

The Americans Did It

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*In his remarkable book, *The Psychology of Totalitarianism*, the Flemish psychologist Mathias Desmet explains how collective psychosis can cause people to lose their critical faculties. He cites a famous experiment in which a person can be made to say that one line on a diagram is the same length as another, when in fact it is longer, if seven or eight actors have pretended to come to the same conclusion before him.*

Desmet is writing mainly about the coercive psychosis of Covid. But the same arguments apply to the current collective psychosis about Russia. For years and decades now, we have been fed horror stories about Russia. These have of course only increased in intensity since the invasion of Ukraine. We have now reached a situation in which entire sections of the media, and their respective national governments, claim to believe things which are simply impossible.

The latest example is the apparent sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipelines. Russia has been immediately blamed but the accusation is not credible, for the following reasons. I defy any person endowed with normal critical faculties to show the opposite.

The Americans have been opposed to Nord Stream 2 for years.

It was Germany, on the orders of the USA, that decided not to open the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline in February. Joe Biden said in front of Olaf Scholz, 'We will put an end to it.' When asked how the US would do this, he replied, 'I promise you, we'll be able to do it.' [1] Victoria Nuland made it even more clear in January. [2]

This is a long-standing American position. Under the Trump administration, extraterritorial sanctions were imposed on European companies working on the construction of the pipeline. Trump attended the Three Seas summit in Warsaw in 2018, an initiative to encourage the building of infrastructure to make Europe able to receive American liquefied natural gas in place of Russian gas. There is therefore a very long-standing US opposition to the continuing and increased supply of gas by Russia to Germany.

The Americans, together with the Poles and the Ukrainians, have been mounting a vociferous campaign against Nord Stream 2 for years, the Poles comparing the pipeline to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of September 1939. The former German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, has been vilified and nearly expelled from his own party for working for Nord Stream 2. In the face of all this hostility, Russia has continued to build the pipeline, completing it last year to the absolute fury of all the above-mentioned countries. Why would Russia blow it up after spending billions on it?

Russia has no motive to destroy the pipelines, but instead has an active interest in their remaining operational, including for political reasons.

In the current situation, Germany refused to open Nord Stream 2 and then the Russians, ostensibly for technical reasons, idled Nord Stream 1.

If you believe that the technical reasons are just a pretext, and that in reality the Russians idled Nord Stream 1 to put pressure on the Europeans, as has been widely alleged, then only possible logical conclusion is that that the pressure in question is being wielded in an attempt to force the Europeans to open Nord Stream 2, by making them realise they need it.

As Russia continues to supply gas through the overland Yamal and Druzhba (Friendship) pipelines, and as Russia recently foiled a plot to blow up the Turk Stream pipeline[3], it is incredible to allege that Russia wants to stop supplying Europe with gas.

On the contrary, the continued supply of gas, which is now sold for roubles, has helped the rouble become one of the strongest performing currencies in the world, its strength enabling the Russian Central Bank to cut interest rates and recover from the initial shock caused by the sanctions in March. Russia has every interest in continuing to sell gas, including in the current conditions of economic warfare. By the same token, Russia's enemies have every motive for removing this leverage from Russia.

If you argue, as does the President of the European Commission, that Russia is trying to blackmail Europe by cutting gas supplies, then by what possible logic would Russia sabotage the pipeline? The destruction of the pipeline removes precisely any ability of Russia to blackmail anyone. That is presumably why it was sabotaged.

Could Russia have done it?

The crazier media have been full of speculation about Russian frogmen carrying out a secret mission. Anything is possible. But if this is the truth, then it shows up Nato in rather a bad light. The explosions occurred just a few kilometres or a few dozen kilometres from the Polish, Danish and German coasts – all Nato members. If Nato is not capable of protecting a key item of European infrastructure, then what is the use of it?

By contrast, the Americans conducted exercises in June 2022 on Bornholm, the Danish island where the pipeline blew up, testing underwater explosives and drones.[4] So while it is very difficult to see how Russian frogmen could have carried out an operation under Nato's very nose, it is easy to see how the Americans could have done it because they were practicing that very thing right there three months ago. Maybe that is what the exercises were really all about.

However, if you do believe that the Russians could have sent a secret hit squad to blow up a pipeline under the Baltic Sea, then it is inconceivable that they would blow up their own pipeline and not Baltic Pipe, which (coincidentally?) was officially opened on the very day after Nord Stream 2 was attacked. Baltic Pipe is a Norwegian-Danish-Polish project designed to supply gas from Norway to Denmark and Poland and to reduce dependency on Russia. If you think that Russia is trying to sabotage Europe's gas supplies, you must surely conclude that it would blow up Baltic Pipe instead. If Russia wants to starve Europe of gas, it needs only not to put any gas into Nord Stream 2, it does not need to blow it up.

“F**ck the EU”

The US Undersecretary of State, Victoria Nuland, who as we saw above, said in January that she had told the Germans Nord Stream 2 would not go ahead, famously had a phone conversation in 2014 with the then US ambassador to Kiev, Geoffrey Pyatt, in which the two of them decided the composition of the new Ukrainian government.[5] At one point, Nuland expressed in vulgar but succinct terms US policy over Ukraine: “Fuck the EU.”

That is exactly what the Americans have just done. At least, that is what the former Polish Foreign Minister and former Defence Minister, Radek Sikorski, thinks. One of the most vicious Russophobes in a very Russophobic country, Sikorski is very close to the security services. On the day of the attack, he tweeted quite simply, with a photo of the gas bubbling up to the surface of the sea, “Thank you, USA.”[6]

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Notes

[1] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=95&v=OS4O8rGRLf8&feature=youtu.be>

[2] <https://twitter.com/StateDept/status/1486818088016355336>

[3] <https://tass.com/society/1511625>

[4] <https://seapowermagazine.org/baltops-22-a-perfect-opportunity-for-research-and-resting-new-technology/>

[5] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2014/feb/07/eu-us-diplomat-victoria-nuland-phonecall-leaked-video>

[6] <https://twitter.com/radeksikorski/status/1574800653724966915>

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