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Sochi Guests Shouldn't Poop on the Russia Rug

By Josh Cohen

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As the Winter Olympics in Sochi got under way, we were treated to hordes of Western journalists tweeting and Instagramming about the mess in their hotel rooms and unfinished buildings.

Much of the commentary on Sochi, however, has turned into schadenfreude, a feeling of joy or pleasure in seeing the misfortunes suffered by others.

Take the opening ceremony on Feb. 7. People did not like some of the music; they criticized one of the mascots; they thought the floats of the Kremlin spires looked cheap. And on and on.

In reality, however, the ceremony was a stunning success. From the glorious music of Stravinsky and Tchaikovsky to the allusions to great writers such as Tolstoy, Gogol and Nabokov, the ceremony was both marvelous to behold and captured the beauty and complexity of Russian history. In contrast, what kind of music would the US have trotted

out for an Olympics opening ceremony — Lady Gaga, Justin Bieber and Miley Cyrus?

Meanwhile, Olympic athletes themselves are marveling at the high quality of the Olympic village and event venues, while the events themselves have been well managed and a thrill to watch.

Of course, every Olympics has its imperfections, whether it be venues, accommodations, weather, or even terrorism — let's not forget what occurred in Atlanta in 1996 nor Munich in 1972. But on the whole the Russians seem to have pulled off Sochi quite well.

Certainly, many of the political criticisms of President Vladimir Putin's regime are legitimate. From corruption to last year's legislation directed against the LGBT community, there are certainly some things to dislike about the atmosphere politics of modern-day Russia.

Despite the flaws of their country however, many Russians are taking a justifiable pride in hosting the Games and are feeling hurt and anger at the criticism in Western media. As one Russian acquaintance put it, "You don't come into someone's house as a guest and then poop on their rug." He used a stronger word than "poop."

Although I am American, and admittedly not a huge fan of winter sports, I have become so annoyed with the slanted media coverage of the Games that I am now glued to the television and chanting, "Россия, вперед!"

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