
What Has it Got in its Pocketses?

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There's an old saying that goes: if you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas. But in the case of Donald J. Trump, it's more like: if you crawl into Putin's pocket, you come out smelling like oligarch cologne and kompromat.

The world watched in slight bewilderment as Trump repeatedly bowed before Russian strongman Vladimir Putin and one question loomed, longing for an answer, *What has he got in his pocket?*

For any reader who may be Tolkien fan, then you will know that a similar question to this has been asked before. Today, however, the question takes on a new form, set against the backdrop of modern geopolitics - it's not Bilbo's pocket that we're interested in anymore, it's Putin's.

Putin's pocket, you see, is no ordinary storage space. It's a vast, Kremlin-tailored void where inconvenient truths go to die, as dark and as treacherous as the tunnels beneath the Misty Mountains. And there, it might seem, sits Trump, whispering about "beautiful letters" and "tremendous respect" whilst clutching his *precious* relationship with the Russian autocrat.

Just as Gollum's obsession with the Ring transforms him into a shadow of himself, so too does Trump's apparent fixation on staying close to Putin, suggesting he's carrying something that has begun to define him. The more he flirts with fancy, dismisses intelligence and teeters over the edges of foundational democracy, the more he seems to be serving a strange power.



But what is it exactly that holds this shadowy mastery over the President?

Good old-fashioned dirt, perhaps?

The infamous Steele dossier that haunts Trump just like the Ring haunted Bilbo is impossible to ignore. Compiled by former British spy Christopher Steele, it alleged that during Trump's 2013 visit to Moscow, Russian intelligence recorded him in a *kompromising* situation, engaging in, shall we say, alternative spa treatment with Russian prostitutes. The story persisted and subsequently hung over his presidency, just like the Eye of Sauron, ominously watching and waiting. Of course, Trump howled 'fake news!' louder than a Nazgûl's shriek, but that wouldn't matter because Russians are absolute masters of kompromat. As former KGB Officer Yuri Shvets has explained, the real power of kompromat lies not in using it, but in the behavioural changes that occur simply from knowing it exists. Like the Ring whispering to its bearer, kompromat works through psychological pressure, making its victims see their captors as masters.

Maybe it's financial leverage? It is well-known that Trump's Russian money problems stretch back decades, winding through shadows like the path to Mordor itself. When American banks refused him after his 1990s bankruptcies,

Russian oligarch's came in bearing gifts: \$98 million in real estate purchases that kept his empire from crumbling. "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of our assets," Trump once bragged. "We see a lot of money pouring in from Russia." It was his lifeline, his precious. Could these money-ties explain why Trump never criticises Putin? Like Gollum needing his ring to feel whole, Trump might indeed need Russian gold to keep his empire standing. Perhaps most damaging was the secret pursuit of 'Trump Tower Moscow' throughout the 2016 campaign. While publicly claiming "no deals" with Russia, he was privately offering Putin a \$50 million penthouse as tribute. His lawyer Michael Cohen's guilty plea revealed the truth: negotiations continued deep into the campaign, with at least ten briefings to Trump himself. The public denials then are clearly lies told while the precious deal glittered in his mind, not misstatements at all.

Then came Helsinki 2018, when the world watches Trump stand beside Putin and publicly side with Russia rather than his own intelligence agencies. It was the moment the ring's true power was revealed for all to see. Even Republican stalwarts were aghast. John McCain called it "disgraceful." Former CIA Director John Brennan

labeled it "treasonous." Most telling was Trump's body language - nervous, deferential, fearful - as if Gandalf had demanded him to leave the ring behind.

So what did Putin show him in their private two-hour meeting, held without any American witnesses? Maybe a folder of financial records. Maybe videos. Or maybe it was merely a knowing smile and the words, "We know everything."

Some speculate that his deference extends to post-presidential calculations. With mounting legal troubles and financial peril looming, the prospect of future deals, favours or sanctuary in a country with no extradition treaty cannot be fully dismissed. There's also the ideological factor. Trump's Boromir-like envy of Putin's absolute power. Throughout his presidency, Trump praised various autocrats worldwide, joking about being "President for life" himself. In Putin's Russia, dissenting oligarchs face exile, critical journalists fall from windows, opposition leaders disappear. For Trump, who raged against 'fake news,' Putin's direct methods must seem appealingly efficient.

Bilbo asked Gollum, "What have I got in my pocket?" and the answer changed middle-earth's fate forever. Trump never asks what's in Putin's pocket because he already knows. It's leverage. It's kompromat. It's the strings of a puppet consumed by his precious. So when Trump defends Putin's latest war crime or parrots his propaganda, remember: it's not strategy. It's the madness of Gollum, forever whispering while serving the very darkness that enslaves him. The riddle's answer was always there, glinting in the shadows: What's in Putin's pocket? Donald Trump.