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Thoughts and Observations on Music, Nature, and Politics, from the Catskill Mountains

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“WHERE THERE’S SMOKE...” PAUL MANAFORT & THE TRUMP/RUSSIAN CONNECTION...

[The Republican Party Platform](#) is so ridiculously extreme this year against LGBT people – African-Americans (through [voter ID and “hours” laws](#)) – Hispanics – and everything else on their laundry list to appease all of the various nut-jobs and extremist groups in their party – that it is *truly* hard to believe

And I'm fairly certain that Donald Trump probably disagrees with at least half of it (but probably couldn't care less).

And although Trump *didn't* speak out against any of the multiple offensive political social issues in the party platform – he did object to (and had removed) one “plank” of the platform which involved the Republican Party vowing to support the arming of Ukrainian troops against a possible Russian invasion. [So this single “plank” was removed.](#)

This was very obviously done by Trump's latest campaign manager Paul Manafort (after his firing of Lewandowski).

Paul Manafort has a slight kink in one of his eyes – and on camera in interviews he honestly looks like a gangster thug who could be quickly cast by Martin Scorsese as an aging, alcoholic “pit boss” in a failing Atlantic City casino.

But the man has a very interesting history.

Before running the Trump campaign – Manafort ran [several political campaigns in the Ukraine](#) – including that of the former Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich.

Yanukovich was the puppet candidate of Putin in Russia who got elected under suspicious circumstances and then got booted out by the Ukrainians after a couple of years.

So Manafort has *very* close ties there – and also an easy “back channel” direct connection to Putin himself.

So when you think about it – Manafort *did* in effect work in direct opposition to the policies of the United States – and earned himself a cool twenty-million dollars for doing so.

After the Ukrainians sent Yanukovich running off to Russia for sanctuary – Manafort continued to work in the Ukraine (by most accounts as a supporter of Russian involvement).

Steven Pifer, former US Ambassador to the Ukraine, believes that Manafort will definitely push Trump to support Russia over the Ukraine. Which fits in nicely with Trump's recent statement that maybe we should just accept that Russia now controls the [Crimea](#) and simply “move on”.

How can conservative Republicans *accept* this?

Because Manafort also has a long history in Republican politics in America – including having worked for Presidents Ford, Reagan, both Bushs, and McCain on their campaigns.

He also made \$900,000 a year lobbying for the infamous [Ferdinand Marcos](#) – \$700,000 for his work with the Pakistani “Inter-Services Intelligence Agency” – and \$326,000 as his “fee” in a [scandal involving HUD](#) in the 80s.

Trump has stated recently that he has never met Vladimir Putin – but in an interview from [2013 given to NBC's](#) Thomas Roberts during the Miss Universe Pageant (which Trump later used as an example of his expertise in international affairs) Trump clearly states that he *did* meet with Putin.

But then again – he could be lying – again.

And as I discussed in [last week's Gazette](#) – Trump has also recently expressed his desire to possibly not support Eastern [European NATO members](#) should they be attacked.

[Russian money](#) was also used for the recent financing of “Trump Soho” (one of his more recent projects) as he hasn't been able to get funding from banks in recent years for the obvious reason of his broken financial promises in the past.

So – only speculating here – but, couldn't there be a connection between not revealing his taxes and the fact that a lot of his recent project financing may be coming from Russian billionaires? Hopefully this will be revealed soon.

But my fear is that Trump could win the election – and then like Nixon and Watergate end up getting impeached over the next year or two. Which would probably be led by the Republicans in Congress – joined gleefully by the Democrats – with nothing positive getting done for at least two years.

Just like under the Nixon years.

Or we could simply elect Hillary Clinton...

And maybe put Trump in jail...

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