

Burning Ukraine's Protesters Alive

Exclusive: For the second time in a week, Ukrainian anti-regime protesters holed up in a building were killed by fires set by pro-regime attackers with ties to newly formed neo-Nazi security forces, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

In Ukraine, a grisly new strategy bringing in neo-Nazi paramilitary forces to set fire to occupied buildings in the country's rebellious southeast appears to be emerging as a favored tactic as the coup-installed regime in Kiev seeks to put down resistance from ethnic Russians and other opponents.

The technique first emerged on May 2 in the port city of Odessa when pro-regime militants chased dissidents into the Trade Unions Building and then set it on fire. As some 40 or more ethnic Russians were burned alive or died of smoke inhalation, the crowd outside mocked them as red-and-black Colorado potato beetles, with the chant of "Burn, Colorado, burn." Afterwards, reporters spotted graffiti on the building's walls containing Swastika-like symbols and honoring the "Galician SS," the Ukrainian adjunct to the German SS in World War II.

This tactic of torching an occupied building occurred again on May 9 in Mariupol, another port city, as neo-Nazi paramilitaries organized now as the regime's "National Guard" were dispatched to a police station that had been seized by dissidents, possibly including police officers who rejected a new Kiev-appointed chief. Again, the deployment of the "National Guard" was followed by burning the building and killing a significant but still-undetermined number of people inside. (Early estimates of the dead range from seven to 20.)

In the U.S. press, Ukraine's "National Guard" is usually described as a new force derived from the Maidan's "self-defense" units that spearheaded the Feb. 22 revolt in Kiev overthrowing elected President Viktor Yanukovich. But the Maidan's "self-defense" units were drawn primarily from well-organized bands of neo-Nazi extremists from western Ukraine who hurled firebombs at police and fired weapons as the anti-Yanukovich protests turned increasingly violent.

But the mainstream U.S. press in line with State Department guidance has sought to minimize or dismiss the key role played by neo-Nazis in these "self-defense" forces as well as in the new government. At most, you'll see references to these neo-Nazis as "Ukrainian nationalists."

Turning to the Neo-Nazis

However, as resistance to Kiev's right-wing regime expanded in the ethnic

Russian east and south, the coup regime found itself unable to count on regular Ukrainian troops to fire on civilians. Thus, its national security chief Andriy Parubiy, himself a neo-Nazi, turned to the intensely motivated neo-Nazi shock troops who had been battle-tested during the coup.

These extremists were reorganized as special units of the National Guard and dispatched to the east and south to do the dirty work that the regular Ukrainian military was unwilling to do. Many of these extreme Ukrainian nationalists lionize World War II Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera and like Bandera dream of a racially pure Ukraine, free of Jews, ethnic Russians and other “inferior” beings. The slur of calling the Odessa protesters Colorado beetles – as they were being burned alive – was a reference to the black-and-red colors used by the ethnic Russian resistance in the east.

Though the mainstream U.S. press either describes Parubiy simply as the interim government’s chief of national security (with no further context) or possibly as a “nationalist,” his fuller background includes his founding of the Social-National Party of Ukraine in 1991, blending radical Ukrainian nationalism with neo-Nazi symbols. Last year, he became commandant of the Maidan’s “self-defense forces.”

Then, on April 15, after becoming the Kiev regime’s chief of national security and finding Ukrainian troops unwilling to fire on fellow Ukrainians in the east, Parubiy went on Twitter to announce, “Reserve unit of National Guard formed #Maidan Self-defense volunteers was sent to the front line this morning.”

Those National Guard forces also were reported on the ground in Odessa when the trade unions building was torched on May 2 and they showed up again in Mariupol as the police station was burned on May 9, according to [a report](#) in the New York Times on Saturday.

The Times mentioned the appearance and then disappearance of the National Guard without providing any useful background about this newly organized force. In the language used by the mainstream U.S. press and the Kiev regime, the neo-Nazi brigades are “volunteers” and “self-defense” units while the rebels resisting the post-coup regime are “pro-Russian militants” or “terrorists.” The Times reported the May 9 attack in Mariupol this way:

“Ukraine’s interior minister, Arsen Avakov, wrote on Facebook that about 60 pro-Russian militants had tried to seize the city’s police headquarters. The police called for support from the Ukrainian national guard, a newly formed force of quickly trained volunteers drawn from participants in last winter’s street protests in the capital. Mr. Avakov wrote that 20 ‘terrorists’ had died in the fighting, while those who survived dispersed and hid in a residential

neighborhood.”

The Times added: “The national guard, though, pulled out of the city soon afterward . Residents who had gathered around the police station offered an account that differed from the interior minister’s. The city police, they said, were sympathetic to the pro-Russian side and had mutinied against an out-of-town chief newly installed by the interim government in Kiev.

“Armored vehicles had driven into the city to confront the rebellious police, not the militants, residents said. Holes in the brick wall suggested heavy weaponry. Gunfire echoed downtown.”

After the deaths inside Mariupol’s police station, the Kiev regime rejoiced at the extermination of a large number of “terrorists.” As the UK’s Independent reported, “The military action is accompanied by stridently aggressive rhetoric from politicians in Kiev who are crowing about the numbers of ‘terrorists’ killed and threatening further lethal punishment.”

The Kiev’s regime’s concern that some local police forces have at best mixed loyalties has led it again to turn to the Maidan “self-defense” forces to serve as a special “Kiev-1” police force, which was dispatched to Odessa amid that city’s recent violence.

Deniable Forces

Though many Americans don’t want to believe that their government would collaborate with neo-Nazis or other extremist elements, there actually has been a long history of just that. In conflicts as diverse as the revolutions in Central America and the anti-Soviet Afghan war in the 1980s to the current civil conflicts in Syria and Ukraine, it has not been uncommon for the side favored by the United States to rely on extremist paramilitary forces to engage in the most brutal fighting.

In Central American conflicts that I covered for the Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s, some of the “death squads” associated with pro-U.S. regimes were drawn from neo-fascist movements allied with the far-right World Anti-Communist League. In Afghanistan, the CIA relied on Islamist extremists, including Saudi jihadist Osama bin Laden, to kill Russians and their Afghan government allies.

Today, in Syria, many of the most aggressive fighters against Bashar al-Assad’s government are Arab jihadists recruited from across the region and armed by Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf oil sheikdoms. So, it fits with a pattern for the U.S. government to hold its nose and rely on neo-Nazis from western Ukraine to take the fight to rebellious ethnic Russians in the east and south.

The key to all these unsavory alliances is for the American people not to know about the real nature of these U.S. clients. In the 1980s, the Reagan administration advanced the concept of “public diplomacy” to intimidate journalists and human rights activists who dared report on the brutality of U.S.-backed forces in El Salvador and Guatemala and the CIA-trained Contra rebels in Nicaragua.

Thus, most Americans weren’t sure what to make of recurring reports about right-wing “death squads” killing priests and nuns and committing other massacres across Central America. Regarding Afghanistan, it took the American people until Sept. 11, 2001, to fully comprehend whom the Reagan administration had been working with in the 1980s.

Similarly, the Obama administration has tried to maintain the fiction that the Syrian opposition is dominated by well-meaning “moderates.” However, as the brutal civil war has ground on, it gradually has become apparent that the most effective anti-Assad fighters are the Sunni extremists allied with al-Qaeda and determined to kill Shiites, Alawites and Christians.

So, it should come as no surprise that the Kiev regime would turn to its Maidan “self-defense” forces formed around neo-Nazi militias to go into southern and eastern Ukraine with the purpose of burning to death ethnic Russian “insects” occupying buildings. The key is not to let the American people in on the secret.

[For more, see Consortiumnews.com’s [“Ukraine, Through the U.S. ‘Looking Glass.’”](#)]

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](#).

Putting the Ukraine Crisis in Context

When the Ukraine crisis began, the mainstream U.S. media cast aside any pretense of objectivity and joined in the service of State Department propaganda. But given the emergence of the Internet a far more honest and nuanced story is possible to detect, as William Blum describes at Anti-Empire Report.

By William Blum

“The Russians are coming again and they’re still ten feet tall!”

So, what do we have here? In Libya, in Syria, and elsewhere the United States has been on the same side as the al-Qaeda types. But not in Ukraine. That’s the good news. The bad news is that in Ukraine the United States is on the same side as the neo-Nazi types, who taking time off from parading around with their swastika-like symbols and calling for the death of Jews, Russians and Communists on May 2 burned down a trade-union building in Odessa, killing scores of people and sending hundreds to hospital; many of the victims were beaten or shot when they tried to flee the flames and smoke; ambulances were blocked from reaching the wounded.

Try and find an American mainstream media entity that has made a serious attempt to capture the horror.

And how did this latest example of American foreign-policy exceptionalism come to be? One starting point that can be considered is what former Secretary of Defense and CIA Director Robert Gates says in his recently published memoir: “When the Soviet Union was collapsing in late 1991, [Defense Secretary Dick Cheney] wanted to see the dismemberment not only of the Soviet Union and the Russian empire but of Russia itself, so it could never again be a threat to the rest of the world.”

That can serve as an early marker for the new cold war while the corpse of the old one was still warm. Soon thereafter, NATO began to surround Russia with military bases, missile sites, and NATO members, while yearning for perhaps the most important part needed to complete the circle Ukraine.

In February of this year, U.S. State Department officials, undiplomatically, joined anti-government protesters in the capital city of Kiev, handing out encouragement and food, from which emanated the infamous leaked audio tape between the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, and the State Department’s Victoria Nuland, former U.S. ambassador to NATO and former State Department spokesperson for Hillary Clinton. Their conversation dealt with who should be running the new Ukraine government after the government of Viktor Yanukovich was overthrown; their most favored for this position being one Arseniy Yatsenuk.

My dear, and recently departed, Washington friend, John Judge, liked to say that if you want to call him a “conspiracy theorist” you have to call others “coincidence theorists.” Thus it was by the most remarkable of coincidences that Arseniy Yatsenuk did indeed become the new prime minister. He could very soon be

found in private meetings and public press conferences with the president of the United States and the Secretary-General of NATO, as well as meeting with the soon-to-be new owners of Ukraine, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, preparing to impose their standard financial shock therapy.

The current protestors in Ukraine don't need PHDs in economics to know what this portends. They know about the impoverishment of Greece, Spain, *et al*. They also despise the new regime for its overthrow of their democratically-elected government, whatever its shortcomings. But the American media obscures these motivations by almost always referring to them simply as "pro-Russian."

An exception, albeit rather unemphasized, was the April 17 *Washington Post* which reported from Donetsk that many of the eastern Ukrainians whom the author interviewed said the unrest in their region was driven by fear of "economic hardship" and the IMF austerity plan that will make their lives even harder:

"At a most dangerous and delicate time, just as it battles Moscow for hearts and minds across the east, the pro-Western government is set to initiate a shock therapy of economic measures to meet the demands of an emergency bailout from the International Monetary Fund."

Arseniy Yatsenuk, it should be noted, has something called the Arseniy Yatsenuk Foundation. If you go to the [foundation's website](#) you will see the logos of the foundation's "partners." Among these partners we find NATO, the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. State Department, Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs in the UK), the German Marshall Fund (a think tank founded by the German government in honor of the U.S. Marshall Plan), as well as a couple of international banks. Is any comment needed?

Getting away with supporting al-Qaeda and Nazi types may be giving U.S. officials the idea that they can say or do anything they want in their foreign policy. In a May 2 press conference, President Barack Obama, referring to Ukraine and the NATO Treaty, said: "We're united in our unwavering Article 5 commitment to the security of our NATO allies." (Article 5 states: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them shall be considered an attack against them all.") Did the president forget that Ukraine is not (yet) a member of NATO?

And in the same press conference, the President referred to the "duly elected government in Kyiv (Kiev)", when in fact it had come to power via a coup and then proceeded to establish a new regime in which the vice-premier, minister of defense, minister of agriculture, and minister of environment, all belonged to far-right neo-Nazi parties.

The pure awfulness of the Ukrainian right-wingers can scarcely be exaggerated. In early March, the leader of Pravy Sektor (Right Sector) called upon his comrades, the infamous Chechnyan terrorists, to carry out further terrorist actions in Russia.

There may be one important difference between the old Cold War and the new one. The American people, as well as the world, can not be as easily brainwashed as they were during the earlier period.

Over the course of a decade, in doing the research for my first books and articles on U.S. foreign policy, one of the oddities to me of the Cold War was how often the Soviet Union seemed to know what the United States was really up to, even if the American people didn't. Every once in a while in the 1950s to 1970s a careful reader would notice a two- or three-inch story in the *New York Times* on the bottom of some distant inside page, reporting that *Pravda* or *Izvestia* had claimed that a recent coup or political assassination in Africa or Asia or Latin America had been the work of the CIA; the *Times* might add that a U.S. State Department official had labeled the story as "absurd."

And that was that; no further details were provided; and none were needed, for how many American readers gave it a second thought? It was just more commie propaganda. Who did they think they were fooling? This ignorance/complicity on the part of the mainstream media allowed the United States to get away with all manner of international crimes and mischief.

It was only in the 1980s when I began to do the serious research that resulted in my first book, which later became *Killing Hope*, that I was able to fill in the details and realize that the United States had indeed masterminded that particular coup or assassination, and many other coups and assassinations, not to mention countless bombings, chemical and biological warfare, perversion of elections, drug dealings, kidnappings, and much more that had not appeared in the American mainstream media or schoolbooks. (And a significant portion of which was apparently unknown to the Soviets as well.)

But there have been countless revelations about U.S. crimes in the past two decades. Many Americans and much of the rest of the planet have become educated. They're much more skeptical of American proclamations and the fawning media.

President Obama recently declared: "The strong condemnation that it's received from around the world indicates the degree to which Russia is on the wrong side of history on this." Marvelous coming from the man who partners with jihadists and Nazis and has waged war against seven nations.

In the past half century is there any country whose foreign policy has received more bitter condemnation than the United States? If the United States is not on the wrong side of history, it may be only in the history books published by the United States.

Barack Obama, like virtually all Americans, likely believes that the Soviet Union, with perhaps the sole exception of the Second World War, was consistently on the wrong side of history in its foreign policy as well as at home. Yet, in a survey conducted by an independent Russian polling center this past January, and reported in the *Washington Post* in April, 86 percent of respondents older than 55 expressed regret for the Soviet Union's collapse; 37 percent of those aged 25 to 39 did so. (Similar poll results have been reported regularly since the demise of the Soviet Union. This is from *USA Today* in 1999: "When the Berlin Wall crumbled, East Germans imagined a life of freedom where consumer goods were abundant and hardships would fade. Ten years later, a remarkable 51% say they were happier with communism.")

Or as the new Russian proverb put it: "Everything the Communists said about Communism was a lie, but everything they said about capitalism turned out to be the truth."

A week before the above *Post* report in April the newspaper printed an article about happiness around the world, which contains the following charming lines: "Worldwide polls show that life seems better to older people except in Russia." "Essentially, life under President Vladimir Putin is one continuous downward spiral into despair." "What's going on in Russia is deep unhappiness." "In Russia, the only thing to look forward to is death's sweet embrace."

No, I don't think it was meant to be any kind of satire. It appears to be a scientific study, complete with graphs, but it reads like something straight out of the 1950s.

The views Americans hold of themselves and other societies are not necessarily more distorted than the views found amongst people elsewhere in the world, but the Americans' distortion can lead to much more harm. Most Americans and members of Congress have convinced themselves that the U.S./NATO encirclement of Russia is benign we are, after all, the Good Guys and they don't understand why Russia can't see this.

The first Cold War, from Washington's point of view, was often designated as one of "containment," referring to the U.S. policy of preventing the spread of communism around the world, trying to block *the very idea* of communism or socialism. There's still some leftover from that see Venezuela and Cuba, for example but the new Cold War can be seen more in terms of a military strategy.

Washington thinks in terms of who could pose a barrier to the ever-expanding empire adding to its bases and other military necessities.

Whatever the rationale, it's imperative that the United States suppress any lingering desire to bring Ukraine (and Georgia) into the NATO alliance. Nothing is more likely to bring large numbers of Russian boots onto the Ukrainian ground than the idea that Washington wants to have NATO troops right on the Russian border and in spitting distance of the country's historic Black Sea naval base in Crimea.

The Myth of Soviet Expansionism

One still comes across references in the mainstream media to Russian "expansionism" and "the Soviet empire," in addition to that old favorite "the evil empire." These terms stem largely from erstwhile Soviet control of Eastern European states. But was the creation of these satellites following World War II an act of imperialism or expansionism? Or did the decisive impetus lie elsewhere?

Within the space of less than 25 years, Western powers had invaded Russia three times the two world wars and the "Intervention" of 1918-20 inflicting some 40 million casualties in the two wars alone. To carry out these invasions, the West had used Eastern Europe as a highway.

Should it be any cause for wonder that after World War II the Soviets wanted to close this highway down? In almost any other context, Americans would have no problem in seeing this as an act of self-defense. But in the context of the Cold War such thinking could not find a home in mainstream discourse.

The Baltic states of the Soviet Union Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were not part of the highway and were frequently in the news because of their demands for more autonomy from Moscow, a story "natural" for the American media. These articles invariably reminded the reader that the "once independent" Baltic states were invaded in 1939 by the Soviet Union, incorporated as republics of the USSR, and had been "occupied" ever since. Another case of brutal Russian imperialism. Period. History etched in stone.

The three countries, it happens, were part of the Russian empire from 1721 up to the Russian Revolution of 1917, in the midst of World War I. When the war ended in November 1918, and the Germans had been defeated, the victorious Allied nations (U.S., Great Britain, France, *et al.*) permitted/encouraged the German forces to remain in the Baltics for a full year to crush the spread of Bolshevism there; this, with ample military assistance from the Allied nations. In each of the three republics, the Germans installed collaborators in power who

declared their independence from the new Bolshevik state which, by this time, was so devastated by the World War, the revolution, and the civil war prolonged by the Allies' intervention, that it had no choice but to accept the *fait accompli*. The rest of the fledgling Soviet Union had to be saved.

To at least win some propaganda points from this unfortunate state of affairs, the Soviets announced that they were relinquishing the Baltic republics "voluntarily" in line with their principles of anti-imperialism and self-determination. But it should not be surprising that the Soviets continued to regard the Baltics as a rightful part of their nation or that they waited until they were powerful enough to reclaim the territory.

Then we had Afghanistan. Surely this was an imperialist grab. But the Soviet Union had lived next door to Afghanistan for more than 60 years without gobbling it up. And when the Russians invaded in 1979, the key motivation was the United States involvement in a movement, largely Islamic, to topple the Afghan government, which was friendly to Moscow. The Soviets could not have been expected to tolerate a pro-U.S., anti-communist government on its border any more than the United States could have been expected to tolerate a pro-Soviet, communist government in Mexico.

Moreover, if the rebel movement took power it likely would have set up a fundamentalist Islamic government, which would have been in a position to proselytize the numerous Muslims in the Soviet border republics.

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Notes

1. . See RT.com (formerly *Russia Today*) for many stories, images and videos
2. . Robert Gates, *Duty* (2014), p.97
3. . If this site has gone missing again, a [saved version can be found here](#).
4. . [Voice of Russia radio station](#), Moscow, April 18, 2014; also see Answer Coalition, ["Who's who in Ukraine's new \[semi-fascist\] government"](#), March 11, 2014
5. . [RT.com](#), news report March 5, 2014
6. . CBS News, March 3, 2014

7. . *Washington Post*, April 11, 2014
 8. . *USA Today* (Virginia), Oct. 11, 1999, page 1
 9. . *Washington Post* print edition, April 2, 2014; [online here](#)
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