

When Is a Putsch a Putsch?

Exclusive: Secretary of State John Kerry accuses Russia of a “contrived crisis” in Ukraine as the U.S.-backed coup regime in Kiev sends troops to crush resistance in the ethnic-Russian east. But the most “contrived” element of this crisis may be the false U.S. narrative, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

The mainstream U.S. news media, which hailed the Feb. 22 neo-Nazi-spearheaded coup overthrowing the democratically elected president of Ukraine as an expression of “democracy,” is now decrying public uprisings in eastern Ukraine as a Russian-instigated “putsch.”

It apparently has reached the point where the MSM is so tangled up in its propagandistic narrative that it can't give American readers anything close to an objective reading of what is actually going on in Ukraine or many other places, for that matter.

The way the MSM now summarizes the Feb. 22 coup is simply to say that President Viktor Yanukovich fled after weeks of protests by Ukrainians who favored “good government” and opposed “corruption,” as the Washington Post wrote on Tuesday.

Airbrushed out of the picture is the fact that the uprising had financial support and political encouragement from U.S. officials, including neocon Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland and the neocon-controlled, U.S.-funded National Endowment for Democracy. [See Consortiumnews.com's [“What Neocons Want from Ukraine Crisis.”](#)]

Also, disappearing from the frame was the inconvenient truth that neo-Nazi militants organized themselves from the start as paramilitary units with the intent of staging a violent putsch against Yanukovich's elected government.

The MSM's simplistic narrative turned this complex Ukrainian reality into a morality play of good guys vs. bad guys, the noble protesters against the nasty Yanukovich backed by the even nastier Russian President Vladimir Putin.

For instance, the New York Times on Sunday published [a long and flattering profile](#) of a Ukrainian man named Yuri Marchuk who was wounded in clashes around Kiev's Maidan square in February. In the first half of the story, written by Alison Smale, we read about Marchuk's courage in standing and fighting with his brave comrades.

The Neo-Nazi Connection

Only in the latter half of the article do we get a hint of a darker side to the tale. We're told that Marchuk is "carefully skirting questions about the arrival of guns stolen from a government depot in the western Ukraine city of Lviv," which was sending hundreds of new militants daily to bolster the sagging protests.

But what we're not told by the Times is that Lviv is a neo-Nazi stronghold where 15,000 members of the far-right Svoboda party held a torchlight parade in honor of World War II Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera and where Svoboda has been mounting a campaign to have the local airport named in honor of Bandera, whose fascist paramilitary force took part in the exterminations of Jews and Poles.

However, since it's been the consistent MSM practice to white-out the role of the neo-Nazi brown shirts all the better to protect the pleasant narrative of a Kiev Spring the Times ignores the Bandera angle and the significance of the Lviv reference.

Instead, we're simply told: "organizers in Lviv said they alone were sending 600 people a day to Kiev. That enabled exhausted defenders [of the Maidan protests] to eat and sleep while new arrivals built barricades and then, early on Feb. 20, thrust toward the Berkut [police] positions."

It was during that clash when Marchuk, a leader of a "sotin" or paramilitary force of 100 fighters, was shot in the right leg and suffered other wounds. After getting a splint on his leg, Marchuk said he returned to City Hall "checking on the fate of the 35 members of his hundred who had volunteered for that Thursday. Two were killed, 12 wounded, the rest all right, he found," the Times reported.

We have to read down even further, to the fourth paragraph from the end, to learn that Marchuk is "close to Oleg Tyagnibok, leader of the nationalist Svoboda party," though again the significance of that fact is not explained. The article continues in heroic terms:

"In these revolutionary times, he [Marchuk] suggested, it is not enough simply to be a patriot. You have to defend what you treasure. 'To sit in the kitchen and simply cry about how much we love Ukraine, that is a crime,' he said."

But what is left out of this story is far more important than what is put in. The reporter should have pressed Marchuk about exactly what he thinks Ukrainians should "treasure," whether he admires Nazi collaborator Bandera and what he would like to do with the ethnic Russians living in east and south Ukraine, Yanukovich's "base" in the 2010 election.

Wouldn't the story have been more interesting to Times' readers if Smale had

blended the grays of Marchuk's far-right politics into this two-dimensional tale of the "white hat" Marchuk fighting bravely against the "black hat" Yanukovich.

But that would have violated an unwritten rule of the MSM's coverage of the Ukraine crisis, to pretend that the neo-Nazi militias were simply one of Vladimir Putin's "delusions" or a figment of Russian propaganda or at most a minor and insignificant factor in ousting Yanukovich.

Seeing a 'Putsch'

Yet, while the crucial neo-Nazi violence in carrying out the Feb. 22 coup is whisked away to the memory hole and the word "putsch" is carefully avoided, an opposite phenomenon has occurred in reporting about resistance to the new Kiev government in Crimea and now eastern Ukraine. There, one can use the word "putsch."

In those cases, the resistance is blamed on Russian "aggression," since it's apparently unthinkable that ethnic Russians who have witnessed a violent overthrow of their elected president spearheaded by neo-Nazis might actually want to resist the imposition of an unelected and extreme new government.

This alternative narrative one that makes much more sense than the MSM's storyline is that the ethnic Russians feel disenfranchised by the coup organized in western Ukraine where the capital of Kiev is located. Their elected president had to flee for his life and a rump parliament took over, immediately "impeaching" him and passing legislation targeting Russian speakers in the eastern and southern sectors.

An American parallel might be: what would happen if the Red States elected a U.S. president but people in the Blue States around Washington D.C. violently seized the White House and imposed a new government? Would the folks in the Red States simply bow to the new order as a rump Congress passed laws targeting the rights and the interests of the Red States?

The rump Ukrainian parliament also passed a harsh austerity plan demanded by the Washington-based International Monetary Fund in order to secure \$18 billion in loan guarantees. Even acting Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the handpicked choice of U.S. Assistant Secretary Nuland to run the new government, has acknowledged that the IMF plan is "very unpopular, very difficult, very tough."

The coup regime also has appointed new governors to bring the eastern and southern provinces under Kiev's control. Yet, when people in those regions resist this imposition of power by unelected officials, the MSM frames the protests as illegitimate. The Washington Post led its Tuesday's editions this way:

"KIEV, UKRAINE Pro-Russia demonstrators in eastern Ukraine declared separatist republics in two cities on Monday, and Ukrainian officials accused Moscow of orchestrating the moves as the first step toward launching an invasion.

"In Washington, the Obama administration expressed deep skepticism that the scattered uprisings and building takeovers in cities such as Donetsk and Kharkiv were spontaneous. 'There is strong evidence suggesting some of these demonstrators were paid,' said Jay Carney, the White House press secretary."

The article by Kathy Lally and Will Englund continues in that vein, presenting essentially a conspiracy theory that blames the Russian government for the political unrest, albeit without presenting any actual evidence to support the suspicions.

On Tuesday, Secretary of State John Kerry, who has emerged as the leading spokesman for the hawkish State Department bureaucracy, blamed the eastern Ukrainian resistance to Kiev's control on undercover actions by Russia.

"What we see from Russia is an illegal and illegitimate effort to destabilize a sovereign state and create a contrived crisis with paid operatives across an international boundary," Kerry told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

So, while the Feb. 22 coup in Kiev was portrayed as a simple uprising of Ukrainian patriots with no attention paid to the \$5 billion that Assistant Secretary Nuland herself said the U.S. has invested in Ukraine's "European aspirations," nor the 65 projects in Ukraine run by the U.S.-funded NED, nor with little notice of the organized violence by neo-Nazi paramilitary forces from western Ukraine the resistance to the coup in Crimea and now in eastern and southern Ukraine could only result from dark manipulations orchestrated by Russian President Putin in the Kremlin.

It is that kind of biased journalism that has now become the norm of the MSM and, indeed, across significant parts of the "blogosphere." Rather than learning to be more skeptical after the Iraq War deceptions a decade ago, the major news outlets appear to have become even more gullible, more integrated into the government's propaganda structure, less able to provide balanced and independent journalism.

The U.S. reporting on crises in Iraq, Syria, Iran and now Ukraine reveal a nearly complete disconnect from the real world, as if the MSM is operating in a parallel universe.

Old-fashioned reporting where journalists took pride in uncovering information that spoiled a U.S. government scheme to dupe the public has almost completely disappeared. Now, we see what looks like a competition between government

officials and mainstream journalists to produce the most extreme distortion of the truth.

Indeed, it is hard to tell if the officials are captive to the false narratives spun by the MSM or if the MSM is parroting back the lies of officialdom. They seem to feed off one another as Official Washington's narrative spirals further and further from reality.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).
