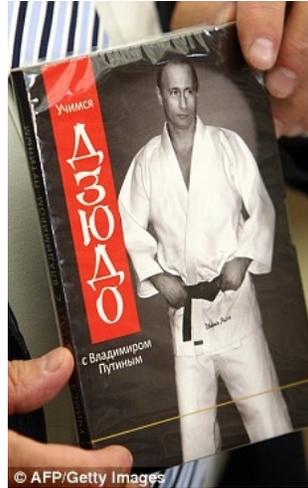


Daily Mail October 8, 2008

Putin releases 'Let's learn judo with Vladimir' DVD



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First we saw him shirtless while fishing. Then he was pictured at the wheel of a massive racing truck and shooting a tiger in the Siberian forest with a tranquiliser. He has also appeared operating a train, sailing on a submarine and co-piloting a fighter jet.

Now Vladimir Putin - the world's most manly leader - has released yet another display of his own masculinity: a DVD entitled 'Let's learn judo with Vladimir Putin'.

Today he presented the instructional judo DVD that shows him throwing an opponent to the mat. 'Let's Learn Judo with Vladimir Putin' is the product of collaboration between Putin - a black belt - and former World and Olympic judo champion Yasuhiro Yamashita.

At a nighttime presentation minutes into his 56th birthday, Putin said the title was little more than an 'advertising trick'. Anyone who watches it 'will be learning not from your humble servant but from real geniuses' of the martial art, he said.

But portions shown on Russian television depicted a black-clad Putin talking about the history and philosophy of judo, as well as a white-robed Putin demonstrating moves against a practice partner.

Putin is a one-time judo champion of his home city St. Petersburg - called Leningrad at the time. He is also an avid skier, and his apparent fitness and devotion to physical activity helped increase his popularity in eight years as president.

This contrasted sharply with his hard-drinking and chronically ill predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, who died last year.

'The level of developing of sports undoubtedly defines the level of development of the country itself,' Putin said at the presentation. 'Without sports, it's impossible to speak of a healthy way of life, about the health of the nation as such,' he said.