At the end of the book, the former Putin’s adviser for public relations urges Russia and the West to try to understand each other’s fears. However, the author considers that no other Russian leader in the future will be more willing, than the current president from Kremlin, to receive sermons or lessons from outside.

Through this study, the author has analyzed some of the most thorny details of Russian policy, both domestically and especially in its external relations. This volume offers a thorough picture of the events that gravitated around Vladimir Putin, from his first term until his re-election – for the third time – to the Russian head of state in 2012. Many information used by the author were extracted from interviews held by officials of the first rank not only from Russia but also from USA, Germany, France, UK, Ukraine and Georgia, information that reveal details that have escaped over the time. The thorough analysis of sources, the personal experience as advisor for public relations and concise style of writing make us say that the volume of Angus Roxburgh is particularly important for the historiography about the period of the first two presidential terms in which Putin was the main architect of Russia’s policy.

Angus Roxburgh study attempted to highlight the stormy political life of the Kremlin, after the withdrawal from the power of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin's accession to the highest office of the Russian state. Despite the fact that it is a book about Putin during his first two terms at the Kremlin, we believe that if correctly interpreted, this would provide alternatives for better cooperation with the current Kremlin leader.

Stanislav Belkovsky, Putin: biografia interzisă (Putin: the man who wasn’t there), translated by Antoaneta Olteanu, Corint Publishing House, Bucharest, 2014

Ionuţ Filipescu*

By then in Russian, but also in numerous translations, the paper sparked controversy and a series of polemics, being widely publicized and discussed in the issues addressed by the author both by non-specialist readers and scientific or political world. Given that the volume is divided into 22 chapters, I preferred a

* University of Bucharest, Faculty of History. Contact: filipescuionut@yahoo.com.
review of the whole, trying to highlight novel information provided by Stanislav Belkovsky and his vision about Vladimir Putin, as well as the objectives that the author wanted to achieve by publishing this book.

One aspect that attracts attention is the title, The Corint Publishing House preferring a commercial title, “Putin: the prohibited biography”. The original book was titled “Putin: the man who wasn’t there” (СТАНИСЛАВ БЕЛКОВСКИЙ ПУТИН: ЧЕЛОВЕК, КОТОРОГО НЕ БЫЛО). Regarding the changing of the title, even Belkovsky gives us an explanation (which remains suspended since the publisher has given up the original version): the title is a modeled title of the American film “The Man Who Was’t There”, giving the impression that the biography of the Russian leader is addressed primarily to the Western society. Moreover, the author tries to show the similarities between the film’s hero and the Russian President: *Hero’s sins of actual crimes have been forgiven, but he was sentenced for a crime he had no way committed. Something similar is the world public opinion trying to do with Putin* (p. 17).

One of the chapters of the volume, specifically the third one, *The Legend about KGB: James Bond or the Tailor of Panama*, discusses the past of Vladimir Putin in the KGB service, which Stanislav Belkovsky puts in doubt. Thus, according to the author, the Russian president would not have worked with the General Direction no. 1 of KGB (foreign intelligence), but was assigned to the so-called General Direction no. 5 which was dealing with the fight against dissidence and political surveys, Putin’s main obligation being to report everything what the Soviet students who were in Dresden with scholarships talked about. One argument Belkovsky brings for this statement is that none famous employee of the Russian secret services received major appointments during President Putin’s three mandates.

After appointing him adviser to the vice-rector of the State University of Leningrad (an appointment that was based on Putin’s mistake to disclose the names of fifteen intelligence agents of the Soviet Union at the time he was activating in Dresden), Vladimir Putin seemed that plunges into a crisis that could mean the end of his career. From this point the author undertakes an incursion in the road to power that Putin took, a road on which the current president of Russia intersected himself with many key figures of the public and political life. These include Anatoly Sobceak, who introduced Vladimir Putin on the political world stage, and Yeltsin family, its future protectors (the Yeltsin family was the factor
that had helped him be appointed as director of FSB – the Federal Security Service - in 1998 and Secretary of the Security Council a year later) who had pushed him later on in the elections for the presidency of the Russian state. Also, the author presents Putin's relationship with Roman Abramovich, in a chapter called highly suggestive for the nuances of the rapprochement between the president and the businessman, **In search of his brother - Roman Abramovich**.

At the same time, Belkovsky depicts from his own perspective Vladimir Putin's relations with the Russian oligarchs, among them Vladimir Gusinsky, Boris Berezovsky, Yevgeny Chichvarkin, Aleksander Lebedev. The author does not consider them enemies of the president, but pseudo-enemies, the finish of the chapter **Putin and his enemies** making a statement tinged with threat to Putin's opponents: **Such pseudo-Putin virtual enemies are many. But Putin did not believe so. But even these pseudo-enemies would give anything if only a benevolent smile from the “opponent”, from the great statesman** (p. 138).

Chapter **Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the favorite enemy** presents details from behind the destruction of the career of the businessman mentioned above and his conviction to imprisonment for 13 years. Although he is presented as a moral symbol and bastion (not specifying against whom), the author states that the blame for the decline of the economic empire is Khodorkovsky himself, through the inability to manage political problems that he faced.

If we are to believe those from *Der Spiegel* (and we find in this book sufficient reasons to do so) as that Stanislav Belkovsky is a close or at least a tolerated and encouraged author by the Russian secret services (p. 8), then we must see what his opinion about Russia's foreign policy during the presidency of Putin is. In opinion of Belkovsky, Putin's aim was and is the legalization in the West of both Russia and the Russian elite and himself. However, the author believes that, in its efforts, Vladimir Putin was not greeted by the Western world as they ought, even if he often showed leniency or courtesy (being the first who presented condolences to US and President Bush after the attacks of 11 September 2001 and opening to the Americans the airspace for transit). Moreover, Belkovsky does not hesitate to appoint Putin a pro-Western to whom the West so far has not acted accordingly to his actions. Thus, the deterioration of international relations between Russia and Western countries have led to - according to the author - the necessary replacement of (!) Dima [Dmitry] Medvedev with Putin at the presidential seat, because if something were to happen (...), Dima could not handle
the situation (pp. 213-214). Such a statement makes us wonder about Belkovsky's perception on how the presidential position in Russia is obtained.

The chapter **Vladimir Putin: Imperfect crimes and perfect mistakes** brings into discussion four issues: the existence of a dictatorship of the men with epaulettes, come mostly from the structures of the KGB, Vladimir Putin's involvement in political killings, the existence and operation of a real machinery of corruption in Putin's Russia and, finally, his desire to reunite the Soviet empire. Regarding the first point, after a brief analysis, Belkovsky concludes that it is difficult to determine the number of officials belonging to the Russian secret service, and that the existence of a militocracy can not be supported by sufficient grounds. According to the author, in Russia live many oligarchs controlling the most important functions of the state leadership. Regarding the involvement of Vladimir Putin in Aleksander Litvinenko or Anna Politkovskaya's assassinations, the author believes that the events mentioned above have caused more harm to the Russian president (of course, in the capital of the imagine) than it would have brought the disappearance of these characters. Thus the murder of Anna Politkovskaya is a result of a mafia-style execution of some Chechens for the disclosure made by the journalist of some people who wanted to overthrow the leader of the North Caucasus (Ramzan Kadyrov). Stanislav Belkovsky believes that the Russian President has nothing to do with Aleksander Litvinenko's death, the method that caused his death (poisoning with antediluvian polonium) is one that leaves some questions, given the traces left behind – intentionally, says the author – by this operation. Regarding the level of corruption in Russia, Belkovski does not blame the Russian President of any fault, considering that Boris Yeltsin was the ideologist and creator of the machinery of corruption nationwide. Moreover, the author depicts the image of a Vladimir Putin who could not stand to increase the level of corruption in the country, being perceived as a man who “was tricked by his honor” (p. 296). Finally, the last part of this chapter is reserved to the analysis of the Russia and Vladimir Putin’s attitude at the possibility of rebuilding the Soviet empire. Belkovsky says that it is hard to find a more anti-Soviet state than the Russian Federation during Putin (p. 298), considering that Russia during Putin did not undertake any action to increase its influence on post-Soviet countries. Omitting even the statement in which Putin said that the collapse
of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the last century, Belkovsky claims that during the current Russian president has been a decrease in quality of the Russian influence among members of CIS, relevant in this sense the “color revolutions” in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005 and 2009).

In front of a climbing of Aleksei Navalny in the political scene, the author declares himself extremely skeptical, considering him a person of perspective, but who is not recommended for the presidential office of Russia. Moreover, he compares him (calling him “temptation”) to Boris Yeltsin, who came as an alternative to Gorbachev's power, but who was a disappointment for the Russian people and its expectations. Also, he does not hesitate to assert that Russia does not need a new leader (p. 353).

Finally, the last chapter (The collapse of the putinism economy - how and when will it be done?) debates the subject of the putinism economy that seems to sink into a crisis becoming more acute. After he is specifying the causes of this situation (not incriminating directly Putin), the author mentions the reasons for which the Russian citizens have to pay higher and higher charges (without Putin - allegedly - to could challenge these increases): the necessity of massive investments in the infrastructure which did not benefited from upgrades since during Brezhnev. The end of this chapter has mobilizing shades for the Russian people, serving very good Putin’s propaganda to show the West as an unreported enemy, who is just waiting to feast from the goods of Russian economy: But one thing is almost obvious: the resulting fragments from the collapse of the putinism economy will fill the whole Europe (p. 370).

It should be noted that this volume, aside from its instigating and ironic character (here and there) gives us another image of Vladimir Putin, a character that the author just gives the impression that he is attacking, although he often calls him “our hero”, which wants to seem an irony that is not at all convincing. In fact, Belkovsky proposes the replacement of the myth of a brutal, harsh, vindictive Vladimir Putin, with the myth of a man who is often misunderstood and does nothing but to protect objectively the interests of the state that he leads. Putin is

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seen by the Western world (and particularly by those who have not completed the work of Belkovsky) as aggressive, evil, dangerous, a KGB member, a former Soviet spy in East Germany, the moral coauthor of some heinous crimes (Aleksander Litvinenko, Anna Politkovskaya), the fierce warrior against Chechnya, the leader of an organization that comprises people from the secret services and military, Cossack nationalists, Stalinists etc. Seeing this, Stanislav Belkovsky aims the annihilation all of the negative epithets and replacing them with explanations of how the West (in error) perceived Putin in such a negative key.

Often the author introduces passages with irrelevant information for the promised approach, that of drawing up a biography of Putin, information that can only get significance if we take into consideration Belkovsky's intention to manipulate the reader. Another element of disadvantage for this paper is the parsimony of documentary sources. The author does not hesitate to assert things full of weight, however he does not provide any document to prove those stated.

On the same note, we must not lose sight of the perverse message sent through the Afterword of the paper, Why I request the Ukrainian citizenship, in which Belkovsky urges manifestly other Russians to request Ukrainian citizenship. In other words, the action that is intended as a form of protest against Putin's policy will give the latter a stronger theme for the annexation and domination under other forms of a part of Ukraine under the motivation of protecting a greater number of Russian citizens that the state should take care of.

This paper seems to embody the description of the very structure of the governance system of Putin: a mixture of truths and myths, where the information and disinformation are forming an endless tandem, and the conspiracy theories abound and generates the idea that in this country where social segments are increasingly polarized (with rich oligarchs and a nostalgic and impoverished majority of the population), everything is possible.