

*Third session: Monday a.m., ceremonial office in Kremlin*

*Opening banter about the beauty of the restoration, especially the Czars' statues; POTUS comments on recollection of various assassinations and battles.*

- Putin: You know Russian history very well. You could be the President of this country. Or maybe we could switch places.
- POTUS: If I worked in a setting as glorious as this, I'm afraid I'd begin to put on airs. But this is a terrific place to hold meetings. It's hard to be angry when you're in such magnificent surroundings.
- Putin: Are you satisfied with your visit?
- POTUS: I think we did the best we could with the material we had to work with. But we can't let up. We've got to keep working on this stuff. By the way, on NOGA, I think I can do what you're looking for; I've checked into it, and I think I've got the room to do something there.
- Putin: Thanks you. Those people are engaging in pure fraud. May I speak to you frankly on another issue that has come up? I'd like to talk to you not just in your capacity as the President of the United States but as a human being whom I like and whom my people like, someone who's earned a reputation not just for being well-spoken, as you've demonstrated several times here, but someone who is a good listener too — someone who pays attention to the other guy's point of view. Can I do that?
- POTUS: Sure.
- Putin: Why do you keep pushing NMD so hard? Why are you so persistent? I recognize there are looming threats we could be prepare to deal with ahead of time. We've got two choice: we can deal with them together, or each of us can deal with them on his own. I know that there are some in America who think you can do this alone, that you certainly don't need Russia to deal with these threats; that you can do whatever you want; that Russia's too weak to do anything about it — too weak to launch another spiral in the arms race. But please believe me: Russia will be capable of an adequate response. That will be true regardless of who the President of Russia is. There will be reciprocal action — maybe quite unexpected, probably asymmetrical — and it will threaten the territory of the United States. I know it's your decision, or your successor's decision. Maybe, according to your logic, the rest of the world will just swallow your decision, whatever it is. But I'm telling you what the results will be, and the result will be quite unpredictable, and that's not even taking into account the Chinese reaction. We're prepared to act jointly with you.

Keep this in mind too. We don't have the same sort of relationship with China that you have with Britain and France, your nuclear allies. We like Chinese food, but we can't imagine living there, whereas we can imagine living in America or Europe.

What you said about NATO [i.e., Russia's eligibility] not only shocked my colleagues — it shocked some of yours too. We need to make more progress there. We need to develop a mechanism for implementing the NATO-Russia Founding Act. I'd like to ask you to consider having officers from our General Staff take part in the work of the planning committee of NATO. It would be a good, mild step forward. It would help allay suspicions on our side, on the part of our military. It would be a mild step but a substantive one.

- POTUS: I'll see what I can do about that.
- Putin: I also want to propose more cooperation in the health and humanitarian field. Our health minister is going to be meeting with your health minister. If you send her, she's welcome to work on common plans: TB, AIDS, children and motherhood issues, vaccination of children.
- POTUS: I think that kind of high-visibility project is very good, and you can count on us to follow-up. But there's also a long-term, more low-visibility project I'd recommend, and that's to have it as an objective for your term in office that average life expectancy being going up rather than down when you leave office. That could be a big legacy issue for you.

Let me get back to NMD. I've worked hard to make this a good meeting for both of us on the security issues. I told you I thought we'd dealt with a difficult problem about as well as we could. I'm determined, if possible, to find a way forward together. I don't think that the U.S. has the unique power to do whatever it wants and to say to hell with the rest of the world and to hell with what anyone else thinks. I'm trying to find a way to work with you on adapting the existing security system to tomorrow's threats without doing harms with regard to what's happening elsewhere — China, India, Pakistan, Japan. So that's what out to come out of our talks — your point and my point put together: "Adapt to new threats; do no harm."

We've got to keep talking honestly to each other. The next opportunity is when Bill Cohen comes here. He's terrific. He's been working closely with me on this whole set of issues. He's a Republican and very effective with our Congress. He thinks a lot of the Republicans are crazy for wanting to trash the ABM Treaty and scrap mutual deterrence and put up an unlimited defense. He's been good in opposing the view of a global ABM. I really do ask you to see him and to talk to him the way you have to me.

*There's a final exchange about Putin's trip to Rome. Putin tells POTUS about his problem with the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church,*

*who has warned him he'll refuse to see the Pope if the Pope comes to Russia. Putin is expecting the Pope to angle for an invitation but doesn't want to tell him about the problem with the Patriarch. He's expecting the Pope to say that the Patriarch doesn't matter — that the Pope is coming in his capacity as a head of state, so from a protocol standing, there should be no problem in extending an invitation.*

*Then Putin takes POTUS off to see his personal working office, and note-takers are excluded for a few minutes. However, after a delay, ST goes after them and finds Putin in his cavernous main office (with the latest flat-screen computer next to a bank of Soviet-era telephones) introducing POTUS to Dr. Shevchenko, health minister and heart surgeon who claims to have removed bullets from the hearts of soldiers shot in Chechnya — and saved their lives.*