

STEAMROLLED: VLADIMIR PUTIN SHARES AN EXISTENTIAL SECRET WITH TRUMP AND YOU JUST SAW THE RESULT

I'm not going to say I told you so.

I will, however, say that if what I laid out before yesterday's ass-handing were true, everything would go just as it did.

The meeting started with the red carpet welcome, with everything looking a bit dingy and Trump looking obeisant.

After a last minute switch, replacing the one-on-one, with a shared meeting, Trump and Putin had a short ride in Trump's limo, with Putin grinning like the Cheshire cat. The meeting was abandoned early. Putin effectively ran the press event afterwards, in which he emphasized Russian demands that Ukraine subject itself to Russia, and Trump doubled down on his disproven claims that Hillary tried to frame him, when in fact Tulsi Gabbard recently released proof that Russia instead framed Hillary. *Fully one-fifth* of what Trump said was redoubling on the lie that Russia knows Trump knows to be a lie.

We were interfered with by the Russia, Russia, Russia hoax. It made it a little bit tougher to deal with, but he understood it. I think he's probably seen things like that during the course of his career. He's seen- he's seen it all. But we had to put up with the Russia, Russia, Russia hoax. He knew it was a hoax, and I knew it was a hoax, but what was done was very criminal, but it made it harder for us to deal as a

country, in terms of the business, and all of the things that would like to have dealt with, but we'll have a good chance when this is over.

Trump's commitment to that lie continued to his interview with Sean Hannity (in which Trump described a second one-on-one moment with Putin after the press appearance). Hannity's first question was what Trump's vibe was in the first minutes with Putin, and Trump repeated his claim that "we would have done great things" if not for the "Russia Russia Russia hoax, which stopped us from doing that," then immediately claimed that the 2020 election was rigged. Then Trump turned to Putin's claim that if he were President in 2022 the war would never have happened. Later in the interview, when Hannity raised Hillary's quip that if Trump could make a just peace, she would nominate him for the Nobel Prize and invited Trump to attack Hillary for ruining three years of Trump's life, Trump said that "she made me tougher." Trump turned immediately from that to describe that Putin reinforced Trump's false claims that he had won the election in 2020. And Trump explained why the war would never have happened if he were President: had he remained in office in 2021, then Putin wouldn't have had to invade.

For Trump, this meeting was about sustaining the lies on which all his power is built: it's not that Putin put him in charge because he would sell out America. Rather, he's the victim. And by sustaining that lie, he renewed Russia's great leverage over him.

Maybe that's why he has no deal, why Trump told Hannity there's one big issue Trump and Putin don't agree on, why Trump's team was all frowns yesterday, why even Fox News reporter Jacqui Heinrich described the presser as "very unusual."

This continued to the Hannity presser. Hannity had to interrupt Trump babbling about tariffs to

bring him back to Ukraine. Eventually (about four minutes later), Trump returned to the question of whether he could craft a deal to tell Hannity that he shouldn't have done the interview.

Trump doesn't want to talk about what demands Putin made of him.

He does want to cling to the lies that he can only sustain if Russia is willing.

And because of that, Trump allowed Putin to look like he owned the joint.

Which maybe he does.