrait of Vladimir Putin, looking slightly to the right with a serious expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

'THIS IS THE PUTIN BOOK THAT WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR'

OLIVER BULLOUGH, AUTHOR OF *MONEYLAND*

CATHERINE BELTON

# PUTIN'S PEOPLE

HOW THE KGB  
TOOK BACK RUSSIA  
AND THEN  
TOOK ON THE WEST

# PUTIN'S PEOPLE

*How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West*

Catherine Belton



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## Dedication

To my parents, Marjorie and Derek,  
as well as to Richard and to Catherine Birkett.

## Epigraph

‘Russian organised-crime leaders, their members, their associates, are moving into Western Europe, they are purchasing property, they are establishing bank accounts, they’re establishing companies, they’re weaving themselves into the fabric of society, and by the time that Europe develops an awareness it’s going to be too late.’

Former FBI special agent Bob Levinson

‘I want to warn Americans. As a people, you are very naïve about Russia and its intentions. You believe because the Soviet Union no longer exists, Russia now is your friend. It isn’t, and I can show you how the SVR is trying to destroy the US even today and even more than the KGB did during the Cold War.’

Sergei Tretyakov, former colonel in  
Russian Foreign Intelligence, the SVR,  
stationed in New York

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Vladimir Putin's identity card as a Stasi officer

Putin in his Dresden days

Putin, Lyudmilla and Katerina, or Katya, in August 1986

*(Sovfoto/Universal Images Group/Getty Images)*

Sergei Pugachev and Pavel Borodin

Boris Yeltsin and Yevgeny Primakov (Itar Tass/Pool/Shutterstock)

Yeltsin's daughter, Tatyana Dyachenko, and her husband Valentin

Yumashev (Shutterstock)

Yeltsin handing over the presidency to Putin, 31 December 1999 (AFP/AFP via Getty Images)

Putin shaking hands with Pugachev

Putin with Nikolai Patrushev (Alexey Panov/AFP via Getty Images)

Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Boris Berezovsky (Alexei

Kondratyev/AP/Shutterstock)

Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev facing trial in 2005

*(Shutterstock)*

Igor Sechin and Gennady Timchenko (Sputnik/TopFoto)

Yury Kovalchuk (Alexander Nikolayev/AFP via Getty Images)

Dmitry Firtash (Simon Dawson/Bloomberg via Getty Images)

Martin Schlaff (STR/AFP via Getty Images)

Konstantin Malofeyev (Sergei Malgavko/TASS via Getty Images)

Putin comforting Lyudmilla Narusova at the funeral of Anatoly Sobchak

*(Sputnik/Alamy)*

Putin at his inauguration as president in May 2000 (AFP via Getty Images)

The evacuation of Moscow's Dubrovka theatre (Anton Denisov/AFP via Getty Images)

Putin reacting to the Dubrovka theatre evacuation (AFP via Getty Images)

A dinner party at Putin's dacha, including Pugachev, Shevkunov, Sechin and Patrushev

Putin and Lyudmilla welcomed by Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip during a state visit to the UK (© Pool Photograph/Corbis/Corbis via Getty Images)

Mourners at the school in Beslan where 330 hostages died in a terrorist attack (Shutterstock)

The school gymnasium in Beslan (Shutterstock)

Semyon Mogilevich (Alexey Filippov/TASS via Getty Images)

Moscow police raiding the dacha of Sergei Mikhailov (Kommersant Photo Agency/SIPA USA/PA)

Vladimir Yakunin (Mikhail Metzel/TASS via Getty Images)

Roman Abramovich at a Chelsea football match (AMA/Corbis via Getty Images)

Putin sheds a tear speaking after his reelection in 2012 (Natalia Kolesnikova/AFP via Getty Images)

Gennady Timchenko and Putin playing hockey (Sasha Mordovets/Getty Images)

Donald Trump inside his Taj Mahal casino (Joe Dombroski/Newsday RM via Getty Images)

Donald Trump with Tefvik Arif and Felix Sater (Mark Von Holden/WireImage)

## *Dramatis Personae*

### **Putin's inner circle, the *siloviki***

Igor Sechin – Putin's trusted gatekeeper, a former KGB operative from St Petersburg who rose in power as deputy head of Putin's Kremlin to lead the state takeover of the Russian oil sector. Later became known as 'Russia's Darth Vader' for his ruthless propensity for plots.

Nikolai Patrushev – Powerful former head of the Federal Security Service (FSB), the successor agency to the KGB, and current Security Council chief.

Viktor Ivanov – Former KGB officer who served with Putin in the Leningrad KGB and oversaw personnel as deputy head of Putin's Kremlin during his first term, leading the Kremlin's initial expansion into the economy.

Viktor Cherkesov – Former senior KGB officer who ran the St Petersburg FSB and was a mentor to Putin, moving with him to Moscow, where he remained a close adviser, first as first deputy head of the FSB and then running the Federal Drugs Service.

Sergei Ivanov – Former Leningrad KGB officer who became one of the youngest ever generals in Russia's foreign-intelligence service in the nineties and then rose in power under Putin's presidency, first as defence minister and then as Kremlin chief of staff.

Dmitry Medvedev – Former lawyer who started out working as a deputy to Putin in the St Petersburg administration when he was in his early twenties, and followed closely in Putin's footsteps thereafter: first as a deputy head of the Kremlin administration, then as its chief of staff, then as Putin's interim replacement as president.

### **The custodians, the KGB-connected businessmen**

Gennady Timchenko – Alleged former KGB operative who rose through the ranks of Soviet trade to become co-founder of one of the first independent traders of oil products before the Soviet fall. Worked closely