

Putin Again Spending Far More to Host an International Athletic Meet than Anyone Else Ever Has, Yabloko Party Documents

Sports

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Putin's regime has already spent far more on preparations for the 2018 World Cup than any other host country in history, not only boost his and Russia's prestige but also and perhaps even more important to use the event to pay off his cronies, Sergey Mitrokhin says.

By Paul Goble for "Window on Eurasia": January 22 – Just as was the case with the Sochi Olympics in 2014, Vladimir Putin's regime has already spent far more on preparations for the 2018 World Cup than any other host country in history, not only boost his and Russia's prestige but also and perhaps even more important to use the event to pay off his cronies, Sergey Mitrokhin says. The Yabloko Party of which Mitrokhin is a leader has prepared a listing of how much and where Moscow has spent money getting the venue cities ready – for the numbers, see yabloko.ru/lp/gold/ -- and he reports that in the competition for spending, "Russia is the champion (echo.msk.ru/blog/sergei_mitrohin/2133212-echo/). According to the Yabloko calculations, Russia has spent on the construction or reconstruction of the eleven main arenas for the World Cup 212.5 billion rubles (3.5 billion US dollars), a figure "almost 100 billion rubles [1.6 billion US dollars) greater" than other governments would have spent to do the same thing. The Russian government has not released a listing of the general contractors for these jobs, Mitrokhin continues, but it certainly consists "almost entirely of the friends and comrades in arms of Putin." And the difference between what the construction should have cost and what it did almost certainly has ended up corruptly in their pockets. The 2018 World Cup "just like the 2014 Sochi Olympiad, of course, has two goals: One of them is "an orgy of prestige," which in this case Russia is unlikely to get even the short-term boost it did after the drug scandals put paid to its "winning." And "the other is "a Bacchanalia of diversion" of state funds into the hands of the oligarchs. This money "will not make any contribution to the development of mass sport," Mitrokhin says; and it is offensive not only because of the massive corruption but also because of the ways that this money could have been better used to assist Russians overcome the hard times they are now experiencing.

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The commentary above is from Paul Goble's "Window on Eurasia" series and appears here with the author's permission. Contact Goble at: paul.goble@gmail.com