
PART I

Sobchak: My first question: what happened with your relationship with Putin?

SP: Good question, but, of course, its hard to describe “what happened” in just a couple of words - because our relationship had evolved over such a long period of time, and continues to do so – I would explain the state of our relationship by saying that the format of it has changed. That’s why, unfortunately, there’s no short answer to the question “what happened”... it has evolved drastically, yes, but also over a very long period of time.

Sobchak: So, in other words, the relationship deteriorated.

SP: Yes, I would agree with that statement.

Sobchak: Let’s develop this topic: since the 90s, you have been a very successful businessman in Russia. Right now, and we will talk about it later - about the economic component of the criminal cases that were filed against you in Russia, about extradition, etc. But, it's obvious that something must have happened to trigger these processes. In your opinion, not from a legal point of view, what happened, what was the turning point?

SP: In my view, what is happening to me is not a one-off situation. You understand, there is a vast number of similar situations. I would say that some kind of trend has changed within Russian society. I think there is a hundred, maybe a thousand similar cases to mine. Perhaps they are not on the same scale, but it is a typical story that the re-distribution of property is conducted by and for the State. It is also a typical story when the one who is being accused, stays abroad. They won’t return and defend themselves. This is the norm nowadays. I come across these types of situations on a daily basis. London is a special place, in this sense - a sanctuary where people have gathered to wait out. In my opinion, nobody, not even Putin wants those people to come back [to Russia], because everything they had, has already been redistributed. Nothing unusual happened [in my case], in that sense.

Sobchak: How was [your property] redistributed?

SP: [The wealth] was directed into the hands of others: there are those in Putin’s close circle, and people, perhaps not too close to him, but nonetheless successful within this new system [that receive it].

Sobchak: Who are these people?

SP: Mainly they are government officials. In my opinion, today, it is not fashionable to own private property. Have you heard any successful businesspeople [in Russia] saying something like: “I own 75% of shares of business” lately ? Nowadays, it’s just not interesting. Today, it is clear that you need to be a director of something; it means that you actually own it. If you are director of a factory [for instance], you don’t need to own its shares. You are more interested in budget explorations and things like that. In this sense, since Putin came to power, in my opinion, [since] I was quite close to Putin and the “new team”, and of course, what remained from the old guard – just the trend changed, the breakthrough to freedom of entrepreneurship, freedom of speech has somehow drowned after 2000. I would say that the Yeltsin vaccine of freedom didn't last long enough to get this trend through. On the one hand, I was surprised, on the other - it has become a tragedy for me.

Sobchak: Tell me about your relationship with Putin - how did you meet?

SP: I met Vladimir Putin in Leningrad. He was at first just a light acquaintance, initially, we did not have a close relationship.

Sobchak: On what occasion did you meet, how did it happen?

SP: I was visiting Saint Petersburg, Leningrad, quite often, mainly due to some discussions with Anatoly Sobchak. Putin belonged to Sobchak's circles during his Leningrad-Petersburg period. At that time, I didn't have close contact with him. Our stronger point of contact happened in Moscow, after the election was lost, after he came to Moscow and tried to get a job in the Administration. In the end, he found a place in the Administration of the President.

Sobchak: Tell me about this. They say that you helped him to find a job in Moscow.

SP: I wouldn't say that. I think that there were plenty of people that were willing to help him. Perhaps, in some sense, because there was a project: I was dealing with international property, sales, etc., and the international property belonged to the Administration of the President.

Sobchak: As far as I remember, you did some credit work?

SP: Yes, that's right. It involved a lot of money. The project was successful enough, and then I found out that Putin, after trying unsuccessfully, to become a part of the Administration of the President, began dealing with foreign economic activities, in addition to curating law enforcement agencies.

Sobchak: Why was he unsuccessful?

SP: I can't remember. I think that the Head of Administration, at the time, Anatoly Chubais, was against him.

Sobchak: Chubais was against him...?

SP: Against the idea of Putin working in the Administration, yes. I don't know why.

Sobchak: Why?

SP: I don't know, he didn't tell me. After Putin had been in power for quite some time, Chubais told me that he didn't remember this situation. In the beginning, it was obvious that Chubais had a subjective view on why he didn't want Putin in the Administration... I don't know what it was.

Sobchak: So how did Vladimir Vladimirovich end up with Borodin?

SP: Pavel Pavlovich Borodin, who managed the President's affairs at the time, had a personal relationship with Putin, some insignificant thing. As far as I understand, at some point Vladimir Putin helped Borodin with some personal issues in Leningrad, Petersburg.

Sobchak: Family related?

SP: Yes, but they were insignificant.

Sobchak: So Vladimir Vladimirovich helped Borodin with some family matters?

SP: I think Anatoliy Aleksandrovich just asked, instructed: "such and such needs to be resolved". So Putin resolved it. I don't remember the details, because I wasn't involved, but I know that it was a personal matter. So the idea was born at that time. In fact, there was a head of department, who was quite ready to engage in President's business inside the Office, but he was not a person who would be able to represent the Office of Presidential Affairs during negotiations, etc. So the idea that Putin should be dealing with foreign economic activity was born. In addition, Putin spoke German [which was beneficial].

Sobchak: So, that is how you became close. How did your relationship develop later? You were quite close and talked with each other a lot, as I understand.

SP: Yes. There was a project which we were both working on during that period. This lasted quite some time, 1996-98. Even when Putin resigned from the Office of Presidential Affairs, and started to work in the Accounting Office, and then after that, in the Federal Service of Security, – nothing changed in our relationship, it continued on quite well.

Sobchak: [narrating] Then Vladimir Vladimirovich is becoming a president. You are still in contact, spending time together, discussing projects, etc. At which point did your relationship start changing? Perhaps you began to feel that you were being alienated?

SP: No, nothing like that. It happened in a slightly different way. Firstly, I don't think the interview format is best suited to discuss this... Today we are used to the fact that Putin is the President. He actually became a president a long time ago, but there is a long story behind it, if you remember more or less what was going on at that time... the period when Putin was becoming president is particularly interesting, it brought us together...

Sobchak: What role did you play during this period, honestly?

SP: I was very involved in this process.

Sobchak: How? We know that it was quite a difficult decision, made by Yeltsin, there were other candidates: Aksenenko...

SP: I would not rush into the conclusion who made the decision there – Yeltsin or not Yeltsin. Well, of course, finally, formally, it was Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin.

Sobchak: There was a circle of those involved – we all know them.

SP: Yes, it was a small circle.

Sobchak: Were you in that circle?

SP: Yes.

Sobchak: Tell me about it, it is very interesting. As far as I understand - when I was doing an interview with Mr Berezovsky at the time, and, of course having read Yumashev, and Voloshin... In the end, there were, as I understand, two main candidates, between whom there was a backstage struggle? Did you participate in that in any way?

SP: And what kind of candidates?

Sobchak: I suppose, Aksenenko and Putin.

SP: No, that's not true. Aksenenko was there for a short period of time, then he went to Sochi. I would say that it was cut down very quickly to two candidates: Stepashin and Putin. I would rather say, it was one candidate – Stepashin.

Sobchak: And who was promoting Stepashin?

SP: It is very difficult to talk about it today, as it was a long time ago. You need to understand that these people did not appear miraculously out of nowhere. That is not how it

works, even in the case of Boris Yeltsin he couldn't just say "I want this person to become a president..." All of this is very conditional. The circle is very narrow, and the president chooses from what is available.

Sobchak: I understand. You see, in terms of Russian modern history, it is believed that there was a short list: Mr. Yumashev, Mr. Berezovsky. Where you in that circle?

SP: Yes, no question about it. But I can honestly say that Boris Abramovich Berezovsky was not part of that circle...

Sobchak: Okay. Then who was? Yumashev, yourself, and who else?

SP: And the president's daughter.

Sobchak: So there were three people who made crucial decisions? Pugachev, Dyachenko Tatiana and Yumashev?

SP: Yes. At the time, yes.

Sobchak: Who proposed Putin? You?

SP: Honestly, yes.

Sobchak: How did it happen? Do you remember?

SP: Of course I remember.

Sobchak: Could you tell me?

SP: So, Putin was participating in the election run... If you remember there was an issue with Skuratov and so on and so forth. You have to understand that this was a difficult and quite dramatic period for Russia, because there was an opposition, conditional opposition. I'm not a lawyer, but in my opinion it looked like a coup d'etat. You remember the story about Luzhkov, Primakov, Skuratov, etc. It was quite strange, because at that time it was a difficult period for Boris Nikolayevich, but it didn't mean that the power had to be overthrown. It was a serious situation in which ordinary management tools, such as presidential decrees were not successful.

Sobchak: I understand, so according to you, you proposed the candidacy of Putin...

SP: No, Putin's candidacy depended on certain... It's not like I said, "Oh, that's Putin, and maybe he will be the president?". Of course it didn't happen that way. Putin was involved in this as the head of the FSB, a representative of the 'siloviki'.

Sobchak: But after he was elected, did he feel that he owes you in some way?

SP: It's hard to say. At that period Vladimir Putin did not really want to be a president. He was not participating in any elections, not starting on a region level and then moving upwards into the Supreme council. He never presented himself as a leader, he wasn't [politically] a head of anything. So, he didn't have any desire to be a president. It is a fact, it is true.

Sobchak: But we can see how his relationship with Yumashev and Voloshin evolved and developed. These people are in good and safe place in the politics, even if they do not actively participate in it anymore. In your case, there was a gratitude for what you have done...

SP: Well, no, not particularly. There is no doubt, that we had a very close relationship. I would not compare it to Voloshin. Voloshin was his co-worker.

Sobchak: So the relationship between you two was closer than the relationships he had with Yumashev and Voloshin?

SP: Of course, it was companionship, at the very least.

Sobchak: In today's Russia, companionship with President Putin is a colossal resource, do you agree?

SP: In modern Russia probably yes. I don't live in Russia anymore, I can't comment with certainty.

Sobchak: Well, even in the 00s having a relationship with Putin is a colossal resource, perhaps, the most important resource that a Russian person can have.

SP: Initially, I would not have agreed with that statement. You, maybe, just don't remember how it was in his first 4 years, his first term. He wasn't a particularly strong resource – he was somewhat alone, he had not yet developed a network of people around him.

Sobchak: It was clear that the staff was temporary, many stayed on due to personal agreements with Yeltsin. It was clear that the situation was changing.

SP: I would not be so radical. There were agreements. It all happened very quickly. I can assure you.

Sobchak: Okay, but that's not what I'm talking about. You had this resource - your relationship with Putin - and also his gratitude that you helped him with the job...

SP: I don't know. I told you in the first part about this gratitude. He didn't want to do it [be a president] – he spoke about it many times, publicly spoke about it.

Sobchak: I understand. So, how does one waste such an opportunity? Because, based on the fact that we are here, the fact that the extradition case has began and also the criminal proceedings... I'd say that it is pretty clear that you have exhausted this resource. Why? How did this happen?

SP: First of all, any resource is used for something. You mentioned that I was a very successful businessman. Thank you. But one thing we must understand that the year 1996 was very busy for me in politics: I was intensively involved in politics then... I participated in the election of Yeltsin, etc. In fact, politics were my daily life. Managers were responsible for development of my assets. Because, when we talk about the resource, and how it should be used, in my opinion, it should have been used to develop a new Russia. Maybe

I'm a maximalist, but we have argued [with Putin], we talked about it, perhaps, we had different opinions.

Sobchak: Where have you had a difference of opinion with Putin?

SP: On the development of the country.

Sobchak: Can you call to memory any disputes?

SP: You have to understand that Putin is a product of his own experience, his education, his work in the security services, etc. The first thing I would say is that even after the presidential elections, he was still associating with Anatoliy Alexandrovich Sobchak... So even if you know Putin, you do understand [him, about him]... For example, Alexander Kozhakov - quite an odious man. I know him very well. You don't need to know him personally to understand what kind of person he is. It's enough to understand that there was an association with Yeltsin.

Sobchak: Your disputes with Putin after he became president, what were they about?

SP: Also about the development of the country.

Sobchak: You mean about his vision for the path of development of the country, vs. yours?

SP: Of course.

Sobchak: Can you tell me what it was?

SP: So, I started saying that Putin was a product of his youth, life, job, etc.

Sobchak: So what did he want? How did he see the development of modern Russia?

SP: Oh, he didn't really have any vision - the fact that it all happened so quickly, that his star was born, well, simply put, that he became the president...

Sobchak: Did he get use to his presidency?

SP: I think so, but, rather, I would say that he liked it on a domestic level.

Sobchak: What do you mean "domestic level"?

SP: Well, living conditions, and how it all happens. He somehow locked himself in it...

Sobchak: So you mean that he discovered in himself a taste for the finer things?

SP: You could say that...

Sobchak: And what exactly does that mean?

SP: He so terribly enjoyed what was going on... I remember when we first arrived in Novo-Ogaryovo - it was an interesting story, because we had to decide where the president was going to live. Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin lived in Gork and there wasn't yet a new presidential house... I remember Jura Krapivin was there, who was the director of the Federal Security Service. And I said, "Give me a list of what is available". There was a prime minister's summer residence available, but what we needed was a presidential residence. I had been in Novo-Ogarevo before - it was an unused building, there were some analysts working there, but, basically, it was a luxury building, beautiful. And I said, "Come, I'll show it to you". There were other places on the list: the Mikoyan's residence...

Sobchak: Was it the first time you went with Putin to Novo-Ogaryovo, to show him around?

SP: Of course. Myself and Yuriy Krapivin – the three of us went there together. Incidentally, I didn't know that this house, where he now lives, in Novo-Ogarevo was formerly a residence of the Grand Duke Sergiy and Elizavieta Fedorovna.

Sobchak: And what was Putin's first reaction? Did he really like it?

SP: He liked it very much, of course. But that was then. Now there are two more buildings, a gallery and a winter garden. Back then it was still only one house.

Sobchak: So you offered it him, and he agreed immediately? Or did he say, "Let's have a look at other places"?

SP: No, he was delighted, everything was fine. Moreover, there was a sports complex, we went there, there was a 50 meter swimming pool that had been there since the times of the Soviet Union. He really liked it.

Sobchak: He loves to swim, did he like it at that time too?

SP: Yes. But I don't know whether he loved to swim before, because before, he never had a 50-meter long swimming pool. Maybe before, he liked to swim in the bathtub.

Sobchak: And did you have a 50-meter swimming pool at that time?

SP: No, I didn't have a 50-meter swimming pool at that time and I don't have one now. Well anyways, he was terribly pleased by all this - it was a completely new life for him. You should understand that Putin was not a businessman, he had never built anything for himself, he had never bought anything on the French Riviera. This was a new and different life for him... And every human being will be affected by this [change]. Change in your surroundings changes your feelings towards things. Only someone who had plunged themselves into politics since youth, for that type of person all this decoration would be secondary. This person would understand that there are 140 million people in Russia, and there are available resources – so what do you do with them? For him it was a surprise. I wouldn't say that it was his fault that he liked his new beautiful lifestyle. This is absolutely normal. It would actually have been strange if he had said: "It does not interest me at all, I have many ideas for Russia's development and the world in general". That obviously didn't happen.

Sobchak: So, in your opinion, there was some kind of a personal interest in this new lifestyle?

SP: Yes, it was a completely new lifestyle. Imagine, he lived through the catastrophe in the mayoral election, then he had all these problems: his dacha burned down, and so on. Only failures. And suddenly he is told: "Look, here is the Palace, here is the country, do anything you want with it ". That's pretty much how it happened.

Sobchak: Well, from your story I understand that you were the person who said "here is the palace, here is the country"?

SP: Well, yes.

Sobchak: You participated in his election campaign, you showed him the Novo-Ogarevo palace for the first time.

SP: Well, before that I brought him into the Kremlin and introduced him to Tania Dyachenko.

Sobchak: Did you introduce them?

SP: Of course, they didn't know each other. Yumashev knew him, but Tatiana didn't. Tatiana, you know, she was like the acting president – this is a fact that she never wanted to

admit to, and just called herself the “image-maker” of Boris Yeltsin. I told her: “Tania, its very strange, the person who makes decisions on such a level – the appointment of ministers and even declarations of war, and when this person refers to themselves as “just an image-maker”. It’s either some misunderstanding... What I mean is, at least you should admit it to yourself, it doesn't have to be in public...”.

Sobchak: Are you sure that she did not admit this to herself?

SP: Yes, I’m sure of it. We spoke about it.

Sobchak: Do you think that Tatiana Dyachenko sincerely believed herself to be an “image-maker” of Yeltsin?

SP: I would say that she was afraid to admit to the truth. You know that people have their own inner fears. Can you imagine how big of a responsibility she had, and she didn't really understand how it worked.

Sobchak: Well, coming from what you just told me, you should probably feel responsible for what is happening in Russia today... and feel that there's been a perversion of justice, that now we're having this conversation in London, and you are under the criminal persecution?

SP: I completely agree with that. Despite the fact that my position was extremely opposite... because, I'm sure you are aware, the stories with NTV and Khodorkovsky began at that time. For me it was a revelation, because Russia had such a breakthrough, and Putin is someone who wouldn't talk to you about something that he knows you wouldn't like... There were things [disagreements] happening despite of our enormous closeness. I think that if you could count the time we spent together during those years... maybe 3 continuous years overall, also in the Kremlin, where I had an office...

Sobchak: You had an office in the Kremlin?

SP: Yes. But I had it even before, really. Not after, but before. Well, and after too.

Sobchak: Any details about these three years of close communication?

SP: I was an adviser to the chef of the Administration, so there was a little room for me... The term “office” is an exaggeration.

Sobchak: But where was this room located?

SP: In the first building, right in front of the president's office.

Sobchak: So you were in a small office in the Kremlin, right in front of the office of the president?

SP: Yes.

Sobchak: And you has a direct access [to Putin]?

SP: Yes, in that sense, of course, yes.

Sobchak: And it means that during these three years, you could discuss anything...

SP: No, when I say three years, I mean roughly three, it doesn't mean exactly three years. More or less. I haven't counted the days.

Sobchak: Well, ok. Let's say three years then, “potential three years” if we count the totality of meetings you had with the president, I'm assuming you could have asked: "Vladimir Vladimirovich, - or however you addressed him - what about Khodorkovsky?".

SP: No, I addressed him informally.

Sobchak: What is happening with Khodorkovsky or with the NTV? Did you ask him these questions?

SP: Of course, during informal meetings, at home, in dacha. When he came to visit me.

Sobchak: Did you ask him such questions?

SP: Yes, certainly. Didn't just ask, I also tried to take some steps to avoid those situations entirely..

Sobchak: Well, for instance - what kind of steps?

SP: For example, before Khodorkovsky's arrest, I met with him.

Sobchak: With Khodorkovsky?

SP: Yes. He came to my dacha and we talked for 5 hours, I told him what I think, although I was not involved in it. But I had some insight due to my understanding of [Putin's] mentality, etc. I simply told him: "Misha, you have enough of money, maybe you'd better go away for a while? At least, from there you will be able to help your people, you can find the solution to the problem". But he chose... what he chose. It is hard for me to call it a gesture of self-sacrifice, as he was absolutely convinced that nothing would happen to him. He told me that he had a meeting with the American president... But you have to understand that my information was also limited because I was not involved... I didn't know anything with any level of certainty, because I was not involved in any negotiations with Patrushev or with Ustinov concerning what would happen to him.

Sobchak: Okay, understood. When did you move out of the Kremlin?

SP: Well, it was an ongoing process.

Sobchak: When did you lose your office in front of the reception of Putin?

SP: I don't remember, at some point during this whole process.

Sobchak: Approximately what year was it?

SP: 2004, or perhaps 2005.

Sobchak: I take the hint that it's time to wrap up discussion on this topic...

SP: If you remember, I became a senator in 2001. That fact has not changed in any way...

Sobchak: Well, that is, the office was still there. You've been a senator - you also should have the office in the building of the Federation Council?

SP: Of course, the office given to me by the Federation Council was available.

Sobchak: But, did you in fact ever stay there?

SP: Well, I could use it.

Sobchak: And why did you move out of it in 2004?

SP: This is your question - when? There was never a moment where I said "let's pack up and go", this is not how it happened...

Sobchak: But your things are not there, are they?

SP: There was nothing special there; you know, it was just a little room to use as a special channel of communication, have a talk with someone, drop into.

Sobchak: Point me to the moment when you felt you could no longer "drop in".

SP: This moment has not come until today. I could always go there.

Sobchak: The reason I'm asking about that is because you obviously had a good relationship [with Putin] for many years. We know a lot of other people who have a close relationship with Putin, they participated in his presidential campaign, etc. All these people are successful businessmen politicians in today's Russia. For instance, Yumashev certainly feels good, also.. the friends from St Petersburg who belonged to "the team" now feel good and are successful... I've read your interview and your theory about why your relationship with Putin deteriorated - when you decided to spend more time abroad and use your assets abroad as well - because of your marriage. But I do not really believe it...

SP: No, that's not true. Perhaps, the reason there was different. How does one build a relationship? Probably by exchanging ideas with people with whom you didn't see eye-to-eye with beforehand, with their point of view or their opinion.

Sobchak: Absolutely. But now I'm talking about something else. We know, you know and I know, for sure, that in Russia any criminal process can either be stopped or started by special instructions from Putin. Evidently, that in your case, Vladimir Putin personally intervened, arriving at the Baltisky shipyard. Obviously, that speech, that political criticism addressed to you publicly, it means that your relationship had already been damaged at that time. I want to understand the real reason why it happened. I do not believe what you've said about moving abroad or about the marriage to a foreign citizen.

SP: Surely not. I never said that. But the fact is that a convergence of factors come together to make a story.

Sobchak: But what exactly happened?

SP: There was no specific thing. Well, a specific thing can only happen when you are not close to someone. Let's say you were introduced to someone, then, after couple of meetings you see that 'he is not a good person, because he did something wrong'. This is a specific reason. And that person can say that "yes, that's when we stopped meeting". When you have a flowing communication, a specific reason can't exist a priori.

Sobchak: And what? Let's imagine that you have friends, and I have friends too. Putin obviously was your close friend, because you know each other for a very long time. When it comes to my friends I can always tell where our relationship became colder, at what point we started to speak less. You can also say the same, can't you? At what moment, did you find yourself speaking much less with Putin?

SP: After 2005-2006 we started speaking less.

Sobchak: So you started to meet less frequently, was there a reason for it?

SP: No, the main reason is an accumulation of opposing ideas... let's imagine this situation. He says to me: "Why did you meet with Khodorkovsky?". And I respond: "I don't need to ask permission to meet anyone". I didn't know what was being prepared [for Khodorkovsky] at that moment. But he [Putin] knew all what was going on. The main thing is to decide for yourself. If you perceive [difference in opinions] as a betrayal, then for you it is a good enough reason to use any sanctions. There were many examples of this.

Sobchak: That is, examples when Putin perceived something as a mini-betrayal?

SP: Yes.

Sobchak: And at what point did other people from the St. Petersburg's team see that they could benefit from this situation. Such as Kovalchuk or Rotenberg?

SP: I knew Putin before his rise to presidency, I can tell you that there were no friends, I have never seen any friends. He was already the director of the FSB at that time.

Sobchak: So there were no Rotenberg or Kovalchuk?

SP: No, there was no one.

Sobchak: How is that possible?

SP: My version is that, from what I heard, that some people didn't like him [Putin]...

Sobchak: But if you say that, at the level of the head of the FSB, there were no one there, so where did they come from? Where Rotenberg and Kovalchuk come from? And when?

SP: I will tell you. Putin felt lonely in Yeltsin's Russia. He became a president without his own team. I remember, when Dmitry Kozak came to visit for the first time in 1999. Because he was a lawyer, and Putin wanted to make him the head of the Glavkomupravlenie. Viktor Vasilievich Cherkesov, a very close person to him, whom he [Putin] respected, and was very kind to him, as far as I know, something went wrong there as well. I don't know for sure what happened to him. But then more new people appeared a bit later... I don't think that anyone started approaching [Putin] right after he became the president. I think he wanted to surround himself with people that he already knew.

Sobchak: Well, it is only logical that he would like to make his own team.

SP: But it was not a team. There was a long period, at least since 1996, when, as I know, Putin was not yet interesting to anyone. It wasn't clear to anyone what to do with him, even if he was the head of the FSB. I was present during those first meetings... I remember when Yuriy Kovalchuk came to the dacha...

Sobchak: Interesting, so tell us where did he come from, and how?

SP: He [Putin] called him, so he showed up.

Sobchak: Directly from St Petersburg?

SP: Well, of course, arrived by train, or by plane.

Sobchak: He came to the dacha?

SP: He invited him, introduced him to me and said: "This is Yura, he is a good person". He never said: "Come and meet my best friend".

Sobchak: But did Yura come to present any project or idea?

SP: No, he came with eyes wide open, not with the project. He looked around the dacha and said, "Yes, Volodya, yes". That is all.

Sobchak: Why did he need such a team? To do business or to create his own system?

SP: No, I don't think that there was any business idea... He simply needed support from people he knew.

Sobchak: People whom he could trust?

SP: I'm not sure. My feeling is that Putin does not trust anyone. So, calling it trust might be taking it a little too far. If he trusted them, they would be meeting. When you are at such high level, you do have a circle of people who you know and meet with [on regular basis]. Those are the people whom you trust.

Sobchak: It is very interesting - what you are saying, because it's commonly believed that there are people from Putin's past, whom he began to appoint in various business in Moscow after becoming the president. What you are saying is that Rotenberg and Kovalchuk appeared much later. And, for example, Mr. Sechin - at what point did he appear? Today he is one of the key figures...

SP: Sechin came with him from St. Petersburg. He worked in the Government of Presidential Affairs as an economist.

Sobchak: So he had been with him, from the beginning?

SP: Well, he was something like his assistant. I don't know what to call him, a special assignments officer.

Sobchak: A lot of Russian businessmen in big and medium-sized businesses say that he is the one responsible for a variety of complex business schemes, [that he is] a person who plays a crucial role in decision making. Do you agree?

SP: I would say yes. I don't know about today, but in the past he surely has influenced a number of crucial decisions. I would not say that Putin makes any tough decisions. As a rule, Putin prefers to adhere to a particular point of view. In this sense, Igor was always there and didn't pose any potential threat. You know, the relationship fundamentally does not change... Now he's some kind of general-colonel, but tomorrow he could be a marshal - for Putin, he is simply Igor, the same person who was available in his waiting room in Leningrad.

Sobchak: For Putin – yes. And what about you? How did your relationship change? Because you met each other much later, due to business.

SP: No, in regard to Sechin, the relationship didn't suffer any big changes. We didn't have any mutual business projects except for the collision over shipbuilding assets.

Sobchak: He was the chairman of the Board of Directors, he was negotiating the price reduction from 5 billion to 150 million.

SP: Not even 150 million. The talks were about 1 billion dollars, etc. But there is different issue there, of course, he wanted the assets to migrate to the USC. I would not say that it was some kind of fight against me personally. There were other factors: he didn't have the money, he couldn't afford to buy [the assets]. The State had to buy it. My agreement was not with Sechin, not even with the USC. I negotiated directly with Putin. Actually, Putin wanted to create that State Shipbuilding Corporation. In this sense, there was nothing personal.

Sobchak: So, in that sense, there are no claims in terms of Sechin's behaviour during the negotiation...

SP: Huge claims. There was no negotiation. Everything that was done, was completely illegal, he participated in the raid...

Sobchak: Who participated in the raid? He was the beneficiary, or (inaudible)?

SP: This is a very simple question. Who is responsible for everything in our country? No matter who actively participates. Putin, he determined it that way - lets take the 'direct line with the president' - who makes decisions about anything?

Sobchak: So, you have no illusion that others are bad, and Putin is good. You understand that all of that is a personal decision.

SP: Absolutely. I would say that, maybe he is not the initiator of all these decisions. I fully admit that when we agreed to the sale of those assets to the state, perhaps at the time he did not have the intention to take them away... for free.

Sobchak: We will come back to the economic side of things soon. I just would like to discuss something else before we dive into the IBE discussion. You know Putin in a way that not many people do. Sometime in mid-00s he started paying a lot of attention to religion, his personal faith. Tikhon Shevkunov, whom I know, and you know him very well, and the

Sretensky Monastery, and the so-called "Orthodox Club". So, Tikhon Shevkunov was the spiritual father of Putin and also a close person to you at some point... What can you tell me about this? Didn't Putin's faith stop him from doing anything, things that many people, including you, might not like?

SP: Firstly, I want to confirm that, indeed, Archimandrite Tikhon, is my close friend since the 90's. I introduced him to Putin: It was before he became the president.

Sobchak: You introduced him to...

SP: Well, of course, he came to the Service with me. There was a service due to some holiday, I don't remember... We arrived for the Service. Putin at the time was a man without Orthodox faith, secular, yes, he understood little about religion at the time.

Sobchak: So the first time he went to service he was with you?

SP: Yes.

Sobchak: And how did you convince him to go to the Service?

SP: Yeah, I didn't convince him. We just happened to be sitting and talking, having a meal, there was a feast - I said to him: "Today, there's a Service, I have to go. Do you want to come with me? - "Let's go". That's it.

Sobchak: You went to Sretensky Monastery, where you met Tikhon Chevkunov.

SP: Yes. It was not some kind of grand event, we simply arrived at the Service.

Sobchak: They met - and after that they stayed in contact? I just know that often the spiritual side of a person can develop after the meet someone truly spiritual, and they realise that this is their way in life.

SP: First of all, I would not use terms such these: spiritual life, etc.

Sobchak: Well, you're a believer, an Orthodox man?

SP: I'm talking about Putin.

Sobchak: So you do not think of him as a truly Orthodox man?

SP: Well, that's what I think, I don't see him as an Orthodox man.

Sobchak: So why does he stay in touch with Shevkunov, for example?

SP: Well, as I remember, they had a few meetings; I have a very good relationship with His Holiness Patriarch Alexei. And I organised their first meetings, as I mentioned. But it didn't really work out, they had disagreements.

Sobchak: It didn't work out for...

SP: The Patriarch and Putin. The friendship didn't work out for many reasons.

Sobchak: Why?

SP: This is my subjective opinion. His Holiness Patriarch Alexei had a certain view on employees of KGB. If you know his life story, he had come from Estonia, which was a foreign country, his father was a priest in Russian Church abroad, and wasn't a priest in the Russian Orthodox Church. And, in fact, in my opinion, he was the only non-Soviet bishop. He did not understand the system. He was very close with Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin. I wouldn't say that Boris Nikolaevich was orthodox or religious, but he treated the Patriarch very tenderly and warmly.

Sobchak: And why was this meeting not effective for Vladimir Vladimirovich? Maybe he offered him some form of interaction that is inappropriate for a Patriarch?

SP: There's many reasons...

Sobchak: Well, why, in your opinion? You know both of them very well. Why didn't it work out?

SP: First of all, there's an age gap, a substantial one. Secondly, I've already mentioned that the Patriarch had very negative attitude to anyone coming from the special services, in general.

Sobchak: So the rumours that Alexei II himself was a KGB agent are not true, right?

SP: Of course this isn't true. You know, the way it was arranged... The Committee of the State Security was tracking their movements, appointments, etc. Undoubtedly, this information was stored somewhere. This does not mean that bishops were with the KGB. This is absolutely absurd.

Sobchak: I see, so the relationship did not work out due to the age difference?

SP: That's the main reason. And the second is, of course, mistrust... total disbelief to the motives of the secret service - coming from an understanding of the enormous damage caused by the Soviet regime to the Church. Because during the Soviet regime a huge number of religious people died in the camps, etc. We must understand that His Holiness the Patriarch knew many of those people personally.

Sobchak: Then why Putin's relationship with Tikhon Shevkunov was successful? How would you explain that? You took him to the Service where they met. How did this relationship become so close?

SP: I'm not sure I'd ever label it as "super-close", that's a bit of an exaggeration.

Sobchak: It's an exaggeration to say that he is a spiritual father for Putin?

SP: Of course, yes.

Sobchak: So he is not Putin's spiritual father then?

SP: In my opinion, he is not.

Sobchak: And you're still in contact with Tikhon Shevkunov?

SP: Yes.

Sobchak: So, you are still very close [to Shevkunov]?

SP: Well, we sometimes talk by phone.

Sobchak: And how does he feel about your current situation regarding the criminal proceedings and prosecutions?

SP: All this story is just PR, it's an exaggeration of Shevkunov's role in Putin's life.

Sobchak: So he wasn't really inspired by Shevkunov's spirituality?

SP: Of course not.

Sobchak: Then why? Is this just a PR stunt because he understood that he lives in an Orthodox country?

SP: Yes, actually, he told me so. He said, "We have 85% [of people] that identify themselves as Orthodox. That where the power is!". That's what he said.

Sobchak: So it was calculated, on his part?

SP: He understood [how to play it], yes. So all these stories that are now completely blown out of proportion, This whole story we're talking about now - that's how it began.

Sobchak: It began with him understanding...

SP: With him understanding that the Church has a big impact on religious people.

Sobchak: How did Vladimir Putin realise it, do you remember?

SP: I do not know.

Sobchak: But if he came with you to the Service for the first time, it means that he didn't realise it before?

SP: No, in order to understand the influence of the Church on society, one doesn't need to go to the Service.

Sobchak: So, all these rumours that Tikhon Shevkunov plays a part in politics and has direct access to Putin – it's not true?

SP: It's not true.

Sobchak: Could you use this channel now to establish a connection with Putin – is it possible now?

SP: I don't even need this channel. There are a million other, better channels. But the question is, what is there to even establish? To finish this Politics-Church story, in my opinion, it's really just an over-valuation of Archimandrite Tikhon's influence.

Sobchak: Well, here you are talking about over-valuation. There was a reason for me asking that question. Aren't you the one who initiated the Russian President Vladimir Putin to this idea [of the Russian Orthodox world? We remember your TV channel called "Moskovia", which was actively propagating the idea of the Russian [Orthodox] world, by broadcasting interviews with religious leaders, and with people from the Soviet era, related to a religious theme...

SP: It's possible.. I don't know, I didn't watch TV at all – I just didn't have time.

Sobchak: TV channel "Moskovia" at that time, if we look at the recordings... I've searched the internet to see what it was like – and, it was exactly like the current trend in Russia.

SP: To put it succinctly, I do not remember, in early 2000 I bought this TV channel - "Third channel". And, in fact, I was only involved with it for a very short period of time. I wasn't really in the media business... Well, there were some newspapers...

Sobchak: But you observed...?

SP: I will tell you. There was Vladislav Surkov who observed this channel. He asked Putin and myself for help. I agreed

Sobchak: What did he ask for? Help with what exactly?

SP: Dealings between Surkov and the board of directors.

Sobchak: So he asked you to help to bring together those who organised the TV-channel "Moskovia" ... and Vladislav Yuryevich Surkov ?

SP: Yes.

Sobchak: So, it was expected that?

SP: I have never dealt with the "Third channel", I didn't inspire any ideology.

Sobchak: Well, you switched it on, you saw what it was broadcasting? There were some former KGB-workers, Orthodoxy. It was, in fact, an anticipation of the Novorossiya.

SP: No, I think that was before I bought the channel, because it belonged to the Moscow region, and there has actually been some kind of claret of the monarchists, etc.

Sobchak: Well, it absolutely mirrors today's project of Novorossiya.

SP: Maybe, I don't know. But, I think, if you looked at the archives, it was before [I bought it]. After I bought the shares... the channel became quite modern in terms of graphics, etc. The whole idea was to flip it around.

Sobchak: If you didn't lose your business and stayed in Russia, would you have supported the idea of the annexation of Crimea?

SP: Of course not. It's a tragedy, it's madness.

Sobchak: So for you - today's idea of the Russian [Orthodox] world is not close to your heart, despite the fact that you are a religious person?

SP: No, it was never close for my heart. I am a person with faith, an Orthodox faith - but this is my personal decision. I'm a very pragmatic person in this sense. Because I really do hold that faith, so I try to do everything possible to create a better future

PART II

Sobchak: Let's talk about why you're here [in London], why today you are facing a criminal case and an extradition case. We don't know how it is going to end, but I want to talk about it in any case. I have carefully read all available materials, and we will do a separate report on it later. But I would like to understand some things that I found a bit strange. Firstly, who was the owner of the Mezhprombank at the time of withdrawal of the license in 2010?

SP: It was not I.

Sobchak: Then who? "Not I" is a strange answer.

SP: It belonged to a trust, a part of the shares were owned by the top managers of the bank. You need to understand what it means that something is owned through a trust. This property was transferred to the trust, and if this property gets sold, the beneficiaries [of the trust] who were members of my family, my children, in fact, two of my older sons, could benefit from the sale, that is if some money originated from the sale...

Sobchak: So in October 2010...

SP: Not in October 2010, but in October 2001. What I mean is that since 2001 I have had nothing to do with this bank.

Sobchak: Once again, I repeat my question: who then, in October 2010, at the moment of the withdrawal of the license, owned the bank?

SP: The trust.

Sobchak: To the trust, whose beneficiaries were two of your sons.

SP: Including my two sons - they lived all their lives abroad and, of course, weren't involved in it directly. I mean, they lived abroad since school age, just left, and weren't participating...

Sobchak: So the beneficiaries - two of your sons, and some small part belongs to the top management.

SP: A large part of 25%.

Sobchak: I just read in some of your interviews that it was the so-called People's Bank.

SP: I'll explain. There is nothing unusual here. For example, Mikhail Fridman is the owner of the Alfa-Bank. He makes decisions, and maybe he doesn't have time, however without him no decision is taken. In this particular case, due to the situation...

Sobchak: So you never managed the bank?

SP: Of course not.

Sobchak: That's really hard to believe, I'll be honest. Even, considering you example with the Alfa-Bank, if Mikhail Fridman decides to set up a trust, and, I don't know, will make up a new tax scheme, and will announce that the Alfa-Bank is not his bank anymore, but the People's Bank. Nobody would believe that Fridman just left his bank, as you did...

SP: I didn't leave anything. It was very simple.

Sobchak: Listen, you are the owner of a big bank, one of the largest at that time in Russia. And then you suddenly leave it to the top managers and say that now it's the People's Bank.

SP: I'll explain. The bank is the asset, which was of interest to me in the early 90s. Because I could use it to acquire other assets, etc.

Sobchak: But even an uninteresting asset, just like that...

SP: No, I'll explain it, if you let me say couple of words. Nobody left anything, it was very simple. In 2001 I physically didn't have a capacity to deal with the bank. Secondly - it was my belief that the banking system in Russia was not a promising business, no private banks... Today you can see the result, what is happening?

Sobchak: At the time you were saying different things. You said that a bank is a perfect business, because it is work with the final product, that everyone is producing something, creating something, and the final product...

SP: I said this in 1992.

Sobchak: Yes. You completely changed your opinion.

SP: It wasn't me who changed my opinion, it was the situation that changed..

Sobchak: So you didn't need the bank anymore, and you decided...

SP: I didn't need the bank anymore, and I decided to sell it. It was the main idea. After that, the managers got 25%, and for three years they have been negotiating the sale to various Western banks, etc. Subsequently, they created some kind of subsidiary retail bank, because it was attractive to the buyer.

Sobchak: I don't have the mind of a businessman. [For example], I want to sell some property – an apartment, a bank, some company, my small restaurant “Bublik”. I only want to sell it. Probably, in this case, the last thing I would do is, let this sale, and preparation for the sale, be seen through by some managers and not exercise any personal control over it.

SP: Of course it is normal, absolutely normal.

Sobchak: If you want to sell, you also need to look over these assets...

SP: Please understand, we are looking forward, and going forward. What was happening at that moment? That was the peak of the development of the multi-billion empire, it was a promising project, which took a lot of my time, energy, and funds. For instance, if you started your business by selling beer in a small shop, and, in 10 years time, you've got a supermarket chain... but they keep saying that its impossible you went from beer, to a supermarket

Sobchak: It's just Mezhprombank at the time was a big bank.

SP: No it wasn't anything like that. Yes, it was a big bank, but there were no businesses...

Sobchak: Please agree that its impossible to compare a bank and a small shop, a big bank with many shares, that received unprecedented support in 2008.

SP: In 2008? What kind of support did it get?

Sobchak: We will speak about it later on...

SP: Ok, let's do it again. I don't know whether you can believe it or not, but its still a fact nonetheless... even before that I wasn't managing the bank myself, I had other things to do. It's important to understand that any bank - western bank, Citibank, for instance, who is managing it? Incase you're under the illusion that the shareholder or owners have an active role, well that's not true. Top managers are managing the bank, moreover, top management is extremely interested in the effective management of it... It was my deep belief, that if you have 25%, you do understand...

Sobchak: So you say, it was the fault of top management, what happened?

SP: Not only.

Sobchak: The ex-head of the Central Bank, Ignatiev, states that you personally participated in the talks about the credit that was given to the Mezhprombank in 2008 - that is what I wanted to talk about...

SP: This is nonsense. I think that you, perhaps, incorrectly read something between the lines.

Sobchak: No, it is his direct statement, he gave such testimony.

SP: No, he never gave such testimony, obviously, I follow all this. That conversation was different. We had deal over the sale of the shipyards' shares. Ignatiev, Kudrin, Dmitriev, and VEB were in on it. In the end, it turned out that it is the Central Bank that had resources... The Central Bank was supposed to either fund VEB, or fund some other... Such a sale – the payment scheme, including the debt of the Mezhprombank, was the result of Ignatiev's proposal. At that moment, I didn't wasn't privy to anything, not only about the bank...

Sobchak: Now, so we all understand, please correct me if I am wrong: the crisis in Russia in 2008, the difficult economic situation, and during this time the Mezhprombank received an unprecedented unsecured loan of 32 billion...

SP: Surprising, I didn't know about it. I think it was even more. There was a period when they said its was 35 billion.

Sobchak: Mr Ignatiev states that you personally were leading the talks in regard to this loan. So he is lying?

SP: I wouldn't say that he is lying, because I think that he never said that.

Sobchak: How is that possible, there are references...

SP: Ok, I will simplify. It is a lie, it's not the truth, I didn't know about that at all. I didn't know about a program of some type of unprecedented loans. I only found out about it after the fact...

Sobchak: So, Ignatiev is lying, if that's what he's saying

SP: If that is what he is saying, then yes, it's a lie. Ignatiev participated in the expropriation of my assets, that is why everything that he says is "after the fact"...

Sobchak: In your opinion, can we say that Ignatiev was a part of that deal, and received some kind of payment to make this loan happen?

SP: I am certain of it.

Sobchak: Is this your personal judgement, that you think this way?

SP: Not exactly personal, but this judgement has basis.

Sobchak: Can you prove it?

SP: Of course I can't.

Sobchak: So, in your opinion, what happened was this: this unprecedented loan, which was issued to the bank without bail, 32 billion....

SP: What is the reason for that though? Why? Why this miracle? What sort of special bank is it? Why did Ignatiev or the Central Bank decide to load it with 1.5 billion dollars? If we move away from the stated opinions, and consider the objective truth? ... I didn't participate in this... I found out about it in 2010, when Ignatiev offered me, as part of the payment for the shipyards, to take this debt which amounted to 1/5 of the whole payment. At the same time, the Red Square project was being expropriated from me, so the situation was very difficult already. And then to say that "we didn't agree to this", even though I had, and said it to Putin... I said (to him): "I don't know, Ignatiev is offering me such and such a scheme with debt, or not debt". And Putin told me: "You know, we're in a financial crisis right now, people are losing their money. So whatever you are offered - take it, agree to it, it's okay".

Sobchak: Wait, let's recreate the sequence of events, so the audience understands what we are talking about.

SP: It is very difficult.

Sobchak: It is difficult, but very important in that economic situation...

SP: What I mean is, it is difficult to do it in this format.

Sobchak: Let see, we have the Mezhprombank, which gets unprecedented loan in 2008 - without bail, 32 billion.

SP: More than that.

Sobchak: You state that the bank got those loans without your knowledge, with Ignatiev, who is participating in all this with his own financial interest in mind.

SP: I think it was not only Ignatiev...

Sobchak: Accordingly, what happens next is (and this is also very confusing). The Mezhprombank appears in the sale of your shipyards. So you were giving OPK shares in exchange for the loan, which, in essence, and according to you, you didn't take, and had nothing to do with at all.. This way, due to the fact that you agreed to such deal, you agree that such deal is legitimate, and thus confirm that you, after all, took the loan ?

SP: Of course not. These things have nothing to do with each other. Taking into account that even in Russia we spent a year and a half debating this in court, so in the space of 3 minutes - it's very difficult to explain.

Sobchak: I will explain in simple terms, like small business. I have a cafe called 'Bublik' and there is a bank Mezhprombank. And I am told: sell it against this loan taken on by some other person at the Mezhprombank...

SP: The question is not about the loan. It is rather about certain assets. What is credit? What is Mezhprombank? They are the assets. If you are talking about your cafe 'Bublik', then, lets say your cafe costs 1 million dollars. And you are offered to be given 800 with

cash, and 200 with the loan taken by a small shop from someone else. The small shop owes money to someone else, we will make an agreement, and once it is done, the small shop will owe that money not to the “someone else” else but to you, and you will deal (as a creditor) with that small shop from that point onwards. What did I think at that moment? I thought: if I carry on negotiating any longer, then I will lose this offer. So okay. Since I didn't know the situation in the bank, I didn't know where the funds went, what happened there... I didn't know about the credit... So, you are offered [narrating] “ we will pay you 4 billion in cash, and 1 billion... “ Then this unbelievable sum came up. Thinking time... there was a meeting with the entire board of directors of the Central Bank present. I asked Ignatiev: “Sergei Mikhailovich, how long do you think this agreement will take?” He told me (with Ulyukaev sitting in front of me): “2 days, I think”. I told him: “Thank you, thanks”.

Sobchak: Am I understanding it correctly... that you needed to get at least some kind of money, and you didn't think that could get anything in the future? And that you agreed to de-facto acknowledge that there had been an unprecedented credit offered without bail, with which you say you had nothing to do?

SP: I didn't acknowledge any credit... Once again... this is what happened: it was a kind of agreement. Simply, what Ignatiev offered to me was... well, he said: “The price is, your agreement with Putin, 5 billion”... It is not Putin who will be executing it - it's me. You can make agreements with Putin every day for 10 years, but unless I decide to pay, nothing will happen. He said: “I have toxic assets in the Central Bank, and we need to get rid of them”. Simply saying: look, if I am helping you – you help me. “Let me make a part of the payment with some assets?”. That's how our conversation began.

Sobchak: But not “some assets”...

SP: No, precisely “some assets”. He didn't tell me the value, didn't tell me which bank. He said: “What do you think about it?”. I said “Positively. Okay, why not?”. With all that, I began to understand the possibility that there's actually nothing...

Sobchak: Wait, are you that naive?

SP: Why naive?

Sobchak: Well, you said you are being offered “some toxic assets”...

SP: Its not that I wasn't interested [in details of the deal], he just told me: “I will tell you [details] tomorrow and will make a proposal, if you agree in principle”. I said: “In principle, I agree”.

Sobchak: Okay, when was the proposal made?

SP: The next day.

Sobchak: Didn't you want to find out about the bank's internal situation?

SP: I went to Putin. I didn't have any time: only two days to close the deal. I knew that either we close the deal now, or never.

Sobchak: That's a big deal that is worth a lot of money...

SP: It's very simple. If I tell you that I want to buy something from you for 1 million dollars, and add that 200 thousand of that million is questionable. You have a choice to take a risk

and basically sell it to me for 800 [thousand]. Do you understand that for me it didn't matter: The Mezhprombank, the Gazprombank, what loans...

Sobchak: This way you acknowledged...

SP: I didn't acknowledge anything. It had nothing to do with anything. He told me verbatim: "It will be easier for you to deal with this. You were the founder of the bank in the beginning of the 90s, maybe some people are still there. It will be easier for your team to, at least, get some money from there". I didn't have a choice. It could be any other bank, not the Mezhprombank, it could be something else.

Sobchak: Did it have anything to do with the credit repayment?

SP: Not in the slightest.

Sobchak: Was it a coincidence that it turned out to be the Mezhprombank?

SP: No. I think, from Ignatiev's point of view it was not a coincidence.

Sobchak: What was his goal?

SP: His goal was realised later on. What happened? Here are the steps. Imagine that we made an agreement on the highest level - Putin, Kudrin, Ignatiev. Medvedev was also involved in this, but to a lesser extent.

Sobchak: How was Medvedev involved?

SP: Ignatiev said (Putin was the Prime Minister), that "Putin - it is wonderful, but the guarantor of the Constitution is Medvedev, that is why I would like him to approve it". I called Medvedev and said: "Dmitry Anatolievich, we have such and such a deal..." - "Yes, I heard, and what do I have to do with it?" - "Ignatiev is worried. Do you mind him coming for a meeting?" - "Please. But I don't know anything about the deal". I said: "We have such and such deal". He said: "Yes, it is a good idea, we want to create the State Corporation, to build aircraft carriers". I said: "Please. You can build what ever you want, even airplanes. But is the deal okay?" He said: "Yes, of course. He can call me". I called Ignatiev back: Sergei Mikhailovich, you can call him. All is okay, he is waiting". In the end, he [Ignatiev] called him [Medvedev], and he said that "Yes, ok, I don't know much about it, but I don't have anything against it".

Sobchak: He doesn't have anything against the deal with...

SP: Globally. In other words he doesn't have anything against it as a President, that the State will buy this asset. Yes, the asset is useful, important, great.

SP: Two days! I was ready to sell for 4 billion. When they said that there is a credit of 1 million that you will be getting... I said, we will figure it out, just send me 4 billion, please. Two days! Send me 4 billion, and then I will deal with what is going on. If there is nothing there, that's also okay for me.

Sobchak: I don't know, maybe because I was never in a big business, but I think, such decisions....

SP: I can assure you that in a big business that exactly how it is done. Of course, there is 500 lawyers who write agreements, etc., but that has nothing to do with decision making. The deal is actually done in this exact way. Do you agree on such and such? Yes, I agree. Shook hands, good bye.

Sobchak: You agreed with what didn't even check...

SP: It wasn't necessary to check anything. Im telling you for the 15th time, I said: "Okay, I agree". To myself I thought, I don't know anything about it [the proposal], but, even if there is zero, then for me, in this situation, the amount that was [proposed] is enough...

Sobchak: Okay. You received this amount. What happened next?

SP: Of course, I didn't receive it.

Sobchak: I mean, according to the agreement.

SP: You mean, if I received it? If I received this amount, according to the agreement, what Mezhprombank owned to the Central Bank would have been transferred to me, and I would have been receiving, over some period, or maybe restructured it, or something like that. But thats not the the story. Maybe, I should say, thank you, i don't need anything, please feel free to just take whatever you want.

Sobchak: As far as I understand, you haven't managed to convince the London High Court of this version of the story...

SP: I have.

Sobchak: ...Because the Court made the decision...

SP: The Court hasn't made any decision.

Sobchak: In April 2014, the decision was made and at the moment there is an appeal, as far as I understand...

SP: The appeal of what?

Sobchak: Of the decision that was made...

SP: What kind of decision?

Sobchak: The decision that the London High Court took the side of the DIA.

SP: If we are finished with this topic, then I will make the conclusion. In fact, it is quite anal situation in today's Russia. It doesn't matter if its the cafe 'Bublik', or a petrol station, or a global business that is worth 15 billion. So this is a normal story, when it is taken from you, and then, naturally, they are trying to blame you that its actually you who stole it, and so on. It didn't begin just yesterday.

Sobchak: Then why did the English court... ?

SP: The English court, naturally, didn't make any decisions. The DIA came to the English court with a single goal in mind - to obtain security measures on my assets. That is all. There is nothing else going on in England. The security measured could have been obtained in Russia in the Arbitration Court, but from the global PR point of view, [the English court] was a great idea for the DIA. Why? Because, you, and everyone else, have no idea what is going on in London. You have an understanding that "the London High Court sided with...". Nobody sided with anybody. The hearing lasted 15 minutes. They came there and said that they have a case in Russia, and that there is an individual who lives in France or in England, they don't know. So "would you mind..." and this is the normal procedure in England - to apply security measures. The procedure doesn't require the presence of the opposite party. The question is what about compensation. Are you ready to compensate for material damags? Not moral, but material. What did the DIA say? They said: we are ready to deposit 100 million dollars in that case if what we ask, to disclose assets, etc. - the security measures. So the court asked me to write down on 3 pages what I own. I did that. The court told me if I decide to sell anything from what I wrote down, then I need to let the lawyers know. That is all that happened.

Sobchak: Look, as far as I understand, you announced that you are going to fight the Russian State in court in the expropriation case....

SP: Not going to, it is already happening. It is in the process of happening now.

Sobchak: In which arbitration are you going to fight?

SP: It's an international arbitration.

Sobchak: Stockholm, Hague?

SP: These are just different platforms.

Sobchak: Well, which one have you chosen?

SP: I don't know. The decision will be made during negotiations with the opponent. The legislative framework is no different, these are just the different platforms that are offered...

Sobchak: I understand that, but did you decide for yourself?

SP: I don't mind. Generally speaking, the hearing will be held here, or in Paris?

Sobchak: Do you think you will win this case?

SP: Certainly.

Sobchak: So you have the proof that the assets were expropriated.

SP: Absolutely, yes. 100% of proof, moreover they are absolutely formalised. They are not anecdotes, etc.

Sobchak: You've surprised me in regards to the arbitration case. I will tell you why; In the first part of the interview we dedicated a lot of time to Putin, to your relationship with him and you supposedly know him very well... Considering the amount of time you spent together. Announcing the next step of war in the form of the arbitration case, is obviously taking up an aggressive stance with the President. Did you try and resolve this situation amicably first...? I don't know, sending him a letter?

SP: I wrote letters and I had a meeting with him.

Sobchak: When was your last meeting?

SP: A long time ago, but we met here, he came over.

Sobchak: In London?

SP: Not in London, in Amsterdam.

Sobchak: And when was that?

SP: Well, I don't remember the exact date, about a year and a half ago.

Sobchak: So, a year and a half ago, you met with Putin in Amsterdam, when the situation was already happening and you were already in London?

SP: Of course. But there were no criminal case yet [in Russia].

Sobchak: How did you meet, how was the meeting organised?

SP: We spoke for a little while. He said: "I will certainly deal with this, write me the details, I will deal with it, I remember, I'll keep it under control". Such generic things. He said: "I will, naturally, solve all this. No problems, everything will be fine".

Sobchak: So, in a personal meeting he said that he didn't have any claims.

SP: Yes.

Sobchak: This meeting in Amsterdam was after his speech at the Baltisky shipyard?

SP: Of course, the speech was in 2010.

Sobchak: That is why I am surprised. It turns out that Putin publicly sent you a message. We all remember this speech, when he said "I hope that the shareholders of the Baltisky shipyard and the owner will change their minds and return the money".

SP: Indeed, "will change his mind and give up his assets for free".

Sobchak: This indicates that he understood the situation.

SP: No question about it. This is the expropriation.

Sobchak: Accordingly, you say that after the meeting in 2012 - that he had no claims?

SP: Not that he didn't have any claims... In my opinion, the point of view that Putin is dealing with nuances and details is wrong. Yes, overall, he understands that there is a vector, that he has a circle that surrounds him. Some say that he has to do it this way, others - the other way. A lot has changed since that time. So he understands that maybe it was a mistake, that the money wasn't paid. The Red Square [project] was taken away, EPK was taken away, and other things. So the question is that the money wasn't paid [for any of that]. It is obvious, one doesn't need to be a businessman to understand that. I would say that Putin is no businessman, no economist, and not some kind of specialist... These are simple things to understand, if you took your neighbour's car, flat, etc. and didn't pay him for any of it, you understand me. You can, of course, resolve it between yourselves, maybe he was a bad neighbour... played music at night, but it doesn't take away from the fact that...

Sobchak: Was is a private meeting?

SP: Yes, well, there were other people there.

Sobchak: Did you warn him that you will fight with Russia?

SP: Yes, before the meeting.

Sobchak: What was his reaction?

SP: No reaction.

Sobchak: Well, he said what, "okay, sue us"?

SP: Yes

Sobchak: So, according to what you are saying, it turns out that publicly Putin took certain position on your case in Russia, but between yourselves, in a private meeting, he promised to resolve the issue in your favour?

SP: Yes, it is important to understand one thing, that apart from any public speeches, personally... we didn't have a direct conflict with Putin, he never told me that he contemplated not to pay me and take everything from me. Something like this never happened...

Sobchak: Okay, but who is the one interested in taking your assets, in your opinion? Putin or somebody else? Who is behind the DIA? According to your version it should be someone in particular...

SP: This is a detective story; It's multiple people. But let's say that Sechin was after the money, at the time.

Sobchak: So who was the one interested in the expropriations of Pugachev's assets in Russia? Sachin or Putin?

SP: Once again: The interested party is Putin. This is my belief. It's impossible otherwise.

Sobchak: In that case, why wouldn't you speak and deal with him directly?

SP: About what?

Sobchak: About the fact that the assets would be transferred to the State? At a lesser price than you would have liked...

SP: He made the decision. We agreed on the price. It was a formal process [based] on the order of the Prime Minister, and the President. There were many documents - agreements, talks, Rosimuschestvo, etc.

Sobchak: What seems strange is that, according to what you are saying, Putin is a hypocritical economist, who, in your face, says that he will "resolve everything", but behind your back is trying to expropriate your assets.

SP: He did expropriate my assets, a long time ago. When he says "I will resolve it", I understand what he means by these words... He says "I will resolve it", what will you resolve?

Sobchak: In one of the interviews you compared your situation with Evtushenkov...

SP: I've never compared it that way..

Sobchak: You were saying that it was a part of one chain of events in regard to the property redistribution in Russia.

SP: Yes, the property redistribution story.

Sobchak: Maybe, in Evtushenkov's case, many experts conclude that the problem was with the price negotiation. Roughly, Evtushenkov became greedy, and for that, he got what he deserved. Maybe, in your case, there was some kind of proposal that you had to agree to, in order not to find yourself in this situation today?

SP: No. I would say that, the proposal was coming from Sechin, not Putin, he just didn't have the money.

Sobchak: Maybe you should have lowered the price?

SP: I don't know, maybe...

Sobchak: Do you regret that you insisted on such a high price?

SP: That price was lower than the market value. I am not even talking about global prices here.

Sobchak: The value was quite high, but it was based on the maximum performance of the shipyards, not their real profit, which was in fact much less.

SP: [The price] was absolutely real for the moment. Based on real orders, etc.

Sobchak: But later, we saw that the value wasn't properly estimated...

SP: How did you figure? I haven't managed to understand it that way yet. It's like this; maybe, my car costs a lot of money, but if you don't know how to drive and got in an accident with it, it doesn't mean that, that type of car got cheaper, does it?

Sobchak: Have you been a French citizen for a long time?

SP: Yes, a long time.

Sobchak: How long?

SP: Many years. Even when I lived in Russia, I was already a French citizen.

Sobchak: Do you find it odd that a French citizen owned shipyards in Russia, that were producing icebreakers, working with nuclear power, and military courts.

SP: Yes, 100% of the military surface fleet, all was constructed...

Sobchak: Don't you find it odd?

SP: No. Once again, I was dealing with operations, I wasn't a director of the shipyards. I didn't have access to classified documents or anything.. Its simply ownership. You can own a military base in the US, for instance. This doesn't automatically mean that you will be exposed to classified military secrets.

Sobchak: Do you have an example when a Russian citizen owns a military base in the US? I don't.

SP: No, I don't.

Sobchak: What I'm saying is, don't you think, that the fact that you are a French citizen, should have served as a warning, that sooner or later something would come up?

SP: So it came up. I was ready to sell all that. I'm sorry, but I spent over 10 years on building it. Where did it come from? I didn't privatise it, I bought it on the market. Piece by piece. [At the beginning] It was a ruin. It was a where the ships stopped to berefuelled, nobody had been building any ships there for 25 years...

Sobchak: Why didn't anyone want to buy your assets for cash? Whose decision was that? I as far as I understand, you had been looking for a buyer for a long time.

SP: I wasn't looking for a buyer. Putin came to me, That is why he created the United Shipbuilding Corporation (USC). This was the buyer. Imagine, you have a private business called 'Gazprom', and then the State also creates a business called Gazprom, so you will need to somehow share it. Because there is a place for only one Gazprom. So the message to me what such that Putin wanted to have everything ship-related in one place, and that itswhy he created the USC. It included some other half-ruined businesses, but the only shipbuilding business was the Severnaya Verf, the Baltisky shipyard, etc. Even not so much the Baltisky shipyard until Sechin was appointed the head of the board of directors of the USC. Right after that appointment Putin made me an offer. He said: "You and Igor [Sechin] wouldn't agree, but what do you think about selling the shipyards?". I said "Wonderful". That is why I invested in it in the first place. I wasn't fascinated with shipbuilding. It wasn't my dream or idea. I was creating it to get some kind of return as an investor. I was buying oil companies, coal companies, apart from EPK. For instance, the company "Russian coal". I just brought together all coal companies in Russia, and then sold it. To the government, to the Rosneft.

Sobchak: Experts say that overpricing is at the heart of the conflict.

SP: It's not true. because chronologically it doesn't match up. The project that Putin personally proposed to me, I didn't want to do it at all, - I mean the reconstruction of the Red Square. Its a development consistent of a hotel and apartments, a good project, in my opinion. Putin was very involved in this project, he was even recommending suppliers and contractors. And then, it emerged that the project was just shut down- after four years. I lost 1.5 billion on this project.

Sobchak: Okay, did you speak about it with Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin]? In the end, who took the Red Square?

SP: I think it is Putin. He transferred it to the Federal Security Service.

Sobchak: Who is the beneficiary?

SP: The Federal Security Service (FSS).

Sobchak: Any specific names?

SP: No, nobody is dealing with it there.

Sobchak: It doesn't happen this way. If your asset is being expropriated, or you are being forced into some agreement. The Red Square, apartments - it is a big project. I can't believe that behind it is just the FSS. Who specifically?

SP: Putin. It was his decision.

Sobchak: In other words, you believe that this asset belongs to Putin?

SP: That's not what I'm talking about. I don't know the motives. In other words, maybe, he wishes that I lose my assets.

Sobchak: It doesn't happen that way. Let's take Evtushenkov's situation as an example. It was clear who was interested in acquiring the Bashneft - Igor Ivanovich Sechin. It is clear that Sechin is against Evtushenkov, and, as of today, he won. In your situation, let's take the Red Square as an example. On the one side is you, and who is on the other side?

SP: Sechin was also in my story, oddly enough.

Sobchak: So today this project is...

SP: I don't know who took this project over, I'm not following it at this moment. I spoke with Murov, he was working on it as the FSS.

Sobchak: How was he participating [in it]?

SP: As the FSS, amongst those who received a presidential decree. Because there was a presidential decree, the agreements were signed, etc. And, he [Murov] told me: "I don't know anything. Sachin called me and said that the boss changed his mind, that now is the wrong time to build the hotel". So it turned out that he [Putin] didn't tell me, but told Sechin. Strange. I arranged a meeting [with Putin], we spoke [about it]...

Sobchak: You met with Sechin?

SP: No, with Putin. I asked what was going on. The [preidential] order hadn't been made yet, at that point. He said that he wasn't sure it was a good idea to build the hotel. He added: "Don't worry, we will compensate you." After the decree was issued, he [Putin] signed the order, followed by government sessions. Putin ordered the First Deputy Prime Minister Zubkov personally to deal with the compensation matters. The sum amounted to approximately 1 billion. There were even proposals to take 0.5 million, we were negotiating. Kozhin was involved because the Office of the Presidential Affairs was... The Office of the Presidential Affairs was a party in the agreement. It is an important moment in relation to the sale of the shipyards. When you asked me "how did I agree to this [refers to the shipyards proposal] without checking?". Apologies, but I have this story that is going on over a year, once every two weeks I had a meeting regarding the compensation, with the presence of Nabiullina (The Minister of Economic at the time). She told me: "I don't understand how will we be compensating you, where would the money come from? From the budget?" Cordon said: "We can't take it from the budget." At that point, I understood that there was some sort of underwater process going on, and I didn't know how it was going to work out...

Sobchak: In other words, you thought that you better take what you can while [they are] still offering.

SP: Absolutely.

Sobchak: You see, that is the same principle, and you are confirming what your opponents are implying. Because, they say, that the same principle was applied to, for instance, [you] taking cash out of the company.

Pugachev: Ksenia, nobody was taking any cash out of the company. This is absurd. Can you imagine, the investigation was going on throughout 5 years. Once I wrote the letter [to the President] that I am going to launch the international arbitration case, I found myself in the middle of the criminal case, they suddenly found out that the cash was taken out. But before that they didn't know about it [sarcastically]. The Central Bank didn't know, they even though its representatives were in the [Mezhprombank] 24 hours a day.

Sobchak: Let me ask you another question. Where could the money of the Central Bank disappear? If all their allegations are lies? I'm sure that you have conducted your own investigation.

SP: No.

Sobchak: So where did the money go?

SP: I'm thinking that there are two possibilities. The first one - is what we were talking about. No credit without bail was actually given. So we didn't believe them when they said that they just gave the credit [the credit without bail to the Mezhprombank] based on a good rating, but then, they said that the bank [the Mezhprombank] was actually in poor standing. It's contradictory. Imagine, I found out in 2010 that the bank [the Mezhprombank] was given almost 1.5 billion dollars, not 1 billion.

Sobchak: So you are saying that you didn't know about the credits.

SP: I didn't know about it and it's a fact. The question is, imagine my emotional state. I was thinking how strange it was that the credit was given just like that...

Sobchak: In your opinion, where did the money go?

SP: I think, that part was divided.

Sobchak: By who?

SP: By those who authorised the credits, the ones in charge of the bribes. Ignatiev wasn't sitting there doing it himself. It was a whole empire - the Central Bank.

Sobchak: So you think it was top managers, including Dimitri Amunts, Aleksander Didenko?

SP: No. Amunts wasn't working in the bank, he couldn't do it.

Sobchak: Do you think it is true that these people made a deal with the justice system and began to testify?

SP: I understand that Amuntsh didn't make any deals with the justice system, but Didenko did. He was released from custody in exchange for his testimony that doesn't correspond with reality.

Sobchak: False?

SP: Of course, false testimony.

SP: And why did he give such testimony then, in your opinion?

SP: Because they have to choose between prison and false testimony. I am not judging them, in this sense. They were put in this situation. That's the punitive judicial system...

Sobchak: Okay, got it. Let's talk about the business in Tuva, which was also expropriated, according to you. Did you have a relationship with Ramzan Kadyrov? and how did he, if he did, apart from the photograph that you told me about, participate in this affair?

SP: No, I didn't have any relationship with him. I don't know him and I have never met him. Same goes for Baisarov.

Sobchak: It's just that I read, that during the negotiation in regards to the coal deposit, you stated that Ruslan Baisarov sent you a photo of himself with Ramzan Kadyrov, asking to negotiate a lower price.

SP: Not exactly like that. Baisarov didn't sent the photo. It was Igor Altushkin who sent it. He is a Russian-Chechen businessman, who lives in Siberia, he has a copper company there. He was the party who negotiated the purchase of the coal deposit, shareholder of which was my eldest son.

Sobchak: Look, at first Baisarov was your partner...

SP: He wasn't my partner. I've never met him. Furthermore, it was clearly stated in the agreement... Look, he can't be my partner, because the shares belonged to my son, and he spent about 1.5 years working with international lawyers, because Altushkin was represented by American lawyers. It was very complicated but I was not involved in it.

Sobchak: So who owns this asset now?

SP: Baisarov, Kadyrov, Altushkin, I don't know the details.

Sobchak: So they were beneficiaries of this scheme?

SP: Obviously. The president wrote a direct letter. You do remember that scandal, when Baisarov wrote asking for transfer of the licence. He told Shuvalov to deal with it, to make the transfer. And it was momentarily dealt with. What sort of miracle is that?

Sobchak: So you had two main interested parties in your two biggest assets (so we can just conclude with it) - Sechin, and Baisarov with Altushkin.

SP: I'll repeat - the final interest is Putin's. Nothing happens without him. Altushkin played a technical role. Also, Credit Suisse organised this deal.

Sobchak: Do you count on getting asylum in England?

SP: I don't know. I don't have this in mind yet.

Sobchak: So you didn't apply?

SP: No. I am a citizen of the European Union, I don't need political asylum.

Sobchak: How do you think the extradition case, which just began, will end?

SP: First of all, the extradition case didn't begin. It is a regular procedure when thousands of requests are being sent. It is just a formality when the request has to be stamped, and said that it will be considered.

Sobchak: So you think that extradition will not happen?

SP: Of course not.

Sobchak: Are you sure?

SP: Absolutely.

Sobchak: Why is that?

SP: It is politically motivated case. What happened was: firstly they took my assets, then initiated criminal case, and now they are saying "send him to us, we will tear him apart over here". That is the story. Very simple.

Sobchak: Yes, it looks like it is very simple. I have a question; it's not business-related. Don't you think, while you were still safe in Russia, and had all those assets, it can be suggested that you weren't openly fighting for any democratic values?

SP: Of course not. I didn't go to the Bolotnaya Square.

Sobchak: So you were told to work with Surkov - okay. To fight in court with 'Novaya Gazeta' - you fought.

SP: I sued 'Novaya Gazeta' for obvious reasons.

Sobchak: I see.

SP: What about it?

Sobchak: I mean, you were the person who accepted the system that existed, and knew its rules. Knew better than anybody else.

SP: I obviously didn't accept the system. I had major disagreements [with it].

Sobchak: Many people don't like the system. But you didn't speak about it in any interview, maybe you discussed it quietly...

SP: What is the point? I discussed it with Putin, and with everyone in the circle. What should I have done?... How do you see it? If I have a relationship with Putin, I should have given an interview? Cherkasov gave an interview, remember?

Sobchak: Which interview?

SP: Cherkasov gave an interview regarding our special services. After the interview he somehow disappeared. What's the point [of an interview]? If I'm already talking to you directly, why should I go and give an interview, for instance in the Kommersant, to reach out to you? Or should I go to the Bolotnaya Square with the banner? What's the point?

Sobchak: It's a bit different - what I'm saying. Don't you think that [your] situation today will be viewed as such: you had a resource of the relationship with the president...

SP: And what is it to me, this resource? Did he [Putin] give me something?

Sobchak: ...And now your situation has changed, now you are being persecuted and are trying to turn your purely economical case into a political one.

SP: It is political. Please understand that I wasn't talking to officials from the Ministry of Finance. The entire elite of today's Russia participated in it to some extent. Kozak was setting up meetings, we were discussing things. I spoke with Kozak over the phone (I was already in London). The White House held a meeting of the Board of Directors of private enterprise. The agenda was to change the director. I said: "How can you do something like that? This is 100% private enterprise. [reflecting speech] "You [Kozak] is sending this agenda out, asking the Board of Directors to come to a meeting at 10am, saying that, you, the Vice-Prime Minister of Russia will be heading the meeting regarding the change of the director". What do you think he told me?

Sobchak: I don't know.

SP: He said: "Listen, it's nothing personal. The boss ordered [me to do it] - and I'm doing it".

Sobchak: Look, just to conclude today's conversation, I think that we covered a vast number of issues, but there's one I want to come back to. You said yourself that it was suggested for you to work with Surkov - and you did, and you didn't go to the Bolotnaya Square...

SP: Nobody told me to work with Surkov.

Sobchak: Let me ask a question. We discussed this - that you did what was asked. Then why do you consider your case to be political, not economical. Why do you think you are a politically persecuted businessman in Russia?

SP: Firstly, I'm not a businessman, I'm more of a politician. We started on this note.

Sobchak: But you are being persecuted not as a politician.

SP: Well...

Sobchak: But, you are not being persecuted because, while you were a Senator, you voted against the law in the name of Dima Yakovlev?

SP: Not because of that. But political motivation doesn't always express itself through such primitive forms.

Sobchak: Then how? We sorted out the economic part [of your case]. What is the political part?

SP: But I explained everything already. It's not businessmen who stole my assets - in which case I would have written to the Prosecutor's Office, and it would have been enough. [In my case], the head of the State, the Prime Minister, the president and so on, were making these decisions. He [Putin, during the address at the Baltisky shipyard] said: "If the shareholders won't change their minds, then we will take hard measures". This is the political motivation. How else should it be expressed? I never said that I was persecuted as a dissident.

Sobchak: In other words, the political resource is used against you.

SP: Absolutely. Is there a bigger resource than that of the Russian president? He annexed a part of the neighbouring country, but everyone is saying that they don't know if the tanks are Russian or not. Just compare the situation. He [Putin] took away the shipyards, took away other things, and gave it to Kadyrov. Maybe he [Kadyrov] is loyal to him, he likes him, so he transferred him the licence.

Sobchak: Then I have the last question on this topic. You said that there was a meeting in Amsterdam, that the talks didn't work out. Maybe you should have written to Putin saying that you agree to everything and let's solve this amicably.

SP: First of, I don't agree to "everything". As for the letter, it, of course, exists, there are even a few, but in the framework of the arbitration. It is written by the lawyers.

Sobchak: Did you get the answer?

SP: Yes. In the form of the new criminal case initiated two weeks ago.

SP: So I hope that your optimism regarding the impossibility of the extradition will be confirmed with such decisions. I wish, in this sense, that it wouldn't end badly for you.

SP: I have no doubt.

Sobchak: My last question. You are a loyal person. You said that you personally participated in Putin's appointment [as a president], and in many other things related to politics. Don't you think that everything that happened to you is some kind of punishment for some of your actions.

SP: Of course I do. I have to answer for everything. You know, good intentions pave the road to hell. The question is did I have any bad intentions? No. Did I dream about a bright future for Russia? Yes. Whatever happened - happened. I wouldn't, as an Orthodox believer, mystify what happened, The Lord gives everyone a cross, which he is able to bear. That is, only according to what one is able to bear, nothing more. So, well, then, in that sense, it should have happened.

Sobchak: I have a present for you - "Life of the Archpriest Avvakum".

SP: Thank you.

Sobchak: Have you read this book?

Pugachev: No.

Sobchak: Perhaps, you will have a lot of free time, so you would have time to read it.

SP: A lot of free time? I don't think so...

Sobchak: In case you will. If we consider the pessimistic forecast, then you will have a lot of free time.

SP: I wouldn't want that. This is the worst option for me.

Sobchak: I wish you luck. Thank you very much for the interview.