

Dispatches from Vancouver, Vol. III: Da da Latvija, nyet nyet Soviet

Posted By [Ilya Shapiro](#) On February 18, 2010 @ 12:05 am In [Opinion](#), [Opinion:Upper Section](#), [Sub1:Opinion](#) | [No Comments](#)

VANCOUVER—Yesterday I went downtown to the Robson Square Celebration Site (Is that like Berkeley's free-speech zone such that you can't celebrate anywhere else?) to see if I could pick up a hockey ticket. I love using scalpers: no waiting in line at the official box office, no Ticketmaster "service" charge, nothing but negotiating price mano-a-mano. I'm not sure how legal it is here—government does try to stamp out economic intercourse between consenting adults—but dozens of them are out in the open wearing laminated signs, so I assume they're at least tolerated. Good for Vancouver: Scalpers make the ticket marketplace go round, ensuring efficient pricing and distribution.

I bought my ducat for not too much over face value—not quite as good a deal as I got for speed skating on Monday, but this is a bit of hockey town so perfectly understandable—and was excited to attend the Russia-Latvia matchup. As a Washington Capitals season-ticket holder, I was even more excited that I'd get to see my boys Alexander Ovechkin and Alexander Semin.

Unfortunately, the dynamic duo play for Russia, which, though my place of birth, has again descended into authoritarian rule. (Call it communism with a Putin face.) So I couldn't in good conscience cheer for the Russkies, as aesthetically pleasing as their high-octane offense is. I decided I would root for the scrappy Baltic underdogs—"da da Latvija, nyet nyet Soviet!"—but hope that Ovie and Semin would still put on a show in a losing cause.

Alas, while the Capital duo did their job, even combining on one goal, Russia won going away, 8-2. Hopefully the free world can put an end to this course of events, and the Czechs and Slovaks could get sweet revenge on their former masters by knocking off the Russians in group play.

Indeed, much as I share The Daily Caller's displeasure with most things Canadian—my notable exceptions being hockey, beer and the metric system—if it comes down to Russia vs. Canada for the gold, I'll don the maple leaf with the best of them. Actually it's refreshing to see Canadians display more patriotism than they have traditionally: it's embarrassing for a country to define itself as being merely "not the United States," and maybe its [fiscal stewardship](#) ^[1] can even shame Congress and the White House into allowing the U.S. economy to work as efficiently as that in Robson Square.

A few other random notes:

- Korean speed skaters won both the men's and women's 500-meter sprints (only one non-Asian medaled in those events). Quite an achievement for a country that was a basket case before it was awarded the 1988 Summer Olympics. I still don't think Pyongyang should be awarded the games any time soon, however, even if the NoKos throw a good party for their ~~Crazy Tyrant~~ Dear Leader...

- The trendy part of Vancouver is a neighborhood called Yaletown. *Yaletown?* As a Princeton alum, I take more offense at this than anything else I've seen here, including *both* zambonis somehow having broken down at the Richmond Olympic "Slowval" the other day...

- The athletic highlight of the games thus far has to be Johnny Spillane's silver medal in the Nordic combined—that's ski jumping plus cross-country skiing for those of you who aren't Scandinavian. This is the sporting equivalent of Finland coming second in the Baseball World Cup. A close second is today's 1-2 finish in the women's downhill by Americans Lindsey Vonn and Julia Mancuso. The next time my shins are sore, I certainly won't be complaining.

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[1] fiscal stewardship: **http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=10208**

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