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Russian State Television Flips President Obama a Farewell Bird

America's 'eight-year disgrace,' according to Kremlin propaganda

By Ola Cichowlas

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Ever since President Putin appointed him to lead the a state-owned international news agency, Dmitry Kiselyov has dedicated most of his Sunday television show to slamming Barack Obama as one of history's worst leaders. This has often given his program somber overtones, but the most recent episode was quite jubilant: it's the last time Kiselyov goes on the air while Obama still occupies the White House.

The Kremlin's "chief propagandist" has other reasons to celebrate, too. For starters, he just got back from vacation, returning to work after a declassified U.S. intelligence report declared him instrumental to Moscow's efforts to influence the American presidential election.

Kiselyov opened his show with some talk about race in U.S. politics, claiming that it was "polite to point out that Obama was America's first black president," when he first took office, eight years ago. Today, Kiselyov says, public figures supposedly avoid mentioning this fact, fearful of leaving "a negative mark" on other black politicians who also aspire to the presidency.

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Why the sudden taboo? Obama's two terms in office have been "a disgrace," Kiselyov told his millions of viewers, as the show zoomed in on a photograph of the president. It was also "destructive" (the audience is now shown footage of bombs exploding) and "bloody" (cue the images of refugees).

Brezhnev's America

Projecting a bit if Soviet context onto the Obama presidency, Kiselyov compared the last eight years in America to the late Brezhnev era.

Showing footage of Obama and U.S. Vice President Joe Biden wiping tears from their eyes during farewell speeches, Kiselyov told his viewers that American politics has never seen "so many male tears" — a weepy display he says Russians witnessed repeatedly under Brezhnev, when the Soviet leader grew "sentimental" in his old age.

In today's America, Kiselyov said, crying has become "fashionable" among liberals.

But don't be fooled, he warned Russians, because the tears are phony. Obama's farewell address was clearly staged and the crying was only an added "effect," Kiselyov said. The crowd interrupted Obama with applause as often as sycophants cheered during Brezhnev's speeches, and it was obvious that Obama is preparing himself for a fruitful career as a "lecturer on abstract themes," Kiselyov speculated — for instance, the TV host said without smiling, "on the dangers of Russian hackers to American diplomacy."

Not only are Americans giving staged speeches and crying like senile old men, but they're also incessantly giving each other medals, "just like in Brezhnev's U.S.S.R.," Kiselyov said.

The program then shows Obama receiving the Pentagon's medal for distinguished public service, where Kiselyov claims a member of the U.S. Army honor guard fainted in disgust during the ceremony. In reality, the man suffered a medical emergency.

But the very worst medal, Kiselyov said, looking so appalled that he might himself collapse, will go to Joe Biden, who's being honored by the Ukrainian government.

The very thought of awarding Biden for his role in Ukraine sends Kiselyov on a tirade of questions: "For the coup d'etat? For the bloody civil war? For poverty? For the gay parades? For corruption? For Saakashvili? For the death of industry? For the end of the European dream? For social hatred? For the hilarious export quotas from the E.U.? For the shame?"

When he's through, the TV show host seems almost out of breath.

Obama Destroyed the American Media

One of Obama's worst victims, Kiselyov said, is the American media. Under his administration, he said, the U.S. press transformed itself into a corrupt institution, capable only of producing "fake news" with a focus on Russophobia and demonizing Vladimir Putin, which the media supposedly uses to justify wars of aggression, NATO's encroachment on Russia, and the orchestration of "coup d'etats" from Ukraine to Syria.

This "technology of lies" that was used against Putin is now being redirected at another supposedly innocent victim: Donald Trump. But the show assures Russians that this campaign is not working. Quite the opposite — it's actually making the president-elect "more flamboyant."

Besides, Trump is fighting back. The show quotes his tweets on the "failing" New York Times and praises Trump for refusing a question from CNN. "Most American TV companies have corrupted themselves," said Kiselyov, the man who heads Rossiya Segodnya, a Kremlin-owned international news agency.

You Call *That* Kompromat?

What U.S. journalists have described as doing their jobs, Kiselyov called a coordinated campaign organized by the Obama administration to destroy Donald Trump's presidency. "They are attacking him as if they are preparing an impeachment," Kiselyov said.

The latest assault on America's besieged and innocent president-elect was BuzzFeed's decision to publish an unverified dossier claiming that the Kremlin is blackmailing Trump with compromising information that includes supposed proof of his sexual escapades in Moscow.

"This is an English plot against the elected president of the U.S.," Kiselyov said, accusing the British government of protecting Christopher Steele, the former MI6 officer thought to have authored the dossier. "Now *that*," he exclaims, "is interference in American politics!"

The viewer is then transported to London — specifically to Grosvenor Gardens, the address of Steele's private intelligence firm. The program's London correspondent says Steele was working on the case of Alexander Litvinenko, who was poisoned in the British capital more than a decade ago, though the TV program doesn't mention the names of the Russians suspected of the murder.

After a brief summary of Steele's life ("from a military family," "attended Cambridge," "served in the intelligence community"), the reporter speaks to Steele's neighbor, who was allegedly asked to "feed his cat," and then the correspondent talks to Steele's mailman, who looks confused that a Russian TV crew has interrupted his work.

In the end, the reporter concludes that British Prime Minister Theresa May and Foreign Minister Boris Johnson ordered the entire thing to sabotage Trump's presidency.

According to Kiselyov, the report is "too boring to summarize," but he celebrated his own starring role in the suspicions of Western intelligence workers. "The main hackers turned out

to be Russian television!" Kiselyov joked, mocking the U.S. intelligence community for squandering its $50-billion budget on digests of his TV show.

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Kiselyov insists that Barack Obama personally leaked the report, in order to justify the expulsion of 35 Russian diplomats in December, which the TV show host says was just another effort to blame the Kremlin for the Democrats' defeat in November.

The Brave New World

Meanwhile, at Trump Tower, things couldn't be more splendid. It's the most exciting place in America — maybe even in the world, viewers of Kiselyov's show learn next. "Being neighbors with Trump is like living in the epicenter of a hurricane," a reporter says as he enters Trump Tower, where he soon meets two residents, one of whom is a woman born in Crimea. She assures the reporter that Donald Trump loves people of all nations: "the Russians, the Chinese, the Indians."

Trump, she says, has affectionately nicknamed her "Lady Russia" since she moved into the building.

On the other side of the corridor, the reporter meets Italian businessman George Lombardi, who was recently photographed sitting in the lobby of the tower with France's far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen. Lombardi assures the Russian TV crew that Trump poses no danger to women, contrary to news reports, adding that Trump never enters the elevator if there is an unaccompanied woman inside.

"He always waits for someone else to be there," he says.

Unfortunately for Kiselyov, this segment seems to have backfired. Lombardi's comments were apparently meant to debunk reports about Trump's sexual perversities, but the strange anecdote about the elevator unintentionally raises questions about why the president-elect can't be alone with a woman in closed spaces. Indeed, even the Russian reporter seems to tilt his head in confusion, listening to Lombardi.

Beware of Obama and Rebel Republicans

But the perfect world inside Trump Tower is threatened by powerful forces beyond. Kiselyov warned Russians not to be naive about renewed relations with the U.S., stressing that "outside actors" are working actively to sabotage President Trump.

In the American tradition, Kiselyov said, the transfer of power should be smooth, glossing over Russia's own disastrous history with such transitions. "This time it's going to be rough," the TV show host said of Trump's incoming presidency.

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Yes, Kiselyov reminded viewers, Obama is doing everything possible in his final days as

president to wreck Trump's friendship with Russia, but there are also people close to Trump who could cause problems, he said.

Rex Tillerson, Trump's nominee for secretary for state, has yet to earn Moscow's trust. Kiselyov noted that Senator Marco Rubio tried to force Tillerson to sever his links to Russia at his confirmation hearing. He was doing fine for a while but was "broken" when asked about Russian hackers, Kiselyov argued. On Crimea, too, Tillerson disappointed Moscow by saying the U.S. should have armed Ukraine.

"That's the kind of friend to Russia he is," the show concludes.

The confirmation hearing for James Mattis, Trump's nominee for secretary of defense, was even worse, Kiselyov complained. "They met him as one of their own and heard what they wanted," he said.

The biggest threat within Trump's own political party is undoubtedly Senator John McCain, Kiselyov said, describing his "pathological Russophobia" as a consequence of his time as a POW in Vietnam in the 1970s. McCain echoes throughout Trump's cabinet picks, KIselyov warned, and Russians "can't have unrealistic illusions," when it comes to the next U.S. administration.

The Meeting of the Year

Despite all this gloom and doom, however, Moscow has renewed hope in the start of a New World Order. Russia, Kiselyov said, is ready to work on rebuilding ties with the United States.

"Trump is not pro-Russian, as the liberal press says — he is pro-American," Kiselyov stressed, warning that there will be no "gifts" from Washington.

But Moscow is prepared for this, according to Kiselyov, and a meeting between Trump and Putin is already in the works. With problems "so severe that they require Washington and Moscow to cooperate," it's likely to happen soon. But Vladimir Putin is "patient and in no hurry," Kiselyov told his audience, welcoming them to the era of President Donald Trump.

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