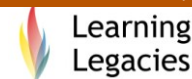


Discussion Starter

SOCHI 2014: Politicisation of European Sport



South Ossetia has been in conflict with the state of Georgia since just before the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990's. The dispute is essentially based on South Ossetia's wish for independence; a wish supported by The Russian Federation.

Despite great tension and armed conflict between Georgia and Sochi, Russia still managed to emerge victorious in the competition to win the right to host the Sochi 2014 Winter Games. This conflict ran during the Beijing Games, meaning that Russia was forced to break the terms of the Olympic Truce.



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BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT

Tensions escalated significantly in 2008 when Mikheil Saakashvili was elected Georgian president in 2004, gaining many votes on his promise to re-unite the country. A series of clashes between Georgian and South Ossetian's quickly followed, culminating in a Georgian aerial bombardment and ground attack on South Ossetia on 7 August, 2008. Occupation of the South Ossetian capital Tskhinvali by Georgian forces quickly followed.

Russia responded immediately by sending thousands of troops into the South Ossetia region and by launching bombing raids both over the contested province and within other areas of Georgia.

Many analysts warned that the conflict might exert a significant and detrimental affect on Russia's chances of winning the right to stage the Games, but it can be observed that the conflict did not, in fact, provide a hurdle to Russia's victory in acquiring the title of host city of the 2014 Games.

BACKGROUND TO THE BID

Three cities (Salzburg, Sochi and PyeongChang) submitted a Candidature File to the IOC in January 2007, in a bid to become the official Host City of the XXII Winter Olympic Games. Despite initially trailing in the first round of the selection process to PyeongChang (Republic of Korea), the Russian Federation finally emerged victorious as the official Host City of the 2014 XXII Winter Olympic Games, securing 51 votes against PyeongChang's 47 in the second and final round of voting.

SOCHI: 'THE RUSSIAN RIVIERA'

Sochi, a beautiful city of 400,000 residents, is a favoured location of Vladimir Putin and Russia's financial elite. It is located between the Black Sea and the Caucasus Mountains in southern Russia, in the heart of the 'Russian Riviera',

Sochi is also notably close to the separatist Abkhazia region that is part of the military conflict that began in 2008 over Georgia's breakaway South Ossetia province, raising concerns about the political volatility of the area in relation to its ability to stage the Games.



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FIND OUT MORE

Sochi Olympics website

www.sochi2014.org

Olympics website:

www.olympic.org

National Geographic website: Eastern Europe

Facts & Figures (Georgia)

http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/places/countries/country_georgia_cntry.html

CREDITS

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