



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on July 27, 2010

Singing With the Spies: Putin's Image Makers Strike Again

What's next for Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin? A guest appearance as a celebrity contestant on *Dancing With the Stars*? If so, there are sure to be plenty of adoring paparazzi-journos in the United States and Europe praising his macho ballroom prowess.

Ignoring [Putin's grab for increased powers for the FSB](#) (formerly the KGB) on July 9, much of the Western media uncritically retailed Putin's recent stunts, including his claim to have sung KGB songs with the Russian spies recently expelled from the United States.



The latest episodes are evidence of a continuation of the penchant of the major media organizations to bend over backward to present the Moscow-approved propaganda line on Russia's maximum leader. On a 2007 fishing excursion, Putin posed topless, which inspired tabloid-style headlines such as "[Putin - the hunk](#)" in the so-called mainstream U.S. press, mirroring the adulatory coverage in the Putin-controlled Russian media.

More recently, Putin has been filmed [attending a no-holds-barred fight](#) with his Hollywood tough-guy pal, Jean-Claude Van Damme; hugging and [tagging a giant polar bear](#); patting and [tagging a Beluga whale](#); and heroically [shooting a huge Siberian tiger](#) with a dart gun (thereby, allegedly, saving a TV crew from the beast's attack).

Over the past weekend Putin scored a couple more photo-op victories to burnish his strongman image, with his media-staged entrance to an [international motorcycle rally](#) in Ukraine and a [press conference](#) at which he claimed to have met with, and sung KGB songs with, the spies recently expelled from the U.S. Clad all in black — complete with black gloves and dark shades — and sitting astride a tricked out Harley Davidson three-wheel conversion, Putin roared into the biker convention on July 24 with a Russian motorcycle group known as the "Night Wolves," to roars of approval from throngs of bikers, many of whom, no doubt, were shills planted by the FSB. "I greet you brothers!" he told the gathering of motorcyclists, extolling the motorbike as "the most democratic means of transport." "It's the boldest, the quickest transport and gives the biker the sweet feeling of freedom," said Putin. "Without any exaggeration you can say that a bike is a symbol of freedom."

The following day, July 25, a jauntily attired Putin, in an open collar and sports coat, told reporters at a press conference in Ukraine that he had met with the 10 [sleeper agents who had recently been sent back to Russia](#) in a spy trade. "We talked about life. We sang. It was not karaoke but live music," Putin told reporters. "We sang 'From Where the Motherland Begins,'" he added. "I'm not joking, I'm serious. And other songs with a similar content," [Putin said](#).

The song, "From Where the Motherland Begins," is not familiar to non-Russians, but it is well known



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among Russians as the unofficial anthem of the KGB.

As we noted in a 2007 cover story for *The New American*, "[Putin's Russia](#)," Vladimir Putin, himself a KGB/FSB careerist, has been rehabilitating the Soviet KGB's image, while simultaneously openly boosting the prominence and power of the KGB's successor organizations, the domestic FSB and the foreign SVR. Among the many significant moves Putin has taken in this regard is his restoration of important communist symbols, such as:

- the Red Star, as Russia's official military emblem;
- the Red Banner, as Russia's military flag;
- the music of the old Soviet anthem, albeit with new words;
- the bust of Feliks Dzerzhinsky, mass murderer and infamous founder of the KGB (known then as the Cheka) to a pedestal at the infamous Lubyanka headquarters of the KGB-FSB.

Unlike the other events described above, the Russian media has released no video, audio, or photos of Putin's alleged singing session with the returned Russia spies, [leading some Putin critics to suggest](#) that the incident never took place, but rather, that the reported KGB song fest was a fiction created by Putin and the KGB/FSB to play up Soviet nostalgia, Russian nationalism, and Putin's cult of personality. All of this is aimed at positioning Putin, say the critics, for a return as President of Russia in the 2012 elections. If the plan works, Putin can thank his fans in the Western press corps who give preference to recycling KGB/FSB propaganda glamorizing him rather than reporting on the many victims of his brutal police-state. (See, for instance, [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).)

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