

U.S. Bashing Takes Center Stage at Holiday Show for Russian Kids

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A typical Russian holiday show for children features fairy tale characters such as Father Frost and his granddaughter Snegurochka, pictured here.

Russian holiday shows typically revolve around fairy tale plots and fantasy characters, but this year some children have been treated to new themes: sanctions, Russia's nuclear arsenal and the "stupidity" of the United States.

Amid dismal relations between Moscow and the U.S. over the crisis in Ukraine, a concert hall in the city of Lipetsk, some 400 kilometers south of Moscow, regaled its young viewers with a heavily politicized performance featuring the characters of U.S. President Barack Obama, dressed as Santa Claus, and State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki as an elf, according to video footage of the show posted online late last month.

The American characters repeatedly testified to their nation's "stupidity," while the Russian ones boasted of their country's nuclear arsenal.

"They are right to say in Russia: All Americans are dumb," the Obama character tells the audience.

"It's not my fault that I'm so stupid," the Psaki character seconds.

After the elf proclaims that the U.S. has "established our own world order" and threatens sanctions, her Russian opponents in the show — dressed, traditionally, as fairy tale characters — respond with some vigorous flexing of military muscle.

"We now have new warriors defending Russia, and their names are Topol M, Iskander and Bulava," a Russian character says, ticking off the names of Russia's ballistic missiles and systems.

The episode culminates in the broadcast of a fragment of President Vladimir Putin's speech to the Valdai Discussion Club last year, during which he portrayed Russia's annexation of Crimea as the actions of a proud "bear" standing its ground against U.S. "imperialism."

"The bear will not ask anyone's permission," Putin said. "In our part of the world, [the bear] is considered the master of the taiga, and I know for a fact that it is not intending to move to some other climatic zone ... But it will not let anyone have its taiga."

A giant bear character then walks on stage and prances awkwardly to an upbeat tune.

Russian children aren't the only ones to be treated to declarations of their country's nuclear might. Talk show host Dmitry Kiselyov, now head of state news agency Rossiya Segodnya, warned during a prime-time show last year that Russia had enough nuclear weapons to "turn the U.S. into radioactive ash."

As for fairy tale characters, they too are familiar with political backlash. Russia's Science and Education Ministry last year threatened to scrap a mathematics textbook from the recommended elementary school reading list for featuring insufficiently patriotic characters, such as Snow White and Cinderella.

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