

# Donald and Vlad: They Spoke

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Region: [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

In-depth Report: [FAKE INTELLIGENCE](#)

*Featured image: US President Donald Trump meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin during their bilateral meeting at the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany July 7, 2017. (Photo: Reuters/Carlos Barria)*

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*The highly anticipated encounter of the two presidents went better, much better than anybody predicted. There was a lot of anxiety, and expectations were low as heavy rain clouds, especially after Trump's visit to Warsaw where he obediently repeated the Cold War platitudes dictated by his minders. Trump had been sent off to Hamburg by Washington establishment with warnings a convent novice gets before an unfortunate but unavoidable meeting with a Don Juan. They didn't trust the inexperienced youngster, and insisted he should speak with Vlad only in [presence of grown ups](#), like Auntie Fiona (Hill) or Uncle HR (McMaster), well known for their aversion to Russians.*

They warned him that, short of a nuclear strike, every other reaction will be considered betrayal of the Shining City upon a Hill. Every neocon and Cold Warrior in the West gave his advice to the President, how should he humiliate Putin and put him on his place, below the salt. They actually didn't allow Trump to have a proper meeting with Putin, with full agenda, advisers and ministers, preferably a few days long, in a Camp David format or similar. But they failed profoundly.

The meeting on the margins of G-20 had become the central event, while G-20 became a meeting on the margins of Putin-Trump summit. When Donald and Vlad had met, there was no stopping: a great sympathy they had felt for each other manifested itself in every smile. At the beginning, Putin had been quite reserved; he steeled himself to a possible rejection, to a possible affront, even to insult. But Trump skillfully put him at ease.

Instead of planned thirty minutes, they spoke for over two hours; even an attempt by Trump's wife to restrain her husband wasn't crowned with success. They just could not tear themselves apart. After a few hard months of enforced separation by the self-appointed duennas, the pals were together, at last.

The Western media, trying its damndest to cause ill feeling between the two men, spoke of [Putin's victory](#), of the Russian becoming [the boss](#), the top dog. A typical reaction was that of the liberal Center for American Progress Action Fund, which declared that Trump had "just unilaterally surrendered to Russia". They hoped that vain Trump would be upset at being bettered by Vlad. We shall not join their legion by ceding victory to Putin. Both won, and we won with them.

At such an event, one can hardly expect real tangible results. The results need more time. Creating conditions for future work together would suffice. And still there were some achievements.

I'd suggest you watch the long but rewarding film "Putin Interviews" by Oliver Stone as prolegomena to the meeting reports. In the film, Stone asks Putin about accusations of cyber-meddling in the US elections, and Putin gives a full explicit answer. He said that he had offered President Obama a treaty on cyber security, properly describing what the states can, and can't do in cyberspace to each other.

Obama did not take the offered ball, for the US felt it had vast superiority in the field, and didn't want to give the advantage away.

"According to an unnamed senior intelligence official with the US government, the Obama administration has penetrated Russia's electric grid, telecommunications networks and the Kremlin's command systems. The purported hack means that critical parts of Russia's infrastructure are now vulnerable to attack by secret American cyber weapons", reported Australian [news agency](#).

Indeed complaints of "Russian hackers" sound false, bearing in mind that NSA spies against everybody in the world, including Russia. Millions of Russian calls are intercepted by the American secret services annually, as Snowden told us. The idea of drafting and concluding a treaty forbidding offensive hacking is a good and timely one. At the meeting in Hamburg, President Trump agreed with that, and the presidents decided to appoint a bilateral commission to sort it out and to prepare the treaty. It will be good for all the nations, not only for Americans and Russians, as NSA spied even on American allies like Mme Merkel.

The treaty should also deal with really dangerous viruses, like Stuxnet that was unleashed against Iran, and its newer versions like WannaCry. Julian Assange provided us with the provenance of the viruses: they are from the NSA collection of tools, and they already caused mayhem from Russian banks to British hospitals. The NSA factory of viruses should be brought under control by the treaty.

Interference in elections is also a valid point addressed by the two presidents. Not the silly story of Russian interference in the last American elections, but the very real one of American interference in the elections in Russia, France and elsewhere. President Trump apparently agreed that it should be covered by the treaty and stopped. Professional Cold Warriors were alarmed: how can you compare Russian meddling with our Western pro-democracy drive! That reminds me of an old Jewish joke, preceding World War One: – Let us go and kill some Turks! – And what if they will kill us? – Why would they? We didn't wrong them!

"How can you compare" is a favourite Jewish cliché, frequently used if you compare a killed Jew and a killed Palestinian. I never could understand it. If it is ok for the US to meddle in Russian elections, why can't Russians meddle in the US elections? Perhaps the two presidents will agree to cease meddling, but I won't bet my socks on it.

They made a move forward in Syria, too, by approving the agreement prepared by their teams in Amman, Jordan. For a first time, this agreement contains a declaration in favour of the territorial integrity of one, undivided Syria; this is an important Russian achievement. If

carried out, the agreement will bring a ceasefire to South-Western Syria, in the area adjacent to Jordanian border and to the Israeli armistice line on the Golan Heights.

In a surprising move, President Trump agreed that the area would be patrolled by Russian military police. This suggestion had been hotly argued against by the Israelis. Despite their frequent visits to Moscow, they really trust only the US. There should be American troops on the ground in Syria, and no Russian troops close to our lines are acceptable, said Israeli politicians. If indeed Russian military police will patrol the area, the Israelis will eat a big fat frog.

There is an additional nuance: the Russian military police in Syria have been staffed with Chechens, who are good fighters, Muslim by faith, and devoted to President Putin – though he fought them, defeated them, and brought them back under Kremlin rule. There was a time when the enemies of Russia would profess their love of Chechens, but not anymore. Now their own leader Ramzan Kadyrov, the son of their previous rebel president and a former rebel himself is a strong supporter of Putin, and a subject of a hate campaign by Western liberals – and by Russian nationalists. Placement of Chechens in the military police in Syria is a success of Putin's national policies, especially relevant in the light of a new development.

This week, the Russian authorities blocked public access to the Russian far right nationalist site *Sputnik and Pogrom*, as you can read in the column of my worthy colleague [Anatoly Karlin](#). It's got its name from (allegedly) the only two Russian words that have entered English dictionaries. They are Nazi sympathisers, like the Ukrainian nationalists, and that is not a popular view in Russia, which bore the brunt of fight with Nazis. Their chief editor published a column on June 22, saying that every good Russian was happy when the Germans invaded their country.

They are also extreme anti-Communists, and this is also not too popular a view in Russia. This site had been established with help of Western secret services to sow discord between Russian citizens of different ethnic origin, just like the US-sponsored Radio Liberty did in the Soviet days, and the Germans during the war it, too. They do instigate hostility between Russians and Ukrainians, between Russians and the people of the Caucasus.

Typically for such political organisations, despite the site's name (*pogrom* was, after all, an anti-Jewish riot), they are quite pro-Jewish and fervently pro-Zionist. Otherwise, the CIA wouldn't dare support them. However, they always have something bad to say about Putin (they hate him) and the Chechens and their leader.

Now we see that Putin was right in encouraging the Chechens to fight for Russia. It is indeed a good idea to use Sunni Muslims as a police force in this heavily Sunni Muslim area being liberated from ISIS, and Chechens are known as fierce fighters that nobody wants to mess with. It is better to have them on the side of Moscow than on the side of its enemies, and it is definitely worth while to block the *Sputnik and Pogrom*, leaving moral considerations aside.

The two presidents spoke about North Korea. Some years ago, Russians had supported sanctions against DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the official name of North Korea), and the Americans had no problem in passing a sanctions-enforcing resolution in the Security Council. Not anymore. Last month, the Russians made a [radical shift on Korea](#).

Now they are strongly against sanctions likely to economically strangle the country and definitely against military action there. So, the Russian position has become quite close to the North Korean one, surprisingly more so than that of the Chinese, although Chinese trade with Korea dwarfs the Russian trade. If the Americans want the North Koreans to stop their nuclear tests, Putin said to Trump, they should refrain from carrying out large-scale military exercises. The Russians also want to encourage North-South dialogue. Such dialogue had been very successful and popular in its time, but then the US interfered in South Korean elections and blocked pro-dialogue politicians. The Northern rulers, however, would like the dialogue to resume with unification of Korea in mind. The Russians and their Chinese allies object greatly to the American THAAD missile defence system being installed in South Korea.

On Ukraine, the presidents agreed to establish a special bilateral channel of communications between the US special envoy and his Russian counterpart. They also confirmed their faith in the Minsk agreements, and this is an important diplomatic achievement for the Russians. However, these agreements did not prevent Kiev troops shelling the cities of Donbass.

To sum it up, Putin and Trump managed to save the day, despite all odds. Their immediate achievements are indeed modest, but they established the ground for progress. Future steps will depend mainly on Trump's ability to withstand the pressure, to set himself free from his minders. He is the first American president experiencing such a continuous media onslaught, and he still stands. It seems that his [advisers](#) urge him to surrender to his enemies in the media and in the congress, but he is a stubborn man. He also discovered that in Vladimir Putin, he can have a real friend and partner.

The world has changed: in 1980s, the Russians were happy that their leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, had met with Ronald Reagan and that he was admired and lionised by Western media. They thought it natural that Gorbachev admires Reagan. Then, the Western support was a real asset for a Russian politician. Gorbachev came to power in aftermath of Margaret Thatcher's blessing.

Now, the Russians are happy that they have a leader who can withstand any pressure, a leader who is admired for his strength. If he is hated in the West, they feel he is doing something right. Probably the Western media, if they want to undermine Putin, should begin to sing him dithyrambs.

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