

CLINTON-PUTIN ONE-ON-ONES
MOSCOW SUMMIT, JUNE 3-5, 2000

Notetaker: ST (June 9 00)

First Session, working dinner, Kremlin private quarters (8:10-10:50 p.m.)

Opening banter about sports; Putin says he hurt himself skiing, really misses regular exercise when he injures himself... tries to be careful. POTUS asks if he's keeping up his judo. Putin says he has engaged in disciplined exercise all his life, was a judo champion in Leningrad, but finds it hard to keep it up in his current job, finds that frustrating. Will show POTUS later how he's got a gym nearby. POTUS says he's read Putin's book and noticed how much emphasis he gave to judo and martial arts. Can't he keep doing that? Putin says, no, because it's hard to find anyone who wants to be his sparring partner, and it's also hard to find the time.

Putin then shifts to asking POTUS about life in the White House, wonders if he has anyplace else he can go. POTUS talks about Camp David and how he hasn't been able to use it as much as he'd like. Mentions that HRC hasn't been able to get up there much lately because of her campaign, and how POTUS himself will be doing a lot of campaigning for Gore, which means not many weekends free.

- Putin: I've really been looking forward to our meeting. I remember our meeting in New Zealand very well — how kind you were, how friendly, how supportive when I was making my first steps in the leadership. I remember how after dinner you took me by the hand and led me to that gallery and we were applauded there together. I also paid attention to what you said during our election campaign here.

Of course, these aren't the only reasons I've been looking forward to our meeting. You're also someone who has served 8 years in the presidency of the most powerful country in the world. During those years, you've done a lot to build the relationship with Russia. You've still got some time left to you in office, and there's a lot we can do together.

While cameras come in, they go back to bantering about houses. POTUS talks about the house he and HRC will have in NY, as well as the set-up at the Clinton Library in Little Rock. Cameras leave...

- Putin: One reason I ask about your life in the White House is that I'm finding life here in the Kremlin very isolating.

- POTUS: I can sympathize. I used to say that the White House is both the finest house in America and also the crown jewel of our prison system.

He then describes how, in order to limit the isolation, he's set up a special zip code so that people he grew up with can write him letters and give him a perspective from the real world, how he's attended reunions of his high school and college classes and brought high-school classmates to the White House. Putin says he's thought about doing the same, but hasn't done it because he didn't want to give the impression of mispending public funds or taking favors from private businessmen.

Several times in this back-and-forth, Putin begins his reply to POTUS by saying, "I agree with you absolutely" or "that's just the way I look at it."

When POTUS runs through a list of all the friends he has back home with whom he's kept in touch over the years, Putin says, almost wistfully, "You're lucky to have so many friends. I don't have all that many. The ones I do have, I try to keep in touch with."

- Putin: Even after you leave office, you'll be welcome here — you and your daughter and your wife.
- POTUS: Well, maybe I'll take you up on that. In any event, you can count on me to keep working on keeping the relationship strong. You know, I've made 5 trips here as President, and I first came here back in the 60s, when Strobe and I were young and full of hope. We had hope about this country when a lot of people didn't. It's a lot easier to have hope about it today. All my life I've wanted to see this relationship strong and healthy.
- Putin: Let's see if we can invent some way of keeping you involved with Russia.

Hillary seems to be running well. How's it going from your standpoint?

POTUS then gives a detailed, cautiously optimistic analysis of the NY race, emphasizing HRC's credentials, including having "traveled the world... Too many people don't see the importance of the U.S.'s role in the world."

- Putin: Well, it's a unique situation. What will the impact of her race be on the presidential election?

POTUS says that he doesn't think there will be a great deal of effect. He reviews the history of NY politics...

- Putin, interrupting — saying, in English, "excuse me," then shifting to Russian: But what I was wondering was if you'd be accused of interfering in the NY race — that is, using your influence as President on behalf of your wife.

POTUS says maybe some will make that charge, but that he's kept his distance from direct campaigning and doesn't think it will be a problem in the end. But he'll be careful on that score.

- Putin: Yes, I think the right approach is always the careful one.

He then recalls Sobchak's wife arousing controversy by running for the Duma when Sobchak was Mayor of St. Petersburg. He says that Russians, of course, have a different view of the role of women than Americans, and that his own wife is a great admirer of Hillary's.

- Putin (rather abruptly): How are Gore's chances looking?

POTUS does a quite detailed analysis and prognosis on the campaign. Bottom line: it will be close, but the VP will pull it out because he will succeed in pushing back against Bush's effort to blur the distinction between them and frame the issues in the way that give the electorate clear choices, including on foreign policy and national security. That allows POTUS to segue into NMD...

- POTUS: The Republicans have an advantage when there is no sharp debate on the issues. That's because the American people believe they're conservative, but in fact they're really progressive and with us on the issues. To win, we have to win on arguments. We've had a couple of issues lately where in order to do the right thing, I had to do things that didn't help Al: the little Cuban boy and trade for China. But now we've gotten those out of the way. The key for Al is to convince people there's a real choice here on the issues. He can do that because he understands the future better. In this connection, foreign policy matters. The Republicans are against CTBT; they're against the ABM Treaty. Al Gore understands these issues very, very well. He's a powerful debater because he knows so much. He's also had more of a role than any vice president in history. Bush will keep trying to convince people he's a slightly more conservative version of Clinton. But missile defense will be one of those issues on which he tries to tell people, "I'm different from Clinton — and I'm better because I'm tougher." [Putin laughs heartily. He seems eager to demonstrate that he appreciates the irony of the President's remark.] For his part, Gore will say, "I've been part of the tough decisions we've made in this Administration, and America is better off because of those decisions."
- Putin (interrupting): Well, everyone's got to be careful not to make the best the enemy of the good. [Not entirely clear what he means by this, although it could be a first marker against NMD as a misguided pursuit of an ideal solution to one problem that greatly exacerbates other problems — i.e., as he's said elsewhere, 'a cure worse than the disease.']
- POTUS (continuing): Bush will be highly reliant on old Republican establishment experts.

- Putin: I'm not going to say this publicly, because we've got to be able to work with whomever the American people elect, but I'll say to you privately that a change in parties controlling the White House would cause some problems for us, including a hiatus in the relationship and the work we're doing together. A new man from a new party will be tempted to say, "We'll do it better than the previous guys, and that means we'll be tougher." I know that, even though both parties included nice words about U.S.-Russian relations in their programs.
- POTUS: Well, if Bush wins, I can't tell you with certainty what he'll do. On the one hand, he's against CTBT and the ABMT. On the other hand, he never gave a minute's thought to these subjects until two months ago. On an all-out missile defense, you might talk him out of his position, but there's no question you'll be better off with the Vice President. And you can't be sure about Bush. He could make a major mistake. I'd keep that in mind as you make your own decisions. We're talking about a guy who didn't have a position on CTBT and mutual deterrence until 90 days ago. If it happens, I'll try to help out, but I think you're better off doing as much as you can with me.

Obviously, on any difficult issue between us, you'll have to make your decision on whether to do a deal with us or whether to wait until the next Administration. Is it better and easier to do it now or wait? It may be better but harder to do it now.

POTUS then predicted that whoever wins the presidency, the Democrats are going to take back the House and recover some ground in the Senate. He went into some statistical detail on this. Putin seemed genuinely quite intrigued.

Now, in some ways, that may seem to argue for waiting until the next Administration to do a deal. But I want to give you two arguments on the other side. Number one, in American political culture, if the Presidency changes hands, a new president can change any policy that's not rooted in law. That virtually always happens on domestic issues, but it almost never happens on foreign policy issues. So if you think you can reach an agreement with us that's better than the one with Bush, do it, because it will be much harder for him to change the deal if it's done and he inherits it. If he wanted to change it, given the history of American politics, he'd almost have to make you a better deal than the one you got from us.

The second reason plays off your point about the danger of a hiatus [if Bush wins]. You may have experienced something like this when you came into office as Acting President. A new president is often afraid of making a mistake – of looking weak, especially on a national-security issue; whereas I have nothing to lose. I just want to do the right thing for America, for U.S.-Russian relations. I'm coming to the end of two terms, and I'm working for

the future. It's with the long term future in mind that I've come up with this policy and this proposal, even though the policy involves hard choices for me and the proposal involves hard choices for you."

- Putin: This logic is possible, but so is another logic. You're what number President? *POTUS* says 42nd. You're the 42nd President – that's a good number! You've done a lot for your country, particularly the upsurge in your economy, maybe as much as any President since Roosevelt after the Depression. You've done a lot for the world too. You were President of the U.S. when the Soviet Union collapsed and a new Russia was born. In that sense you're one of the leading citizens of the world. From that point of view, I can't imagine you'd make a dangerous mistake from the standpoint of mankind and international security.

Apart from your domestic politics, I believe you'd want to make a decision that will, as physicians say, 'do no harm.' Of course it would be better to come to terms with you. But we need to find a basis on common ground. And we've also got to find a way that allows you to make a decision that won't spur a new arms race or return us to the mistrust and dangers of 15 years ago.

And I'm not just talking about Russia here. If we fail to find the right solution, other countries will react. How will that look? So please think carefully before taking a decision.

Putin then suspended the discussion and took POTUS on a tour of the private quarters: the nap room, the sumptuous duplex library with a bust of Pushkin, the gym (with a universal weight machine, a massage table and a heart monitor), the private chapel and the guest quarters. He also made a point of showing POTUS a darkened room that clearly was no longer in use: the clinic for the previous resident.

On returning to a separate dining room for desert, POTUS mentioned that he'd be paying his respects to Yeltsin on Monday and asked if he was in the same dacha he'd had as President.

- Putin: Yes, I'm let him stay where he was.

POTUS then recalls the many-course meal Yeltsin had given him at his dacha in January '94 and how the weight of the meal was almost too much for Warren Christopher: "That meal almost cost us our Secretary of State." Some banter about Yeltsin's style of hunting (great carnage for the wildlife, no great risk to the hunter). "When Boris described how he went after the wild boars, it didn't really seem like a fair fight." Big laugh from Putin. Putin then recalled Yeltsin's bagging 200 ducks in a single outing: "Sometimes I think he just pretended at ill health."

Then back to the subject of life in the White House and the Kremlin and how the two Presidents' children are adjusting.

- Putin: It's been difficult for my daughters, but they're good sports. Because of our fear of terrorists, they can't go to regular schools. We have to bring teachers in here.

That, for him, is a segue into Chechen terrorism, a grisly account of the kidnapping of the Israeli boy, his rescue and the grateful call from Barak.

- These are brutal, cruel people we're dealing with. Yesterday we broadcast an interview with one of Maskhadov's deputies, who talked quite openly about the need to kill all the Jews. There are, of course, other manifestations of Islamic fanaticism and extremism, but the Chechens go farther than others. Yet your Secretary of State meets with this Akhmadov, the so-called Chechen foreign ministry. We don't regard that as a friendly act.

And then there are these alleged, mythical atrocities committed by the Russian army. They're spoken of all the time. But people keep silent about the real atrocities. I believe our special services understand the real facts and keep in good contact with each other.

Let's toast our cooperation in general, including on that account.

Putin then starts trying to wrap up the dinner, noting that the ministers and other guests have gathered for the jazz concert. He does a cursory review of the agenda for the next days meeting.

- POTUS: I'll certainly want to discuss economics in detail, including how I can be of help. We'll also need to deal forthrightly with the strategic issues, including missile defense. I'm also interested in your view of Russia's long-term strategy for integration. I think you ought to go into the WTO as soon as possible. I know you're going to China soon, and I'd like to talk to you a little about that. I'll also want you to talk to you about the Balkans. Maybe we could have a small meeting in the morning.

Whether we make a deal on missile defense or not, I've worked for 8 years for a strong Russia and a strong partnership. I think you're the right person to lead this country. I'm determined to reach whatever agreements with you I can, and to manage our differences as well as possible.

There are a couple of things I'll want to talk to you about in the smallest setting possible, not in a big group, in the same spirit of candor you used with me just now.

Let me get the Balkans off my chest. I don't want Kosovo to be independent. American doesn't have a long-term strategic interest in an independent Kosovo, or in the U.S.'s being the predominant power in the region at the expense of other countries' legitimate interests. We have an interest and a

role there, but so do other countries. We want to see the Balkans develop in a way that's integrated with the new Europe. That's in our long-term interest. I despise ethnic cleansing, whether it comes from Milosevic or from guys like that one you talked about from the interview.

- Putin: What do you suggest?
- POTUS: Getting Milosevic out. If that happens, there will be less reason for you to worry about the U.S. predominance in the region because Serbia will gravitate back onto a more normal course, including developing its natural ties of faith and blood with Russia. I have no personal or political reason to want to stand in the way of good relations between Serbia and Russia. But the problem is that guy being there.
- Putin: I'll reply very confidentially. It's impossible for me even to hint at what I'm going to say in public. I'll count on our colleagues here to keep what I'm going to say in the strictest confidence. What you say is fully in line with our own thinking about how to build peace and order in the Balkans. But we haven't figured out how to do away with Milosevic. That's a problem for both of us. He's deceived us both.

Now — in confidence — I'll tell you that we've sent out feelers to ensure that he won't be there too long. We've been probing through the very closest channels, both family and military. But he's a very, very tough nut to crack; he's stubborn as hell. I know it sounds strange, but he actually feels pretty confident.

You know the left-wing opposition was here. I decided to let them come. I didn't have to do that, nor did I have to make it possible for them to be noticed. I decided to provide proper coverage so that the people of Serbia would know that there's a different kind of Serbia possible for them than Milosevic's. So in principle we agree. But it's not simple. Let's assume we understand each other.

But let's look at the realities. 2000,000 Serbs have fled Kosovo. Compare that humanitarian catastrophe to 30-40,000 Albanians being driven out of their homes. The Serbs are human beings too. The process of Kosovo separating itself from Yugoslavia continues. Like it or not, Kosovo is no longer part of Yugoslavia.

So Milosevic is not the right man to lead Yugoslavia. But we have to be careful not to make it a public political objective to remove him. He's democratically elected, and it would be counter-productive to the Serbs for outsiders to be telling them who can and cannot be their leader.

Putin tries again to shut the discussion down and adjourn to the jazz conference.

- POTUS: I've got one more set of points he had to make, since, among other things, Sandy Berger is discussing an aspect of it with Sergei Ivanov, and I want you to have the full context when Sergei reports to you before we meet tomorrow.
- Putin (*in English*): Okay.
- POTUS: I know this is a tough issue, but I want to get back to missile defense and strategic stability. I realize, because I've listened carefully to what I've heard from my people who've talked to yours, that we don't agree on this. But there are some things I want you to hear directly from me.

I believe very strongly, as my people have been saying to yours for all these months, that Phase I of NMD is not a threat to Russia or to mutual deterrence. We're stuck with mutual deterrence until we invent something better to take its place – something that we both agree on.

But while I believe that strongly, I believe just as strongly that the North Korean missile program is a threat to us, and it's a threat that's coming at us very fast. There are one or two other countries that will also threaten us in the next 5-10 years.

Now, please understand and believe what I'm saying: I've got a tough decision to make. I haven't made it. I really haven't. I'm going to do what makes sense in the long-term interests of my country – and also in the long-term interest of what I believe, whether you agree or not, is in the interests of relations between our countries. There's a test coming in July. That will have a lot to do with the criterion of technology. There are three other criteria as well. You know what they are. I'm going to have to balance a lot of different factors. But the key thing for you to know is that this isn't driven by politics; I'm not just trying to cover Al Gore's backside here; that's not what this is about. You may not agree with me, but I may conclude that we have the technology to deal with this threat.

Now, there are two reasons why I think it might be in your interest to work out a deal along the lines of what I've proposed. Number one, I might make possible a more ambitious START III agreement than we can do otherwise. Number two: if we do make an agreement, it will be a strong precedent establishing that any future steps on missile defense would have to be based on agreement.

Let me say something about the Principles Document we're going to sign tomorrow. It's a good, solid step – but it's an interim step. It gives us more time. That could mean more time to do something while I'm in office, or it could mean more time if you chose to wait for my successor. I think you'd be making a mistake, as I've already said, but in any event I think we've got a framework here that protects both of our options. My options include

proceeding with technology that I'm convinced will work in the time frame of the threat. Your options include either doing a deal with me or with the next guy.

The Principles Document also reaffirms mutual deterrence while at the same time acknowledging the need to deal with new threats. It's respectful and reaffirming of the ABM Treaty, respectful and reaffirming of strategic stability between the U.S. and Russia. But North Korea doesn't have the right to threaten the U.S., or anyone else, with nuclear weapons and missiles. There's nothing in the ABM Treaty protecting that for North Korea.

Now, I know you've made this proposal of your own about boost-phase intercept. I'm willing to work with you on that. But I can't make working with you on that a quid pro quo for my dropping NMD if our people believe that the technology is there that will deal with the North Korean threat. Boost-phase may have promise, but it will take another 10 years or so, and the North Korean problem is coming a lot faster than that.

So the bottom line for tonight: if you decide you'd prefer to deal with my successor, I can do something that will dramatically increase the time you'll have to do so; that is, so that you won't be dealing with someone who's got about 60 days to make a decision of his own and to make a deal with you and who's scared to death of looking weak.

We're caught in a time warp here. 30 years from now people will look back on the Cold War and the U.S.-Russian nuclear stand-off as ancient history; the U.S. and Russia will be working together against new threats – rogue states that are threatening the world with chemical and biological weapons and suitcase bombs, new threats deriving from religious and ethnic conflict and religious extremism. How do we get on the right side now for that point in the future – how do we make sure that we're part of the same system working together – and not let ourselves be trapped in the Cold War mentality while at the same time keeping mutual deterrence strong between us until we come up with something better? And how do we take advantage of the opportunity and the responsibility we have to bring levels of nuclear weapons much lower? I believe we can have a helluva lot of mutual deterrence with smaller arsenals. That's the question, and the Principles Document, combined with our proposal, is a good way forward to a common understanding.

I know it's tough. You do things I don't in Chechnya, and I do things you don't like in Kosovo, but even while we manage those disagreements, we've got to deal with the common problem of missile threats. That threat is a certainty; put alongside that certainty the possibility that our country can put up a defense that doesn't threaten mutual deterrence but is, strictly speaking, a violation of the ABM Treaty, and that means I've got to make a good-faith

effort with you to figure out how to change the treaty – not to ruin it but to make it hold up for 30 years.

So you've got your decision to make, and I've got mine. Whatever I do, I promise I'll never support putting Russian in an untenable position with regard to mutual deterrence. Just don't think that this is a political problem for me: it's a strategic problem, a real strategic problem.

If the best we can do is the Principles Document – and if I decide to go ahead with NMD – then I want to buy you as much time as possible to deal with the next guy. That's the background of Sandy's conversation with Sergei Ivanov. It's all about reaching an agreement, sooner or later, and not having a train wreck.

- Putin: It may surprise you, but I agree with you, in contrast to some of my colleagues, including several in the Ministry of Defense. In the future, suitcase bombs are a much bigger threat. There are some points where I could take issue with you. For example, when you say, 'We have to do it now.' I think it would be better to focus on the threats that we'll face 30 years from now...
- POTUS (*interrupting*): I've got to focus on threats a lot sooner than that.
- Putin (*who seems rather thrown off his stride for a moment – genuinely surprised at the push-back*): Okay, but we have to think carefully on how to avoid any wrong steps. I can see perfectly clearly that the U.S. isn't getting ready to deliver a nuclear strike against Russia. But we've got to treat the balance between us very carefully, with an eye to the future as well as to the present.

As for what the experts, including your own in the presence of my experts, tell us – I think it confirms a lot of our fears.

He then repeats a distortion of what Sergei Ivanov heard in the tank – an alleged U.S. military confirmation that NMD is designed to protect against a triad, and Russia is the only country with a triad other than the U.S. itself – therefore NMD is anti-Russian.

That's why our people think the balance is upset or is going to be upset.

He then talks about a speech Primakov gave in the Parliament today about how Russia will need to take counter-measures, in the form of shorter-range missile capability, against U.S. ABM facilities in Europe (probably referring to Phase II radars in UK and Greenland).

POTUS interrupts briefly to say that Putin may not understand the phasing of our system and proposal.

- Putin: My point is, there's a frantic search going on here for counter-measures, and it could lead to an unexpected response.

He then asks rhetorically if POTUS knows the origin of the Soviet nuclear program. Then he tells the tale of Lavrenty Beria being put in charge by Stalin of the crash program to get nukes. Beria gathered all the scientists who had anything to contribute, assigned each of them a task and a deadline. Those who met their assignment on time were made Heroes of the Soviet Union; those who didn't were shot. Later, after de-Stalinization, a lot of those who were shot or sent off to die in the camps were posthumously made Heroes of the Soviet Union. Then he comes to his point: quite a few American scientists spied for the USSR and passed along nuclear secrets to the Soviets – not, according to our host, because they were traitors to their country but because they believed in (you guessed it!) mutual deterrence, and wanted to make sure peace was assured by there being a balance.

- POTUS: Interesting. I believe in mutual deterrence and balance too. That's why we're doing this document and making this proposal.

The dinner ends and they go off the jazz concert.
