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Was the Ukraine Coup America's Main Event at the Sochi Olympics?

Clever, Clever

by PETER LEE

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In my previous essay on events in Ukraine, I speculated that the US and EU orchestrated the climax of the Ukraine crisis to occur while Vlad was preoccupied with presiding over his beloved Olympics, and unwilling or unable to destroy the soft power vibe by intervening forcefully in the Ukraine, or even giving the matter his more complete attention.

Clever, clever America, if this was the case.

Of course, with what we know now about the aggressive Western destabilization effort in Ukraine—which included subversion, coercion, and even comfort and aid to violent insurrectionists against Yanukovich's hapless elected government—it is rather ironic that the Western media anointed Putin History's Greatest Monster February 2014 Edition.

You remember that, don't you? The mean, anti-democratic, gay-hating, Pussy-Riot whipping autocrat who might unleash tyrannical Russian might against the freedom fighters in Maidan Square?

Well, it is also ironic that Putin preached non-intervention and let Ukraine (and Yanukovich, obviously not his BFF) stew, while it was the West and the ever-reliable Western media that engaged in active cheerleading and more, intervening in Ukraine to facilitate the overthrow of an elected government on Russia's borders.

Wait a minute. Maybe that's *too* ironic. Maybe it was intentional. Maybe the Western campaign against Putin and Sochi was part of the pre-emptive framing effort to depict events in Ukraine as a struggle of freedom-loving Euro-Ukrainians against the Evil Empire.

I always thought the ostensible reason for the near universal boycott of the Sochi opening ceremonies by President Obama and the EU states always smelled a little fishy. As I recall, the guy who runs Belgium was the only Atlantic leader who showed up.

Of course, nobody said We're boycotting. It was just, we're too busy, (F*ck you Vladimir).

There was considerable rumbling in the Western press, I recall, that the forces of freedom were dumping on Putin and Sochi because of the anti-gay propaganda law, a justification that has a few holes in it, considering that the legal position of LGBTs is more protected in Russia than it is in several US states. And let's not forget the brutal oppression of stray dogs—cute, cuddly puppies!—by the heartless Russian bear.

Maybe the Sochi-time hostility was more a matter of making sure that Putin and Russia were on the wrong side of global opinion—and less likely to risk spoiling the optics of the Games by throwing themselves into a regional crisis—when Ukraine finally blew up.

As to why the United States was so keen to hand Russia a geopolitical loss, maybe it has to do with support for the EU's long-standing desire to wrench Ukraine into the Western column.

I hope so.

Because an alternate possibility is that the United States did it for revenge, to punish Putin for not going along with the US program on Syria.

That's not great because, if so, the decision might have been made out of short-sighted spite, and the West might have taken sole custody of the Ukrainian tar baby just as its finances are teetering to collapse and the split between eastern and western Ukrainians threatens to turn into a permanent rift.

It would be... ironic! There's that word again!—if punishing Putin over Syria turned Ukraine into another Syria.

I don't think this revenge scenario is too outlandish. President Obama seems to be a man who likes his revenge served cold—icy cold—and maybe underneath that controlled façade he was itching to show Putin that Russia could not lightly defy US demands to withdraw support from Assad and collapse the Syrian government. I believe personal disdain and the need to assert his credentials as world's numero uno big boss drives President Obama's foreign policy with regard

to Putin, with the Chinese leadership (ever since he was subjected to a finger-wagging tirade by China's chief climate negotiator for America's botched outing at the Copenhagen summit in 2010), and of course, his counterproductive crusade—now in its third dismal year with a promise of further escalation— to destroy Syria and further destabilize the Middle East in order to punish Bashar Assad for refusing to go when Obama told him to go.

One hopes that twelve-dimensional chess is guiding US moves in the Ukraine. But if that policy is in the hands of a crude neo-con like “Fuck the EU” Victoria Nuland, maybe we're looking at another one of those “nobody could have foreseen” bloody foreign policy botches that the US seems to specialize in nowadays.

And Putin might have the last laugh, withholding Russia's promised contribution of \$15 billion while the EU scrambles to come up with the \$30 billion Ukraine needs to get through the year (amazingly, the US has to date made no commitment to provide financial aid, something the EU is probably noticing; and thinking Thanks a Billion! Not! Vicky Nuland, since the aggressive US strategy blew up the transitional government negotiated by the EU that might have kept Russia in the game and on the hook).

A year from now it might be Vladimir Putin who's saying Thanks! Victoria Nuland. Thanks to you I was spared the cost and trouble of propping up a dysfunctional pro-Russian government in the Ukraine. I saved \$15 billion bucks...turned a nice profit since I could drop concessional pricing in the new gas contracts...and I picked up east and south Ukraine as new Russian provinces for free!

Clever, clever...maybe too clever America.