



Interview With Alexsey Pivovarov of NTV

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Moscow, Russia
April 20, 2005

(10:00 a.m. Local)

MR. PIVOVAROV: Madame Secretary, welcome to Moscow. So this, your visit, is a preparation of the Presidential visit to Moscow in May. We both remember that during a recent U.S.-Russia summit in Bratislava, your President was quite critical of democratic freedoms in Russia, but got quite a strong rebuttal. Are you planning to keep the tone set in Bratislava here in Moscow?

SECRETARY RICE: I thought the tone in Bratislava was very good, because it was a tone of friends who are able to talk about difficult issues. We do have concerns that Russia's democratic progress continue. It's extremely important not just for U.S.-Russian relations but, of course, for Russia's own progress, because a free and open society is a society that also opens the creativity of its people; that would facilitate Russia's integration into Europe and into Euro-Atlantic structures; and that would serve Russia well in becoming really a leading power again in the 21st century.

So we've talked about these issues. We do it in a spirit of friendship and cooperation, not in a spirit of criticism.

MR. PIVOVAROV: It's widely announced that you are going to discuss security cooperation issues here in Moscow. What issues in particular will be under discussion?

SECRETARY RICE: We've had very good security cooperation concerning the war on terrorism, intelligence sharing, law enforcement activities together. We, of course, need to continue our progress on the nonproliferation issues. I mean, everyone is very concerned that the weapons of mass destruction and the technologies associated with them would not fall into the hands of terrorists or others who might use them to harm us. And Russia, of course, as well as the United States, has a sad history with terrorist incidents.

We have recently signed -- Defense Minister Ivanov and I signed an agreement on MANPADS because this is a very dangerous kind of weapon that can be used by terrorists to try and bring down aircraft and the like, so we have that cooperation. And I think you will see us try to continue to make progress on the terrorism agenda and also on the nonproliferation agenda.

Finally, we have very good military-to-military cooperation. We've had joint exercises. I think the NATO-Russia Council has been very active. So on the security side, we're doing very well.

MR. PIVOVAROV: After the visit to Moscow in May, George Bush is going to Tbilisi. It's well known that current relations between Georgia and Russia are far from being ideal. Do you think that this Presidential visit may cause some negative emotions among Russian people?

SECRETARY RICE: I would hope that the Russian people would understand that we have friendly relations with Latvia, friendly relations with Georgia. But by no means is this to be at the exclusion of friendly relations either with Russia, between the United States and Russia, or between Russia and Georgia or Russia and Latvia. In fact, it's our very strong view that Russia is well served by strong neighbors, by the former states of the old Soviet Union who now are developing transparent and good relations with Russia. They are always going to be close relations because of economic ties, cultural ties. So when the President goes to Latvia and he goes to Georgia, he goes as a friend to those countries. He goes to talk about the need for cooperation with everyone, including with Russia, and I think that will be a very good message. So I would hope that the Russian people see this also in the spirit of friendship.

MR. PIVOVAROV: Another Russian neighbor, Ukraine, has clearly stated its position to join NATO. Does Washington support this and do you think it may look friendly towards Russia?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we've said to the Ukrainians that it's always been NATO's policy that there is an open door for European democracies. But this is very much a process that is performance based. In other words, Ukraine currently has an action plan with NATO that helps them to make certain reforms. These are reforms, by the way, that will strengthen Ukrainian democracy, strengthen civil control of the military, all things that should contribute to a more peaceful neighborhood in which Russia lives. So as Ukraine moves toward these Euro-Atlantic structures, again, it does not have to be at the expense of good relations with Russia.

I might just note that I think the NATO-Russia Council has been much more active in recent years, and it binds Russia in a very effective way to these Euro-Atlantic structures. Russia has a relationship with the EU. These are all good things. Because as Europe becomes more integrated, as Europe bases its relations on transparency, on economic ties, on the cultural ties that go back centuries, this is just going to be a much more peaceful continent; and we will be able, together, to resolve the remaining issues, for instance issues that we have in the Balkans.

MR. PIVOVAROV: Do you still consider Iranian-Russian nuclear cooperation in Bushehr an issue that spoils Russian-U.S. relations, or it is somehow resolved?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we have had concerns about the Bushehr nuclear reactor. But we've also noted that Russia has taken proliferation concerns into consideration when it has done the agreement with Iran. And some of the provisions are really very useful. For instance, the decision that there should be delivery of fuel to Iran and then a fuel take-back, which does help to minimize the proliferation risk.

We all need to be united in dealing with the Iranians because the Iranians have an obligation to show the world that they intend to live up to their international obligations not to try to get civilian nuclear power -- to get a nuclear weapon under the cover of civilian nuclear power.

I think that we, Russia, the Europeans have been pretty united in this view because no one wants to see an Iranian nuclear weapon, particularly in the Middle East, which is already a terribly troubled region.

MR. PIVOVAROV: Russia is currently finishing all preparations to join World Trade Organization. Does Washington support this, or there are some unresolved problems between our countries on WTO matters?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we are very supportive of Russia's effort to join the WTO. We think this would be good for world trade, good for Russia. There are certain performance criteria in the WTO that have to be met. And we need to resolve the issue of intellectual property rights. At this point, the legal framework in Russia to prosecute those who engage in piracy is not very strong, and that really must be taken care of before WTO accession. There are agricultural issues between us. We have

an agreement that is awaiting signature that would help on the agricultural issues. There are issues of access to financial services markets.

It has to be understood, and I hope the Russian people will understand, that when the United States supports WTO accession, this also has to be accepted by the American Congress. And so we have to have performance on these outstanding issues so that when we go to the American Congress, the WTO accession can go through without difficulty.

MR. PIVOVAROV: Madame Secretary, it's widely known that you speak fluent Russian.

SECRETARY RICE: [In Russian.] (Laughter.)

MR. PIVOVAROV: Do you ever use it when talking to Russian officials, and does it help you?

SECRETARY RICE: [In Russian.]

MR. PIVOVAROV: Do you use it in talks with Mr. Putin?

SECRETARY RICE: [In Russian.] (Laughter.)

MR. PIVOVAROV: Last question. You already met with our channel last time when you were in Moscow one year ago; and when my colleague asked you maybe you could play something on the piano, you said, next time probably. Is this the time, Madame Secretary?

SECRETARY RICE: Next time. (Laughter.) [In Russian.]

MR. PIVOVAROV: Madame Secretary, thank you very much.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.
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