

Putin Has His Own Private Assassins
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I don't know how many of you remember the story of the "Sorcerer's Apprentice," charmingly done in the Disney film Fantasia. Mickey Mouse played the Sorcerer's apprentice, tasked with sweeping out the house. The lazy rascal found the master's book and tried his hand at magic, turning the broom into an army of brooms who swept and went to the well, nearly flooding the house and coming close to drowning Mickey until the Sorcerer returned and put things to rights, punishing the foolish apprentice.

In this case, things turned out fine. But the story has a much more menacing outcome when one lets loose forces that cannot be contained. Evil has a way of getting loose with consequences not controlled by their authors.

? Hitler's Brownshirts terrorized the German public during the 1930s quite effectively, but became so bold that Hitler realized that he had to get rid of them all or risk his own neck. In 1934, he organized one night to take them down, in an organized purge. This was called "the Night of the long knives." The Brownshirts were replaced by the SS.

? Stalin's constant paranoia motivated purges against anybody that he thought might challenge his authority. Nobody in his inner circle knew who might be next. His assassin-in-chief, Beria, ran the Soviet network of slave-labor camps and was notorious for his sadistic enjoyment of torture and taste for beating and raping women and violating young girls. Beria carried out these purges. It is probably that Stalin so alarmed his inner circle that they finally managed to poison him and Khrushchev bravely organized Beria's arrest and execution.

It is here, however, that I call upon the wisdom of literature. There is nothing more satisfying than Shakespeare for exposing the underbelly of evil. In King Lear, we meet the terrible daughters of the delusional king, two of them in league in absolute ruthlessness----until they fall out! They only know how to hate, not to love even each other, and as such, they bring down their entire evil enterprise, along with their evil colleagues. In history, this happens too.

The great Cult of the Assassins in the 13th Century was exterminated by the Mongols. The Mongols were tamed by the Persians and the Chinese. Hitler wiped out the Brownshirts and the Allies wiped out Hitler. Stalin purged and purged, but his inner circle poisoned him just in time before more of them died, letting Khrushchev clear the air.

Now comes Putin, the latest Sorcerer's Apprentice. Putin has turned Russia's Chechen enemies into his own secret army, creating a Chechen warlord, Ramzan Kadyrov, as his own man in Chechnya. This nasty dictatorship is a combination of a mafia state, pledging allegiance to Putin (not Russia) and to Militant Islam, at least that aspect of Islam that makes them fanatically immune to fear of death. Needless to say, this makes Russian legislators very nervous indeed, because they do not know who may be next on Putin's death list.

Chechens are known to carry out assassinations at the behest of Putin anywhere in the world. They have done so in London, in Moscow, in Petersburg, and this inspires a pall of fear. Russian police went to Grozny (Chechnya) to arrest a murderer (Chechnya is part of Russia after all), and Kadyrov had them fired at and kicked out. Putin defended Kadyrov, not the Russian police!

Putin had better remember the Sorcerer's Apprentice. If the day comes that he and Kadyrov quarrel, who is going to assassinate whom first, eh? Will Russia have to declare a third Chechen war and level Grozny again? Or will Kadyrov set his assassins on Putin? Could Chechnya take over Russia? Don't laugh. Their demographics are better. Putin is bold, but I don't see him dying an old man in his bed. His playmates are far too wicked. Kadyrov may not die an old man in his bed either. Warlords don't.

Time Magazine June 25, has done an amazing reporting job on "Putin's Secret Army." Simon Shuster in Grozny deserves credit!

675 words

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