

Putin Talks Obama, God and the Iron Curtain in New Interview

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Vladimir Putin, pictured here at the G20 conference in Brisbane, Australia on Nov. 15, covered a broad range of subject matter in his interview with TASS, published Sunday.

President Vladimir Putin addressed everything from the possibility of re-election and his thoughts on U.S. President Barack Obama, to God and his preference for tea, in a massive interview published by state news agency TASS on Sunday.

Putin on His Political Future

Putin said in the interview that he does not intend to remain president for the rest of his life. Keeping the post of president for too long would be “not good and detrimental for the country and I do not need it,” Putin was cited as saying.

In the same interview, Putin said he would not rule out running for re-election in 2018, though he said it is not a decision he is ready to make right now.

The Constitution provides for re-election, “but it does not mean that I will make such decision,” Putin was cited as saying by TASS. A lot could change in the next four years, he said, according to TASS: “We are still in the year 2014, and you are talking of 2018. There’s much time ahead and a lot can change.”

No New Iron Curtain

Putin also confronted recent speculation that Russia was becoming isolated amid ongoing diplomatic tensions with the West in light of the Ukraine crisis, which prompted wave after wave of Western sanctions against Russia.

While dismissing speculation of Russia being cornered on the international stage, Putin also said he has no plans to steer the country in the direction of another Iron Curtain.

“We realize the malignity of the Iron Curtain for us,” TASS cited Putin as saying. “There were periods in the history of other countries, which tried to isolate themselves from the rest of the world and paid very dearly for that, practically by degradation and collapse. Undoubtedly we are not taking this path. And nobody is going to build a wall around us. It is impossible!”

Obama Is a 'Clever Person'

Asked about his recent placement at the top of Forbes' list of the world's most powerful people for the second year running, Putin said: “I don’t know how Forbes made these assessments — it is their business. Perhaps they do this on purpose to exacerbate my relations with Barack Obama, placing him second.”

The Russian president went on to note that Obama is a smart man, even if the two aren't particularly close. “The president of the United States and I know each other. I can’t say that we have quite close relationships, but he is a clever person and can evaluate all this. This could be a method of internal political struggle in the United States, especially on the eve of the elections to the Senate. Let them sort out these things themselves,” Putin said in comments carried by TASS.

The Russian president refrained from making any assessment of Obama's foreign policies: “I don’t want now to give an assessment of the U.S. president’s steps on the international scene, and we have a lot of contradictions and our views frequently diverge and, all the more so, I don’t want to assess his internal political initiatives because this is a separate theme, but I know that Obama realistically assesses what is going on in his country.”

On God, Tea and 'Secret Desires'

The interview covered an impressive amount of ground, delving far beyond the standard boilerplate questions on politics and the economy.

When asked about his beliefs on the afterlife, Putin was quoted as saying: “You know if one gets [to heaven], there is only one phrase that is appropriate to say, 'Glory to you, o Lord!' What else?”

The president noted a preference for “ordinary tea” in special “tea ware” that prevents the

beverage from getting cold.

When asked whether he had any “secret desires,” Putin said: “No. You see I am in such position that nothing is secret,” TASS reported.

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