The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Here's How Russian State TV Spun Putin's G20 Meeting With Trump

July 10, 2017



Rossiya-24 / YouTube

Russian state TV was unimpressed with Donald Trump in its coverage of the G20 in Hamburg last week.

The world leaders who assembled there and the U.S. President were all outshone by the real star of the summit: Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Dmitry Kiselyov, the notorious presenter of Russia's most watched news program Vesti Nedeli on Channel One, began by setting a high bar for Trump and Putin's first face-to-face meeting in Hamburg.

"People around the planet had been waiting for this moment and hoping for success," Kiselyov said.

But before delving into G20 intrigue, Kiselyov first took his audience on a detour to Italy. An artist there had drawn a portrait of the Russian president into a field with a tractor. The

rendering was so large it could be seen from space.

“Not a single preliminary sketch. 130 by 100 meters large,” Kiselyov told viewers, sounding impressed. “The similarities are astounding. The portrait even reflects the president’s light-blue eyes.”

Related article: Putin and Trump Talked. But Don’t Bet on Real Change (Op-ed)

Then came the hard news: Putin’s G20 sit-down with U.S. President Donald Trump.

“First, [here is] an important distinction between the Trump on TV and the real person,” Kiselyov said, cutting to footage of Putin speaking to journalists about his meeting last week.

“Trump on TV is very different,” Putin said. “[In real life,] he’s on topic, behaves normally towards his conversation partner and is relatively quick to analyze.”

“I think if our relationship is going to continue in the style of yesterday’s meeting, there’s every reason to believe that we can restore, at least in part, the level of cooperation that we need,” Putin was shown telling journalists.

In his conspiratorial tone, Kiselyov said the tone of the presidential meeting was set within minutes. Putin looked “put together” and “focused.”

Related article: Putin Meets Trump (Finally!)

In stark contrast, Trump appeared as if “he had wrung himself loose from a madhouse, leaving behind him in the United States this entire, insane anti-Russian campaign.”

Even in Hamburg, Kiselyov continued, Trump could not escape being asked “idiotic, unsubstantiated questions.” This is why Trump canceled a closing press conference at the last minute, he said.

But Putin confronted journalists “calmly and confidently,” Kiselyov said. The Russian president even took a question from an American journalist about whether the the presidents discussed meddling in U.S. elections.

“[Trump] asked me. I answered,” Putin said. “It seemed to me he was satisfied with the answers. There’s no reason to think that Russia interfered with the election process in the United States.”

While Kiselyov’s coverage left Trump relatively unharmed, the U.S. president’s fellow countrymen got off less lightly. Trump’s press corps had acted without composure, the Channel One’s presenter told viewers, as the cameras panned to U.S. journalists jostling to get close to the world leaders.

“As we could have expected, American journalists started screaming their questions at the president,” the channel’s correspondent noted dryly.

The program also showed excerpts of U.S. media coverage of the summit. American presenters described Putin as “a guy who knows what he’s doing,” and Trump as someone who “had seemed nervous.”

Compared to other world leaders featured on Vesti Nedeli, Trump might have got off easy.

Channel One showed German Chancellor Angela Merkel apparently snoozing at a the summit’s closing concert and reacting with surprise a barking dog.

“Everyone noticed that Merkel was constantly engaging Putin, constant smiles,” Kiselyov’s voice-over remarked.

Recently-elected French president Emmanuel Macron arrived to his meeting with Putin late. He then spent the opening moments of the meeting pulling up his socks.

Channel One conveniently failed to mention Putin’s own infamous habit of showing up late to public events.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/07/10/kiselyov-a58347