

## TRANSCRIPT

# "PROVOCATEUR, GENIUS, SCOUNDREL: A FRANK DISCUSSION WITH THE INIMITABLE GLEB PAVLOVSKY"

*A conversation with Gleb Pavlovsky*

*Moderator: Stephen Holmes*

*Recorded September 14, 2015*

## **ANNOUNCER:**

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## **LEONARD BENARDO:**

This is a wonderful opportunity-- to have a conversation-- with-- Gleb Pavlovsky. And I-- and I thank Stephen Holmes for-- being willing to have or take part in this conversation with Gleb. Gleb's gonna be around tomorrow to an event that I and Ivan Krastev, who should be here momentarily, are putting on on propaganda. Some of Gleb's native soil. And so, we're thrilled to have him with us. Gleb was born in Odessa pre-Saakashvili. (LAUGH) And has had-- an illustrious career as a dissident of some sorts-- as a longstanding public intellectual and perhaps most prominently as what they call--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **LEONARD BENARDO:**

As what they call in Russian a political technologist, which *Spin Doctor* does not adequately-- translate, unfortunately. But we'll speak more about that. Gleb has been running his foundation for effective policies-- for a number of years now. Was--

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some say the sort of chief ideologist for Vladimir Vladimirovich.

But was cast out of the Kremlin in April, 2011 for reasons that perhaps-- Steve will inquire into. Some say because of his patronage of Medvedev. But I assume that there're many other reasons as well. And Gleb Olegovich works now very much in the role of political commentator-- in a wide range of media. And we're just very fortunate-- to have him here with us in New York.

Stephen Holmes is the Walter E. Meyer professor of law at NYU. And Stephen is an old friend of-- of many of us. At-- at one point in his career in fact, he-- he took time off to work for this vaunted foundation in Budapest. Short lived, but-- but-- but-- but from all--

## **VICTOR:**

What-- short?

## **LEONARD BENARDO:**

--accounts--

## **VICTOR:**

Who said short? Spent \$11 million. (LAUGH)

## **LEONARD BENARDO:**

(BACKGROUND VOICE) So again, I was talking about the temporal aspect, Victor. But n-- (LAUGH) nonetheless, I remember Steve's home very well in the Buda Hills, lovely.

## **MALE VOICE:**

Right, that's true. Right.

## **LEONARD BENARDO:**

But-- Steve has written widely on liberalism, on anti-liberalism, on Benjamin Constant and liberalism. Has spent a number of years now focused on questions of security and law. Had a center set up at NYU that's somewhere else now. I don't know where-- national secur-- is it-- somewhere? That's--

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## MALE VOICE:

Yeah, at Fordham.

## LEONARD BENARDO:

It's at Fordham University, on national security and law. And-- continues to-- to write-- sometimes on Russia, in fact. And has written several pieces-- recently on the question of so-called imitation democracy and imitation authoritarianism-- as they apply-- to Russia. But-- I'm thrilled that-- that-- that Stephen has agreed to be Gleb's interlocutor, and-- and thank you for that. So without further ado, Steve, I'm gonna hand things over to you. This is a conversation, as Gleb and I discussed earlier. And there will be ample opportunity for-- all of us to-- to contribute to it.

## STEPHEN HOLMES:

So I-- I'm just gonna start the conversation and then others will also chime in. I think all of us-- the basic thing all of us want to hear is how we should be thinking about Russia today and Putin today. How we got where we are and where we're going. So there's many ways to approach this. But I think, particularly because of your background, one way to start is what do we make of Putin's popularity?

What is popularity in Russia? What meaning does it have? Why is he so popular? Is he so popular? And-- and what is the political consequences and-- your estimation of the f-- of the future of this popularity, to the extent that it exists? So?

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

There were kind of two introductions.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And one presupposes I should talk about myself and (BACKGROUND VOICE) tell you something about myself, and the other that I should talk about Putin. (LAUGH)

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

So is there a compromise we can find? Is there a possibility of a compromise?

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

So the word, "Putin" (LAUGH) actually I found-- in my diary, in my work books, back in 1991 and it was spelled with a mistake. It was Pudín, with a D.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

But what was actually written Pudín-- and then president and a question mark.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And-- this (UNINTEL)--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

--kind of-- was connected to the trip of my fellow dissident Igranoff (PH) to a conference, where he met this very timid-- kind of sheepish man. And-- nonetheless, he told me that this might be-- this is a president, this might be a president. And that's-- I forgot about that.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

At that time, I was 40 years old.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And by that time, I had lived through two small lifetimes.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And one life was in Somerscot (PH)--

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--in 1970s.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And another life was the life in independent media in the 1980s.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And that was the creation of newspaper *Kommersant* and the agency Post Factum.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- I had no-- contacts with the state other than the fact that I was searched.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And in the '90s, I started working for-- power, for powers to be.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And it lost it--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--for 15 years. It's been a long-- time.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

And perhaps today I'm not going to go into great detail in-- into the topic of propaganda.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But-- what I want to remark upon, that by propaganda people often mean the loss of political control.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And Putin could be-- kind of could lean towards that. But again-- all politicians-- lean towards that.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

I have been reading a lot of memoirs about the Revolution of 1917.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- the most interesting memoirs, of course, are the memoirs of those who were on the losing side.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And they always explained their failures-- by propaganda, by the success of propaganda. In that particular case by Bolshevik propaganda.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And recently, I have been thinking how it was even possible in the country where there were no radio, no television and the majority of population was illiterate.

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And it-- by that, I don't mean that-- propaganda here is meaningless. It's-- that I-- we often-- when we say, "Propaganda--" indicate-- politics that we kind of lost, that got out of hand.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And that perhaps was my-- sin in the past few years because I also kind of let-- politics-- slide out of my hands.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

But-- even though all the elements of-- propaganda-- policy in terms of-- media and how it's-- applicable to the media was handled by me and at some point passed from my hands.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

But it wasn't-- it didn't carry really-- a kind of separate meaning because at that time-- I thought up about the actual stabilization and-- turning into some sort of a normal-- way of life, as compared to what we had before.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And I wouldn't follow-- here a simple way because-- in the '80s and even-- in the '70s, I-- I read translations of American-- specialists in propaganda, early ones such as Lippman, Bernays. And-- I had-- a very, very vivid interest in how-- they applied-- the findings to politics.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

And I was very interested in media engineering and communicative engineering and the opportunities that they give to politics.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But that was the period when our power and politics were held in completely different hands.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So I would like to understand-- what is the expectation of where I should concentrate.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

I've been actually--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--known four--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Or did we have four or (BACKGROUND VOICE) three presidents? Four.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And I worked very closely with three of them.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)



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**TRANSLATOR:**

And prior to working with them, actually president was sort of-- a kind of-- c-- cursing word, if you will. It was-- you know, not a polite word.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So what would you like to hear from me?

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

So-- we didn't coordinate-- of course, beforehand. (BACKGROUND VOICE) But-- I think just following up on what you've just said, these three presidents-- I think just would be very useful, interesting for us for you to tell the story of these-- the three presidents. Some particular events of working with-- Yeltsin, Putin and Medvedev and how different it was. So-- maybe about the different elects-- maybe about the moments in which they were elected, '96 and so on. This would be one thing. Your own experience with working with these three men.

**QUESTION:**

And could I just add one thing, Steve--

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

Please.

**QUESTION:**

--to (UNINTEL) because there're some people here who perhaps don't realize that the election in '96 was stolen, was completely stolen. And that Gleb, you-- you played-- a rather, or shall we say, a not insignificant role in-- in helping that theft.

(BACKGROUND VOICE) So-- so-- so just getting some sense of why and how would be hugely useful.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Oh, here there (BACKGROUND VOICE) are no-- contradictions here at this point with us.

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

It's-- in reality, I started working with Yeltsin and with the presidential administration in '96 in relation to the elections.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

Even though the-- Foundation for Effective Politics at this point has been in existence for about half a year, we had the firm, but it was kind of a very-- rigid term. And I even-- talked to people and gave them two days to think about whether they would want to work with the government with the power because-- at that point for us, it was a very-- s-- a very big move.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And two people refused-- to follow us there.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

But-- I have to say that, at that point, there was no talk about-- to-- you know, stealing the elections.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

The point was to take all the-- kind of capacities, all the-- strengths that the candidate has and put it under one management.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

To make a point-- first and foremost-- the media that did take part in that campaign-- was non-governmental media. So that was a project of the non-government media, first and foremost.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So it was a rather kind of narrow slice of the market-- in terms of independently owned media outlets. It was the TV channel Enterve (PH), it was the-- publishing house Kommersant.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And exactly those people, they created the headquarters that ran the rest of the media.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

This task to kind of-- reach this optimality-- this optimal level was so interesting for us that, at that point, it created an attraction. It attracted very, very serious, interesting people to us.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And at that point-- it seemed like we were talking about preserving-- at an opport-- had an opportunity to preserve the state that existed at that point. (MIC NOISE) It was the Russian Federation, it was five years old. And its-- creation, its existence-- was not recognized by the opponents.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And I also was part of this-- kind of-- segment of-- part of the people that did not fully accept-- the existence of that state. And for me-- it was a very interesting move. It was an interesting step to take.

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And-- there was also a moment that perhaps was very kind of difficult and is difficult to grasp for people who didn't live that at the time. But it was a certain gravitas of this intelligentsia crowd of-- of this-- kind of movement of this fashion of momentum that existed at that time.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

In that there was a challenge to the older generation that-- generations that used to take all the decisions for us. And-- at the same time, were not able to decide anything.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

In-- in, like, at the foundation, there was this kind of a motion of trying to move them away and tell them, "Move away, you don't need-- you're not needed anymore. We don't need you."

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

The people who wanted to kind of k-- that wanted to cancel the elections were the ones who wanted to steal them.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And actually, Yeltsin-- already launched the procedure to cancel the elections. And-- there was kind of a coup in the headquarters. And-- at that point-- Tobias (?) was able to persuade him-- not to do that. However, the process was under way.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

The State Duma has been already closed. (SIREN)

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

S-- so and people who participated in this endeavor had very different motives and did very different motives.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And I-- I don't consider those people having some sort of an alibi. But-- the point is that-- after '96-- there was this change-- in terms of-- how-- c-- how-- how everything worked. And that-- there was a machine created which we see even today-- on how to build political campaigns using media.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And it was very interesting to dissuade Yeltsin because at the beginning he was not at all sure it was going to work out.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And it was interesting--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--that we had-- the numbers and we actually-- we showed him models-- on how we could use-- the collective fears and how we could build coalition-- coalitions with his-- electorate competition. So that already existed.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

Then we didn't--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But we didn't know and we were not confident that this is going to work because it hasn't been done before.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And Yeltsin believed. And for me, that was a very serious motive.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Perhaps there is a certain--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--a certain Freudian component here.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

You couldn't let the old man down. You had to save him.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- Zyuganov, to us-- did not really represent-- the-- meaningful-- kind of-- figure. He seemed to be an artificial product of-- other figures-- collective figures of electorate.

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**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

Zyuganov was the-- the communist party candidate. (BACKGROUND VOICE) So-- but-- but Gleb, to-- to what extent does this, in your mind, represent the original sin that engendered the kind of political tech-- no, the kind of manipulation that would be so pervasive afterwards? Was this, for you, the original sin?

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Well, I am (BACKGROUND VOICE)-- I do not know politics within manipulation--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Even Gandhi-- manipulated--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--politics.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So there is a component of manipulation--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--in politics always. The problem is dosage.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

The problem here that there is a risk to lose--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

--the primary goal of politics.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And also the emergence of the block-- in power that is protected from any kinds of counter measures, from any kind of checks and balances.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

It's unjust.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

That the people cannot question what (UNINTEL)--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And they couldn't.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

We controlled all the media.

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

So just following up on this, and (BACKGROUND VOICE) particularly on this, in the concept of collective fear, (FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)-- so is it-- un-- w-- under what conditions can you arouse fear or use fear or manipulate fear in order to be elected, but then lose pa-- lose control of the fear? Is fear something that you can control, that-- that-- that a political technologist can control? Or can it-- can the political power lose-- start fear-- start-- waves of fear that it loses control of? This might have to (UNINTEL), I don't know. I don't think he has a concept of sin, probably. But--



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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

Well, in Russia in '96-- it was-- there was a fear and it was very-- kind of scary without political technologists.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

Five years-- have passed from the time where several people met at the Laerska Pusha (PH) and signed a piece of paper that effectively transferred citizens from one country to another without any big disagreement. Kind of like serfs.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

At that time-- those decisions that were made at the Laerska Pusha were not supported. And I don't remember exactly, but close to 70% of the population were opposed to them.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

It was a ver-- there was also a war in the caucuses and that was a very scary war.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And first and foremost, it showed to the electorate that-- it was not protected.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And the other side also saw the emergence of their own technologists, if you will-- that-- tapped into terror as a huge resource and kept kind of upping the ante and kept-- using that resource-- for Chechnya's sake.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

By-- here I mean such people as Udugov and Basayev.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And most of-- men-- kinda br-- breadwinners in the country were very-- scared because they were not-- certain that they can continue provide for this-- they can't continue to provide for their families.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Theoretically, one can envision-- a situation where-- politically-- people would-- people in power would-- admit the failures of the early '90s and start this process of demining-- those fears. But, at that point-- in '96 nobody wanted to do that. Nobody wanted to talk about that.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And Yeltsin could not be such a politician and Zyuganov-- neither could be that politician.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- at that point, the paradox was that the voter wanted to vote for somebody who

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already had power. So that was a very-- interesting moment because-- that's what-- the voter demanded.

## **STEPHEN HOLMES:**

Just-- there's a story of-- one of Gleb's stories (BACKGROUND VOICE) about meeting a voter who was supporting-- this is you, I'm quoting you now, who was supporting Zyuganov. And-- he ask her how she was gonna vote and she said, "I'm gonna vote for Yeltsin." "Why are you voting for Yeltsin if you support Zyuganov?"

And she said, "Well, when Zyuganov's president, I'll vote for him." (LAUGH) So this is as if you-- you orient this what you just said, another way. You're-- and-- and it's as if-- public support actually follows power, as opposed to creating power. It orients toward who has power, who you think has power.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

One of (BACKGROUND VOICE) the surprises of-- our scenario, and it was even before the elections-- was that the communist electorate-- did not trust people outside of power. Ideologically, they liked Zyuganov, but they wanted the power immediately. And the immediate power was in the hands of Yeltsin.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And this political problem-- continues to exist to this day.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

No, and actually-- that-- situation continues to-- exist today. And-- what we see that people-- kind of outside of power-- do not become part of the political process. That if you will, that political dialect (?) it only presumes-- something that happens inside the present power structure.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And I'm afraid that in 1996-- we were exactly the same. Exactly-- like those-- communist grandmothers.

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

We didn't think critically that we actually wanted power prior to deciding why the power is needed.

## **STEPHEN HOLMES:**

Victor, go ahead. Victor-- Shazinski (PH).

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **VICTOR SHAZINSKI:**

I think that-- money bought elections for Yeltsin. You just stated-- mentioned big money. And money then-- send Yeltsin (BACKGROUND VOICE) home, providing him security and bought his successors. And the successors (UNINTEL) money eventually. It was very simple.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **MALE VOICE:**

Voters. This is such bullshit, you know? The real thing is behind. (BACKGROUND VOICE) The real thing is-- (UNINTEL PHRASE)--

## **MALE VOICE:**

You dealt with.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

There was-- there was money from all sides.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

But money bought--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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(STEPHEN HOLMES: UNINTEL)

**VICTOR SHAZINSKI:**

Without money-- Yeltsin would (BACKGROUND VOICE) never, you know, stand for this miracle that we're saying. So--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**VICTOR SHAZINSKI:**

When was-- when was the moment in which money decided support Yeltsin in the second election? Where was the moment and why? And what was the deal? You probably were one that was dealing with that deal, you know? So tell us, right, so-- or don't waste time, you know?

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

There's a very interesting moment and it is widely known.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And I don't think that it is-- understood correctly.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

There is a very--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--f-- famous--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--famous-- kind of agreement-- of Russian oligarchs in Davos--

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--at-- in the beginning of '96--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

In February of '96. (COUGH)

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Which indeed was organized by Boris Berezovsky.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

That made--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--the decision to save Yeltsin and to put the bet on Yeltsin.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

There-- what is less known that--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--there was a second agreement in May of '96 by the same people that, just in case they decided to support Zyuganov and also gave him money.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

But-- what-- was happening is--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--that-- that their support-- was granted in exchange-- for-- very big bonuses. Boris Berezovsky-- received-- Sibneft-- after the elections.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**VICTOR:**

These-- can you release these eight names? Can you release-- (BACKGROUND VOICE) remember and-- and do (UNINTEL PHRASE) Berezovsky? (SIGH)  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Some people have--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--passed on, but there were--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**VICTOR:**

Usinski (PH).

**TRANSLATOR:**

Zmynansky (PH), Usinski--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

There was an-- a president of the bank (BACKGROUND VOICE) named Bagradof

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(PH), the bank--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

### **TRANSLATOR:**

Also Hadarkovsky (PH).

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

### **TRANSLATOR:**

I think there were more people-- there.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

### **TRANSLATOR:**

I don't think that (UNINTEL)--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

### **TRANSLATOR:**

--at that point was--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

### **TRANSLATOR:**

--and independent--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

### **TRANSLATOR:**

--figure. Maybe Friedman.

### **GLEB PAVLOVSKY:**

Friedman.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)



---

**TRANSLATOR:**

But-- it is important to understand that those people at that point were just only-- multimillionaires. They were not billionaires yet.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- the money was actually-- in-- the state assets.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

In industry--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

In agricultural assets.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And actually, some of those financial interests, some of this money supported Zyuganov--

**MALE VOICE:**

Statement. Statement.

**TRANSLATOR:**

Correct.

**MALE VOICE:**

That's personal.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

---

**MALE VOICE:**

Yeah, but the real money come from the IMF (?). In fact, financial support-- the cash come from the IMF.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

The problem is--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--that the (UNINTEL)--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--and the (UNINTEL)--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--have the knowhow of how to manage and how to transfer this money into politics and how to use media to that effect.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

It would be incorrect to say that all the money in the country supported-- Yeltsin. That actually, at that time, it was a minority group that supported Yeltsin. So that was the money of the minority.

---

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

So you would not use the phrase, (BACKGROUND VOICE) "Stolen election," to refer to '96? You would not use that? Would you or not? Or you don't think it's a relevant (UNINTEL)?

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

I don't think it's a relevant--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--phrase. And let me say why.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And I think it perhaps--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--would have been better--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--for Yeltsin to kind of fell-- back in 1996 and to have a small civil war, a petite civil war, if you will. (NOISE)

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Without a doubt-- Zyuganov could not have-- held anything.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

---

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- he would be forced to call back-- the troops from Chechnya and to deploy them inside the country.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And there (NOISE) would be--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--there would emerge a person--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--like-- General Labitz (PH). (THROAT CLEAR)

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And, you know, a few bars after, we could have-- arrived to a democracy (UNINTEL). But again, maybe not.

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

Gleb, can I-- can I just cut in for-- it's Stephen, if I can, just one second. And then I (BACKGROUND VOICE) wanna turn to my close colleague, Tanya, who has several questions as well. But-- you do have several?

**TANYA:**

A number.

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

A number (LAUGH) of.

---

**TRANSLATOR:**

Yeah. Totally (UNINTEL).

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

I-- I just wanna fast forward, (BACKGROUND VOICE) if we can, to the present day. You have said repeatedly in the press that Putin and his operat (PH) are go-- are th-- have no idea where they're going. It's utter confusion. And I'm wondering is that because you are no longer there or are there other reasons? (LAUGH)

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

I actually don't know what I would have done-- if I were there.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

The only real option is to get some large money and run away with it somewhere.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And there are a lot of people--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--who are actually busy doing that. There is a long line of such people.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And the problem is not that they lack-- wise counsel.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

---

**TRANSLATOR:**

Putin is actually moving in a very--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--logical way, in a much more logical way-- than we could have offered him five years ago.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

The point is that with this power, that is-- really extraordinary that is not contained by anything or anybody, and that actually has-- many different gadgets, both media gadgets and financial gadgets at its disposal, the question is where does it support-- does its support come from? And that cannot be-- a support by political technologists or media.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- it has to engage-- the-- population. But at the same time, it can't because it can't allow elections. And those two things-- lead to the situation that we have today-- in terms of both Crimea and the Russian Television today.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And it then logically needs to build-- another cumbersome administrative apparatus. And it doesn't know how to do that.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

---

## TRANSLATOR:

The power practices what I-- called kind of a limited tyranny, where it zeroes on certain interests-- or people and destroys them. And it does not need to create another-- communist party of the Soviet Union. Other people kind of make their own conclusions from what has happened to-- to those who were subjected to this limited tyranny.

## STEPHEN HOLMES:

So Tanya?

## TANYA:

You-- every point you say generates so many questions, but I just (BACKGROUND VOICE) wanna backtrack to-- your comment that-- everyone wants to vote for people who are already in power. And I wonder if that's a bit of a cop out if the truth is not-- I mean, I don't know if there is a truth. But if-- this is really not a result of your and your colleagues' work of creating this fear of change in people.

And fr-- frankly, you probably didn't have to do much because people already fear change. So this is the reason (NOISE) people keep on voting for the same people, because they fear what will happen when someone else comes in power. It's, like, the person in is bad, but they-- but the next one might be even worse.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

But it was not always so.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

In 1999 there was a huge crisis.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

--the crisis in kind of the mass conscience of the voter. (THROAT CLEAR)  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

I would say--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--the (UNINTEL) (BACKGROUND VOICE) that-- the kind of-- mainstream thinking wasn't liberal. So the foundation was not democratic.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

However, there were many options and it could have worked not just for Putin, but (COUGH) for-- for another person.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So again, there was fear.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And there was a fear that stemmed from-- a dissolution of Yugoslavia. And those events were transferred onto themselves by the Russian voters who perceived it-- as-- the situation where their turn could be next.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But that was not coming from--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)



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**TRANSLATOR:**

--the power. At that point, the power wanted--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--to get rid of the Yugoslav problem.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- because that was preventing us from-- gettin' engaged into the main question that was the question of a successor.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But at that point, the majority of the voters were against the power. At that point, that time, they wanted something else, something different.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And if you look at Putin's campaign at that time, at-- at this (UNINTEL) of the Putin campaign, at that point, it was a victory of the Putin's candidate who stormed his way into cre-- into the Kremlin.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

It wasn't the vote for the lesser evil-- such as it was in '96.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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## TRANSLATOR:

--it was a candidate who-- at least-- partially was imitating but partially, sincerely was going forward with this kind of populist agenda.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

So there was no single factor that you can always lean upon (THROAT CLEAR)-- in elections. Not fear, not anything else. All of them were differently. And I am-- taking upon myself to break any one factor if-- if it needs to be done.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And-- in-- the country-- in our country-- that we live in-- the voters-- they have a thousand challenges. They-- generally lean-- towards a strong-- group, a strong-- power, strength. Not necessarily in its brutal-- sense, but-- people who-- can deliver what they're talking about.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And one of the-- tragedies of-- 1999 is that the main opponents, the Luzhkov and Primakov's group-- they-- did not-- come out with this democratic agenda. They kind of pretended to have-- force, which they didn't have. And it was very easy to-- call their bluff. So in a sense, they set themselves up.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

So if-- since this is-- this event is at least partially about me, I would allow myself a personal-- reminiscence. My grandfather-- died-- in a year when-- Kennedy was shot. And-- he remembered and recalled how (BACKGROUND VOICE) in 1917-- Kerensky-- who was the representative of the interim government, president of the interim go-- prime minister of interim government, he came over and my grandfather actually voted for social revolutionaries, the party of Kerensky. So he voted for that list of candidates.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- Odessa-- prior to (UNINTEL) having great sense of humor in the sense of irony, so what Kerensky was telling-- to-- people in Odessa that-- all the humanities eyes are on you, people of Odessa. And that you are going to-- live in this French fairytale.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And my grandfather was absolutely livid and he left this meeting. He was actually the (COUGH) member of the the committee of this party. And I later-- decided to look at the newspaper s-- of-- of the period because I thought that maybe he had invented a kind of-- did not say-- what was-- what transpired correctly.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But (LAUGH) was one word that my grandfather-- kind of did not hear-- and it was omitted from his-- ren-- rendition. He said that-- Kerensky what actually said that you're going to live in the fairytale of a French Revolution.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

The French Revolution is-- the topic that inspires perhaps a very scary fairytale.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

The point was that Kerensky's government declared a very tough agenda. But they're-- they were not able to deliver on that (NOISE) agenda. So there existed that gap between this toughness of the agenda and the character. And in that gap-- always politicians dream-- that they can then use it to their advantage.

**MALE VOICE:**

But can-- can I make a point because-- this is just continuing on this, because you made the point, I want to be sure that I got you right. You said there is one time (BACKGROUND VOICE) when the (UNINTEL) won in Russia. And it was in 2000 with the presidential elections of Putin. So he was-- Yeltsin's candidate who was elected with the anti-Yeltsin vote. And in a certain way, this is where basically the major-- secret of his was, because Luzhkov and others decided to play the status quo power?

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**MALE VOICE:**

Am I getting you right?

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

One of the problems-- in-- in this electoral democracy that in such important elections, the main candidates were not represented by parties.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So the competition, the struggle, if you will-- was carried out between Putin, Luzhkov and Primakov. And Luzhkov and Primakov were in alliance.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

And Putin's--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--prominence-- came from sort of left of center agenda. And that agenda was also then appropriated by Putin later, where those social payments-- became-- associated with the way of-- power, with the way of governance, with the way of that brutal strength and force.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Primakov was an old-- man at that time. And when he was trying-- to get himself into that kind of power-- image-- it was very easy to-- I remind him that he just had an operation, and Luzhkov never really looked and never could try on this power image (THROAT CLEAR) upon himself without being laughable.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So it is conceivable to imagine that at that time-- during those elections-- Kremlin's opponents could have come up with a liberal state-- agenda. But at that point, there was no one who really could formulate and offer that agenda.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Okay. And I-- what-- what I want to say is that media is not some sort of an absolute that can-- always carry the day. Media-- go into the gaps, into kinds of-- situations where-- something could be exploited. And-- and that's how those gaps-- actually get worked out by the media.

---

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

Adam.

**ADAM:**

Putin has-- thrown-- a lifeline to the Assad regime in Syria. (BACKGROUND VOICE) And its involvement in Syria seems to be deepening, rather than lessening. And in fact-- Russia seems to be citing the emergence of ISIS as-- as a vindication of its policies in Syria. I can see three reasons that have been put forward to explain the intensity of this alliance. Defiance of the west, the legacy of a Cold War alliance and a fear of Sunni Jihadism-- in-- in Chechnya and so on. Ha-- h-- how do you understand-- the persistence of this alliance and-- and Russia's commitment to the Assad regime?

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

I think-- one needs to look for simpler explanations-- in this context.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Our power structure, as any weak power structure, is very sensitive--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--to kind of--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--hallways or spaces that remain unoccupied.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And it doesn't mean that-- it will not make a mistake. And it might consider-- this particular space a weak space and go into that, where-- it really is not the case.

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Well, in Syria--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--w-- what is important is--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--there exists a small one, but yet-- a Russia base which is the only base in the Mediterranean.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And it is not connected to the Cold War. It is connected to the symbolism.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And there is no simple situation where on the one side, there are the opponents on the Kremlin, on the other side there're allies. The situation is very complex.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

There is the factor of Israel, which is again a very complex factor all in itself.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And Iran.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

And all of that together from the point of view of the Kremlin tacticians-- creates a certain playing field.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

I do not think (BACKGROUND VOICE) that they have an understanding of how the victory might look like in this situation--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And I don't think that-- our preserving-- Assad-- is all in itself for them an absolute goal.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

I think at some point, he can disappear.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Then that's part of the conditions of-- of the task of-- of--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And what is important today that the west cannot come up and formulate a single position on this question.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- the absence of this position, again, increases-- the playing field and the potential of-- what can be done with it.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)



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**TRANSLATOR:**

And there are always calculations and considerations. But I-- would not really rely on those kind of undeclared clandestine perceived calculations of the Kremlin because m-- more than often, they do not come true. (THROAT CLEAR)

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

One-- another argument (BACKGROUND VOICE) that's used in the press to explain the latest Russian-- moves into Syria is-- is a way of distracting from the Ukrainian problem. Whe-- which seems--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

--which seems-- (BACKGROUND VOICE) so if you could comment on that, yes--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

And where we are with the Ukraine.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Yes, of course, this factor exists of distancing-- from the problem of Ukraine. And this is, again, a kind of part of the conditions of this game.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

I do not know if that explains such a tough decision-- sending personnel-- to the Mediterranean basin.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Because-- so some internal taboos-- that exist even for our-- Kremlin power-- are violated by this action.

---

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

This-- option, we might recall, was even considered in Iraq in 2002.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But there were objections. And the main objection was the memory of Afghanistan.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

The-- the-- the problem with--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- (BACKGROUND VOICE) and the problem is that, at a certain point, our Kremlin player-- is beginning to perceive the risk and-- lower the risk-- t-- so that he can play because this energy, this desire to play-- all-- kind of takes (THROAT CLEAR) over the critical thinking and critical estimation of the conditions.

**MALE VOICE:**

Wouldn't there be also an argument that loyalty and (BACKGROUND VOICE) (UNINTEL PHRASE) in the moment in which the America basically showed itself being disloyal to its allies, basically Putin is staying with his allies. And this is a very strong message in a region where basically loyalty is perceived as critically important.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And our actually power-- political power--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

--comes-- from the presumption of loy-- a loyalty that needs to be explained separately. It's this loyalty of allies and to allies.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Well-- the power also maintains the right to-- kind of-- edit the list of allies and take them off and add them without actually warning them and telling them that they are on the list.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And actually-- kind of-- an extreme example of-- what happened-- and how this loyalty-- plays out in politics is 2004, where-- in Ukraine-- we carried out exemplary stupid policy in support of an ally.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So Putin has--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--asked Kuchma many times maybe another p-- guy--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--(UNINTEL PHRASE) and he came up with names.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But Kuchma said no.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

And Russia--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Russia continued to engage and play that game and we know the results.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

I don't have really-- the-- the data or the information today that Assad is perceived as such an-- ally as-- that-- that this definition of an ally is applicable to him in-- in quite (THROAT CLEAR) the same way.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

In-- the end of the day, how is he better than Milosevic--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- Milosevic (BACKGROUND VOICE) we kind of-- left and got rid of very easily without major-- major issues.

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

Gleb, can I ask-- Oh, so go ahead. S-- s-- I-- I just wanted to, sorry, go back to 2004. (BACKGROUND VOICE) K-- one-- we're all interested in Ukraine today and what role does the Ukrainian situation play in the Kremlin's world view. But maybe you could go back and tell us how you experienced the Orange Revolution. What was your experience of the oran-- rev-- revolution from inside the Kremlin?

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Well, that story-- does not look the same as 2014 at all.

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

One should not forget that--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--during those-- Orange Revolution, the entire Ukrainian vertical-- of power stayed in place.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And people-- out in the streets, they did play a role. But it perhaps was a role of an argument of one of the power players, on one of the sides of power.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And I at that po-- point, of course, was part of the team that played--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--on the (UNINTEL PHRASE)-- side in Moscow-- Moscow's part of the team. That's how I define us.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

What was unexpected is this-- emergence of street politics, appearance of street politics.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Because at that point, from 1993, we did not have any street politics for about ten

---

years.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And for us, it was really unexpected-- the degree of that internal break-- between-- the power structures in Ukraine that were not really connected with economic or other issues.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And our expectation when it emerged, when it came out-- was that Kuchma-- was going to be like a magician who has always kept a genie in the bottle and is gonna put him back. And Kuchma did-- did not do it, was not doing it.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And we saw the activity of western embassies there, but we did not see the activity of Kuchma. And that is exactly at that precise moment where this inflated role of western embassies-- kind of emerged and be-- became to be-- be-- began to be discussed in-- in what was happening in the Ukraine.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And what was interesting that in 1996-- it really did not make any difference for us that the U.S. ambassador regularly met (NOISE) with Zyuganov. And what was interesting, those meetings happened and at the same building where most group headquarters-- happened to be together with some of the mayors offices. So-- and it's interesting that, you know, they were all together in the same building, the bank, the mayor's office. And-- (THROAT CLEAR) you know, we did not perceive it as something that was out of the ordinary.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And that, again, is-- kind of a story where, if a politician is failing at something, he is looking (NOISE) for an external reason.

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And in nineteen-- in two-- 2014-- Ukraine's-- power just collapsed-- (THROAT CLEAR) in maybe a mystical way, but I would say in a revolutionary way.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

But again, what's interesting that it collapsed in such a way that the revolution-- was not victorious.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And-- you know, the people who came into power and who-- became heads of-- government are-- are completely different people from the people who were organizing Midon (PH).

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

But for Kremlin, it was an absolutely impossible situation that the power collapses in such a way.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And in 20 years, there emerged this kind of thinking, this view that Ukraine is not quite a separate country. That it's some sort of-- of-- some sort of, like, an estate out there.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## TRANSLATOR:

And-- w-- it's interesting that it was not considered-- and it was not part of the idea of-- Russia taking over Ukraine.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

It-- it was-- kind of-- a situation where certain parts of Ukraine and its economy, such as energy, transit, finance, some sort of territorial parts were not considered quite separate from Russia.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And even today--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--you know, under the conditions of war-- it is a lot narrow, of course. But there exists kind of a sector of normal economic relationship with Ukraine, which is very interesting.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And it's not r-- restricted to just-- gas and gas transit. (THROAT CLEAR) It is-- also connected to military industrial complex.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And it's--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And there exists (BACKGROUND VOICE) this view and this perception that, as deeply ingrained-- in-- in-- in the psyche in-- in-- in how-- things-- work-- is the perception of-- Ukraine not-- having this-- exceptional s-- sovereignty. That-- there is a certain game, that there is a certain play going on. And we can talk about how is behind this, whether it's certain powers outside of Ukraine.

There are certain powers inside Ukraine who do not quite understand how the business works. But the point is that-- (NOISE) if we look at-- other countries, from example, Tajikistan or Turkmenia-- they are perceived as separate countries. And



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Ukraine-- and that's just a fact that needs to be explained. Ukraine has never really been-- perceived (THROAT CLEAR) as quite an exclusively separate ca-- sovereign country.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And-- it's interesting that-- Ukraine's own elite-- looks at the country as some sort of a project. That's exactly-- under this scenario that Saakashvili could-- have become the governor of Odessa. That it is a context of-- of some sort of a project, of some sort of a play, but not as a (UNINTEL) of a separate country.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And-- (THROAT CLEAR) it is the same logic that led-- to the appointment of-- Chairman Weerton (PH) as ambassador of Russia in Ukraine.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And Chairman Weerton here was, of course, perceived (THROAT CLEAR) as-- as-- a person representing business interests. And, as such, he could not just be appointed as-- an ambassador in our framework of thinking.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

It's difficult for me to talk about Ukraine because this is very personal for me.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

## **TRANSLATOR:**

And perhaps I would be glad if that transfer of Russian-- military personnel to Syria-- would help-- take them-- out of Donbas. (THROAT CLEAR)

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

But that is the methodology of our system.

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

Okay. You wanna ask another question?

**TANYA:**

I ha-- I have two. I think that--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

**TANYA:**

I think that Turkistan, first of all, would like to defer-- in (BACKGROUND VOICE)-- your claim that Russia treats it as a sovereign nation. I think many of the former repu-- Soviet republics would like to defer in that. But I'll leave it at that.

**MALE VOICE:**

What-- what is the theory in Tajikistan, 97% (BACKGROUND VOICE) of Tajikistanis align themselves--

**TANYA:**

With Russia? And 50 of them are living there currently? But anyway. (LAUGH) But-

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

Yeah, the s-- (BACKGROUND VOICE) and-- and-- that was just the s-- an aside for me. I don't wanna waste (BACKGROUND VOICE) valuable time with this. But I just had-- so you spoke about power so many different times in so many different ways. You could write a (UNINTEL) from this speech on power. But I'm just wondering-- did you have anything to do with these-- images of Putin on the tiger? Was that one of your projects (LAUGH)-- flying with the birds, et cetera?

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TANYA:**

Per-- perhaps it was conceived in--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

By-- (BACKGROUND VOICE) by the time-- by the time Putin (LAUGH) started flying  
(BACKGROUND VOICE) with the birds, I was not working--

**TANYA:**

So you don't take credit--

**TRANSLATOR:**

--with him in--

**TANYA:**

--as something (BACKGROUND VOICE) of your legacy, as someone to whom this  
power is so--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

No. I-- I think this is something deeply internal--

**TANYA:**

Well, (UNINTEL PHRASE)--

**TRANSLATOR:**

--that is playing out--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

No, I-- (BACKGROUND VOICE) I don't think (THROAT CLEAR) think so.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

I left-- the administration of President Medvedev-- f-- it's important (THROAT CLEAR) to point out.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Even though at that time I was confident that Putin is going to get into this trap of the third-- term.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But I just in case-- was always (THROAT CLEAR) saying, "Let's not do that. It's not-- helpful to do that--"  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- the first (LAUGH) thing that kind of gave me pause was--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--the appearance of naked Putin on-- on-- on the horse in 2010.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**MALE VOICE:**

Very handsome.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

And it could not have been-- it could not have been done--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--without some external advice. That was-- the expectation--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

It was some sort of manifestation--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--to break through--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--of this Russian (UNINTEL)--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And a desire--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--to say, "Goddammit, I'm young, I'm alive--"  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

"--I am strong."

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**TANYA:**

And since then it comes out in (UNINTEL)--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- it was absolutely not necessary for the premi-- the prime minister.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- back then in 2010 as the prime minister, he was in-- a relatively good situation.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And, you know, kind of-- pushing the limits here a little bit and-- he could still-- carry on with the message that, look-- we created this strong structure where-- taking it out of the crisis, we're going forward, et cetera.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And quite-- the opposite, (BACKGROUND VOICE) what happened is that he developed a fear--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

He became--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--afraid and (BACKGROUND VOICE)-- he became afraid and he had this-- notion that everything is falling apart.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

And nobody else had that--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And he started, you know-- kind of driving with those-- rok-- rockers or the wrong pe--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

You (LAUGH) know.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

With bikers--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

With bikers.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Not-- not--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And I understand this. I can-- relate when such-- when this happened, I would go--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

--to the nightclub.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But then I can-- understood very well that I'm trying to prove something to myself--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--here. And there was no-- huge risk there.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And all those things that-- now there's quite a lot of them des-- descending into the Black Sea.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

What can I say? It shows--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--that this person cannot manage his own decision.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

He made a decision in 2011.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)



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**TRANSLATOR:**

And he-- achieved an extraordinary success.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

At the first-- juncture-- at the elections.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And then-- almost immediately, he lost himself.

**MALE VOICE:**

Strange people happen to male when they turn 50. Simple. (LAUGH) It's very simple. I can assure (BACKGROUND VOICE) you. Men in my-- f-- I'm 70--

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

You know, d--

**MALE VOICE:**

--around--  
(OVERTALK)

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

There'll still be time afterwards for a critique of masculinity. I-- (LAUGH) t-- I-- b-- and it -- it's not-- unimportant, but-- but I think it might-- (BACKGROUND VOICE) it might be useful if I could go to my friend Alex.  
(OVERTALK)

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

Vicky and then-- and then Sanjay.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**ALEX:**

So-- I actually wanted to return to the very good question that Professor Holmes started this session with, which is about the significance of approval ratings and popular support in contemporary Russia. One of the paradoxes about Russia is that, on the one hand, it is an increasingly authoritarian state in which political power depends a lot on elite support, or deep state support.

On the other hand, there is a fanatical, systemic obsession with approval ratings and with ensuring that in every election, the party of power does better and better. What in your view, as a political technologist, is the connection between these two different kinds of vulnerability in Russia? On the one hand, there's elite issues. On the other hand, there is this obsession with popular approval ratings and support ratings. Why do approval ratings matter and how durable are they and why should we care, looking at Russia today?

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

I--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--don't really--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--want to kind of--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--develop this topic at the present time here. But I don't think that there exists a state, and that's why it's very important to fight for those other numbers and for those other factors.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

We always substitute-- power for state, the word for s-- for th-- s-- instead of the word, "State" we use the word, "Power--"

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And then--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--we develop a need to tie it, to anchor it somewhere. And today, it is anchored to the 86% approval rating of Putin.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So there is a factor of symbolic policy of the center. But there is also a factor where those 86% did come from.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And for a long time, for over ten years-- there is a certain-- there was a certain level of support of Putin, a kind of plateau that-- I know of (NOISE)-- from-- on-- on-- my remark-- and-- from me-- became known as Putin's majority. But it never quite reached that level.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So there were even-- kind of-- sociological-- research done that-- showed that there could be conceivably a 60% support-- to the-- to this power. But then from that 60%, we had this big jump.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

See, that also happens in states, in the-- in the-- in the states that do have governments. There could be a peak of support, but then-- it becomes to diminish.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

That--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--existed (BACKGROUND VOICE) with--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--(UNINTEL) junior, with-- Thatcher during th-- the Falkland campaign.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And usually--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--usually that peak of support is-- or could be placed in one year's time, maybe a year and a half.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But in our case, people developed a perception of a different power.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

And of a different attitude towards power.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And it did not-- cre-- it was not created-- and it was not related to the elections.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

It's very difficult--  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--now to-- make people go and vote. They don't want to go to elections.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

In-- in their view-- the power's not really-- supported by the elections. It is supported by the fact that-- a next Crimea.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

It's a different type of power.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And that is not going to be very simply changed.  
(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

It's a different type of legitimacy and it's a different type of agenda that is being dictated.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And-- what has never existed and has never happened is that readiness on grassroots levels-- to advocate and to proclaim their support-- for the power.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And we have-- hundreds and thousands of examples-- where quite ordinary people would lash out-- against the perception-- of attack not necessarily from Putin or for Kremlin, but for something mysterious that is their political heart. And they would be quite v-- wicious (SIC)-- vicious-- defending that.

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

So look, we just have ten minutes left, (BACKGROUND VOICE) if it's okay, so Vicky, maybe you wanna jump in?

**VICKY:**

Yes. (BACKGROUND VOICE) I wanna go back to a point you made a lot earlier in the conversation this evening-- when you spoke about your time working as a political technologist and how you were working for this idea of stability, for a more normal society, for living more normally than you have in the past.

And looking back particularly I guess at the time when you were working-- with-- the Medvedev presidency, to what extent was that successful or unsuccessful? You know, I'm thinking about the modernization agenda and so on. And-- and where are you now? Where are we now-- in Russia? What has worked and what hasn't worked from that drive for stability?

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

What-- what-- what is--

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--what is important--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--in-- in the Medvedev presidency, there was-- this illusion, as we came to understand it later that, for the first time in 20 years after the second term of Putin was over-- the Russian politics-- found some sort of a stable route. A way of development-- that was rational, that was stable, that was understandable. That that was an illusion, of course.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

There was a possibility-- of kind of-- hearing those declarations of Medvedev-- but not taking them really seriously because they were not completely prepared. The-- the agenda of modernization, this proposal of creating a unifying Euro-Atlantic-- block that would include both Europe and Russia, all of that was just a slogan that was really not-- a serious-- proposal.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So who--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--who was supposed to be doing all of that?

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Well, the political machine that was constructed during the two Putin's terms really precluded from going back to the people and engaging-- people.

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(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So all politics after that could only be some sort of elite politics, the political-- politics of elites.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And that, of course, showed itself and manifested itself-- in the creation of the Skolkovo Innovation Center.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And the main problem and what was considered to be a main problem and what was six months wasted for is finding the billionaire who would be-- become the patron of this project.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Now, what's (?) (BACKGROUND VOICE) really-- no appeal to this gigantic educated class in Russia to get involved, to get engaged in this pro-- project.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

They were supposed to wait.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)



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**TRANSLATOR:**

So there would be a center open for them and then-- they could go in there and d-- do something there.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But even, you know, during this-- stage of kind of-- feasibility studies and agreements-- the (UNINTEL) group that ultimately-- took over the project started selling off-- parcels of land for luxury-- housing and villas.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And that's--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--only--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--to be expected because when this agenda is expected to be carried out by those people who already found out the ways-- (COUGH) a way to-- capitalize, to monetize and-- to get the profit from this activity-- this is not going to change and they're not going to change.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

So th-- basically-- what happens in this scenario is that this is-- exactly we get the product of the system, plus innovation. It's, like, somebody who wants to lose weight and gets on a diet, while continuing to eating basically the same (UNINTEL).

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

No, it wasn't just simply slowness.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

It--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--was a desire to act and it was a true desire to act.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

But it (BACKGROUND VOICE) was conservative--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

--in a way that it wanted to preserve all the conditions that had been created before--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And there was another moment-- partially maybe natural, may be n-- partially not is that the liberal-- component-- from the very beginning-- decided not to support Medvedev.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

And it perhaps is characteristic for Russian society that it usually is distanced-- from politics and it usually expects, like, a hero.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

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**TRANSLATOR:**

And (BACKGROUND VOICE) Medvedev-- did not make an impression of the (UNINTEL)--

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Only now, we've noticed kind of-- this trend that in social media Medvedev became an object of this kind of liberal nostalgia.

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

**TRANSLATOR:**

Kerensky also became-- a subject of this nostalgia after a certain time.

**STEPHEN HOLMES:**

Would everyone join me in thanking our guest, which was (UNINTEL). (APPLAUSE)  
Thank you.

\* \* \*END OF TRANSCRIPT\* \* \*