

## Bear Market: Gassing Russia

Written by

Tuesday, 03 January 2006 09:07 - Last Updated Tuesday, 03 January 2006 09:07

---

### Bear Market: Gassing Russia

**Empire Burlesque** - Chris Floyd - I hold no brief for Vlad (the Impassive) Putin's authoritarian Kremlin regime ? in so many ways a role model for the one-party, oil-bidness oligarchy run by his soul-mate, George [\(Cedarhead\)](#) Bush. But the current ["gas crisis"](#) between Russia and Ukraine does expose some of the hype and hypocrisy that Western leaders and their media sycophants habitually display toward the ever-unruly Rus.

*www.chris-floyd.com*

### Gas Pains

#### **Chris Floyd**

Empire Burlesque

03 January 2006

For example, Russia is being universally condemned by the Bush Regime and European leaders for the heinous crime of practicing hard-nosed market capitalism. And for the horror of horrors! mixing business and politics. Whoever heard of such a thing? Oh, those Scythian savages!

Basically, the confrontation boils down to this: Putin doesn't like the cut of Yushchenko's jib ? namely, his attempt to pull Ukraine out of Moscow's economic sphere and integrate more fully with the West, coupled with Yushchenko's bid to bring NATO into the historic heartland of the Slavs: a nice, shiny American-made dagger poking Russia's underbelly. In addition, Putin, like the Bushists, believes in making hay while the sun shines: with natural gas prices soaring, why not squeeze as much profit as you can from your vast stores of the valuable commodity? In particular, why continue to subsidize a government that displeases you by supplying them with gas at almost one-fifth the market rate?

And so, combining power politics with the power business, Russia demanded that Ukraine pay the going market rate for gas. This was unkind, unfriendly, unfair, to be sure, and could no doubt have been negotiated amicably if both sides were on the up-and-up ? but as far as economic warfare against a government which displeases you goes, it's not a patch on the scorched-earth policy that the United States has conducted against, say, Cuba for decades. In the end, Putin is doing exactly what Trump, Gates, GM, Halliburton, Mastercard, Xerox, Con Edison, Wal-Mart or any other celebrated entrepreneur or corporate behemoth does: charging what the market will bear for goods or services rendered. In this, he is merely following the gospel of greed proclaimed so loudly for so long by such apostolic organs as the Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times, the Economist, the New York Times, etc.

## Bear Market: Gassing Russia

Written by

Tuesday, 03 January 2006 09:07 - Last Updated Tuesday, 03 January 2006 09:07

---

Strangely enough, most of these same organs now oozing spleen at the Kremlin for its ball-busting business dealings were leading the cheers back in the day when Boris Yeltsin was applying economic "shock treatment" to the post-Soviet economy. The imposition of the most ruthless kind of Thatcherite-Reaganite-Bushist "market capitalism" sent prices of food, clothing and shelter sky-rocketing, wiped out the savings of millions, and threw millions more out of work as newly "privatized" industries, long-subsidized, followed the "law of the market" and went belly-up. The suffering and deprivation endured by ordinary Russians during those years can scarcely be imagined in the West, where shoppers get the vapors if there are less than 32 varieties of deodorant and corn chips bulging on the supermarket shelves. Life expectancy plummeted ? a first for a developed nation; old women and men ? younger men and women too -- were stripped of their dignity and forced into the street to hawk their possessions; skilled machinists, carpenters, engineers, dress-designers, nuclear scientists drove gypsy cabs, swept floors, cleaned toilets, begged on the streets, sold their bodies, turned to crime or just laid down and died from hunger, cold, depression or drink. But still the cheerleaders urged on the "reform": faster, faster, more, more!

To repeat: I hold no brief for Putin. He has throttled the political and civic freedoms that began under Gorbachev (and could have been equally developed, expanded and nurtured under a less draconian transition from Communism), fomented a new, murderous war against Chechnya, etc. etc. But it seems very telling to me that when Russia's capitalist hard-ball threatens Western pocketbooks, it is a terrible thing, a "throw-back to the Cold War," the act of a dangerous regime unworthy of its new leadership in the G8, and so on and so forth. But if the exact same mind-set crushes a few million worthless Russian peons under its designer boot-heel, well, that's just fine and dandy.