



Wimbledon Declares Cultural Revolution Against Russians: Will Rest of World Eventually Target the West's Crimes?

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Or, more likely, UK tennis is dominated by idiots. They must believe that Putin, who has fought on despite the West's punitive economic sanctions on Russia and abundant financial and military support for Ukraine, will be so chagrined at hurting his nation's tennis players that he will surrender. No doubt, they imagine, at this very moment Putin is preparing to withdraw Russian armed forces from Ukraine, schedule elections, resign as president, and turn himself over to the International Criminal Court.

Well, maybe not. Even leaders of the All England Club, as well as the British government headed by Prime COVID Partier Boris Johnson, which reportedly pressured the tennis paladins to impose the ban, could not be stupid enough to believe that, right? Right??

The Lawn Tennis Association appears to be reviving China's Cultural Revolution, punishing people for who they are or what they represent, rather than what they have done. Being born Russian now amounts to the curse of Cain. Ian Hewitt, the All England Club chairman, affected crocodile tears as he preened before the media: "We recognize that this is hard on the individuals affected, and it is with sadness that they will suffer for the actions of the leaders of the Russian regime." However, he plans to punish innocent individuals for something which they did not do and do not control in order to look good.

The Wimbledon folks apparently imagined that the entire world would be watching the tournament and viewing it as a proxy for the war. The LTA announced: "Given the profile of The Championships in the United Kingdom and around the world, it is our responsibility to play our part in the widespread efforts of government, industry, sporting and creative institutions to limit Russia's global influence through the strongest means possible."

Sorry to spoil the association's fantasies, but most people on earth do not watch Wimbledon. And those who do do so for the tennis, not politics. If Medvedev or, less likely, Pavlyuchenkova, won, most people would not view it as a victory for Moscow or Putin. Only the delusional LTA,

scandal-scarred British prime minister, and hysterical political commentators could imagine that barring Russian nationals from Wimbledon would deal a death blow to "Russia's global influence."

The tennis politicians appear to recognize the nonsensical nature of their position, seeking to disguise their hubris with the claim that the situation is unique: "In the circumstances of such unjustified and unprecedented military aggression, it would be unacceptable for the Russian regime to derive any benefits from the involvement of Russian or Belarusian players with The Championships."

However, there are other military aggressors. For instance, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates against Yemen; America, the United Kingdom, and other European nations against Iraq, Libya, and Serbia; and the Soviet Union against Afghanistan. Indeed, there was no ban on tennis players from the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact members even as communist apparatchiks occupied Eastern Europe; violently oppressed Hungary, East Germany, and Poland; and aimed the Red Army westward. British tennis morality is quite selective.

Worse, though more understandable, perhaps, is the jihad demanded by Ukrainian players against Russian individuals who have done nothing against Ukrainians. At least Elina Svitolina, the top-ranked Ukrainian woman, only wanted to exclude players backing the war: "We don't want them banned completely. If players don't speak out against the Russian government, then it is the right thing to ban them." She added: "We just want them to speak up, if they are with us and the rest of the world or the Russian government. This is for me the main point. If they didn't choose, they didn't vote for this government, then it's fair they should be allowed to play and compete."

Both Medvedev and Andre Rublev, currently ranked world number eight, criticized the war. Medvedev has spent most of his adult life outside of Russia and his parents live in France. These and other Russian players do not represent Vladimir Putin. Nevertheless, interrogating players and insisting on public declarations could put them and their families in danger. Which makes that a high price to demand for someone to play sports. Especially since similar questions are not asked of Chinese about violations of human rights by their government, Saudis and Emiratis about their rulers' slaughter of Yemeni civilians, Egyptians about their dictator Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's brutal rule, and so many more.

Worse, however, are Ukrainians seeking vengeance against those who have done them no wrong. Punishing the innocent compounds the initial crime of aggression. The retired Ukrainian player Olga Savchuk (top ranking number 79) declared: "If you think about it, why is somebody who works in McDonald's in Russia losing their job because of sanctions and the tennis players are exceptions? It has to be even, and I think it's collective guilt."

Actually, the right question is, "why is somebody who works in McDonald's in Russia losing their job because of sanctions?" In theory that wasn't the purpose of the West's economic war. Rather, the objective supposedly was to weaken the Russian state. However, Savchuk let the world in on a dirty secret: sanctions usually hurt average folks, not elites, and thus achieve no political purpose. There is no example of economic sanctions fomenting a democratic revolution

against dictatorial rule. No serious observer of Russia believes sanctions are going to drive Putin from power. It isn't even clear how much they will hurt his government. However, they will do what Savchuk apparently most wants, punish all Russians for "collective guilt."

However, in this case sanctions don't go nearly far enough. Why stop at Russians and Belarusians? Surely the Chinese people should be banned. Their government has declared an "unlimited" partnership with Moscow, refused to impose sanctions, and amplified Russian war propaganda.

Moreover, consider how countries voted at the United Nations. For instance, the Security Council condemned Russia. China, India, and United Arab Emirates abstained. To international purgatory, all their citizens, and especially the tennis players! No excuses and no mercy!

The General Assembly also voted on a resolution denouncing Russia's invasion. Opposed were Eritrea, North Korea, and Syria, alongside Belarus and Russia. The tennis ban certainly should be expanded to the other three. However, 35 nations abstained and another 12 were conveniently absent. Obviously, anyone who is not with Ukraine is against it. So all of them also should go on Wimbledon's naughty list:

Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, China, Congo, Cuba, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Togo, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.

Moreover, the UN General Assembly also voted to suspend Russia from its membership on the Human Rights Council. In this case 24 states voted against and 58 abstained. Players from these apostates and traitors, too, should be banned from British tennis. In addition to the nations listed above are Bahrain, Barbados, Belize, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lesotho, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Suriname, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Vanuatu, and Yemen. By aiding and abetting Moscow, these countries should see their players barred from Wimbledon.

Yet even most of those voting against Russia have refused to impose sanctions on Russia. Despite US and British pressure, they are not trying to get every McDonald's worker fired, as Savchuk desires. Thus, they are enjoying a political form of cheap grace. Indeed, sanctions are largely a US-European affair, with little backing from America's allies elsewhere. Most Asian, African, and South American nations are not assisting Ukraine by waging economic war against the Russian government or people. This of course makes these countries de facto allies of Moscow. Their citizens obviously should not be able to play in British tennis tournaments.

Even that does not go far enough, however. Most NATO members also are falling short. After all, most European states create militaries for show rather than use and probably wouldn't fight if

Russian forces were occupying their capitals. For instance: Spain and Italy, Montenegro and North Macedonia, Albania and Portugal. None have serious armed forces. And they are doing nothing to help arm Ukraine, certainly not nearly enough in Kyiv's eyes. Even the Germans are backsliding on transferring weapons and have yet to agree to end natural gas imports. Players from these countries should be prohibited from competing. This would provide an important incentive for the governments to do their duty, meaning whatever Ukraine demands of them.

However, this still lets many NATO members off too lightly. Most of them unaccountably do not want to go to war with Russia. Why should they be so selfish? Kyiv is pushing for at least a "no fly zone." Alas, Washington and even London are opposed. In NATO only the Baltic States have backed imposing a NFZ. (Of course, they would not be enforcing flight ban. Only America could do so. Still, give them credit for being truly in sync with Ukraine.) So even Americans and Brits should be barred. That would punish their governments for refusing to start World War III on Kyiv's behalf.

Of course, this wouldn't leave many players eligible for the tournament. At least there would be a few ranked players on the women's side. And since no one dominates women's grand slams – there are almost as many champions as there are tournaments – the winner of the much-reduced competitive field conceivably could have won even with everyone there. For instance, Estonian Anett Kontaveit, ranked 6th, would be top seed on the women's side. Latvian Jelena Ostapenko, ranked 11th, would be second. And Ukrainian Svitolina, ranked 25th, would be seeded third. Ukrainian Anhelina Kalinina, ranked 36th, would be seeded fourth. Another Ukrainian is ranked 52nd, Estonian 53rd, and Ukrainian 92nd. Filling out the rest of the field would require looking outside the top 100, but sacrifices must be made to punish the Russian government, and all those refusing to war against it.

Admittedly, the men's side would be a bit more dismal if measured by the tennis played. The top men's seed would be Ricardas Berankis of Lithuania, ranked 90th in the world. The rest of the players would have to come from outside the top 150. Most probably aren't known in their home countries. But at least a few Lithuanians, Estonians, Latvians, and, of course, Ukrainians know how wield a tennis racket to some effect, even if their records aren't so hot.

Frankly, the best policy for the men would be simply to forgo matches and bestow the trophy on Aleksandr Dolgoplov, who topped out at number 13 in the world a decade ago. After all, Wimbledon has dropped the pretense that the tournament is about tennis rather than politics. The officials might as well go all the way. Dolgoplov, who retired but serves in the Ukrainian army and backs the ban, is the obvious choice for winner. Bernankis, as the only seriously ranked player, could be declared runner-up. That should make him happy since the likelihood of him reaching the final without excluding the rest of the field would be minuscule at best.

Of course, Wimbledon and the other grand slams shouldn't stop with the Russo-Ukraine war. For instance, *Washington Post* columnist Sally Jenkins also came out for collective guilt, no matter how unjust. You may not have made the decision, but in her view your birth makes you responsible. She wrote: "Even the most innocent Russians will be price-payers for the rapacious actions of Vladimir Putin's regime. Young Ukrainians are being bombed, shot and orphaned, and

they have not participated in the war or done anything to deserve their penalty, either. Nevertheless, they are part of the conflict. Why should Russian tennis players get a bye?"

So how about all the Western governments that set up the circumstances for this war, violating multiple assurances of not expanding NATO, ignoring multiple promises made to bring Ukraine into NATO, and engaging in regime change and aggressive war on Russia's doorstep? The US and its allies bear significant blame for triggering the war even though the decision to invade remains Russia's. Surely America's players should be barred from the tourney. Why should they get a bye for the war their leaders helped cause?

Then there is America's illegal invasion of Iraq, which left hundreds of thousands of Iraqis dead. And Washington's murderous backing of Saudi Arabia's and United Arab Emirates' invasion of Yemen, which is estimated to have killed some 400,000 Yemenis. Young Iraqis and Yemenis were bombed, shot, and orphaned, directly and indirectly, by the US government. To paraphrase Jenkins, Americans are part of the conflict. Why should American tennis players get a bye? Or those of the United Kingdom and other countries which backed the Iraq invasion and armed the Saudis and Emiratis?

Russia's attack on Ukraine is criminal. But that does not excuse British tennis authorities, commentators like Jenkins, and Ukrainian activists from promoting Russophobia and inflicting individual injustice while preaching collective guilt for Russians. Americans and Europeans, in particular, should be careful what they wish for.

Already much of the world – most of Asia, Africa, and South America – is resisting the West's campaign to impoverish the Russian people through sanctions. As these nations continue to grow economically they might someday isolate the West. After all, over the last two decades the allies' conduct of and support for lawless aggressive wars wrecked several countries, turned multiple foreign lands into killing grounds, left hundreds of thousands of civilians dead, displaced millions of people, devastated religious minorities, and spread ruin and instability. Would Ian Hewitt, Sally Jenkins, and the rest of us living in the West like to be held responsible for that record?

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