

# Giftng Russia 'Free-Market' Extremism

**Exclusive:** Official Washington's Putin-bashing knows no bounds as the Russian president's understandable complaints about U.S. triumphalism and NATO expansion, after the Soviet collapse in the 1990s, are dismissed as signs of his "paranoia" and "revisionism," writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

If the Washington Post's clueless editorial page editor Fred Hiatt had been around during the genocidal wars against Native Americans in the 1870s, he probably would have accused Sitting Bull and other Indian leaders of "paranoia" and historical "revisionism" for not recognizing the beneficent intentions of the Europeans when they landed in the New World.

The Europeans, after all, were bringing the "savages" Christianity's promise of eternal life and introducing them to the wonders of the Old World, like guns and cannons, not to mention the value that "civilized" people place on owning land and possessing gold. Why did these Indian leaders insist on seeing the Europeans as their enemies?

But Hiatt wasn't around in the 1870s so at least the Native Americans were spared his condescension about the kindness and exceptionalism of the United States as it sent armies to herd the "redskins" onto reservations and slaughter those who wouldn't go along with this solution to the "Indian problem."

However, those of us living in the Twenty-first Century can't say we're as lucky. In 2002-03, we got to read Hiatt's self-assured Washington Post editorials informing us about Iraq's dangerous stockpiles of WMD that were threatening our very existence and giving us no choice but to liberate the Iraqi people and bring peace and stability to the Middle East.

Though Hiatt reported these WMD caches as "flat-fact" when that turned out to be fact-free, there was, of course, no accountability for him and his fellow pundits. After all, who would suggest that such well-meaning people should be punished for America's generous endeavor to deliver joy and happiness to the Iraqi people who instead chose to die by the hundreds of thousands?

Because Hiatt and his fellow deep-thinkers didn't get canned, we still have them around opening our eyes to Vladimir Putin's historical "revisionism" and his rampaging "paranoia" as he fails to see the philanthropic motives of the U.S. free-market economists who descended on Russia after the end of the Soviet Union in the 1990s to share their wisdom about the unbounded bounty that comes

from unrestrained capitalism.

That many of these “Harvard boys” succumbed to the temptation of Russian girls desperate for some hard currency shouldn’t be held against these selfless business “experts.” Nor should the reality that they sometimes shared in the plundering of Russia’s assets by helping a few friendly “oligarchs” become billionaires. Nor should the “experts” be blamed for the many Russians who starved, froze or suffered early death after their pensions were slashed, medical care was defunded, and their factories were shuttered. Just the necessary “growing pains” toward a “modern economy.”

And, while these U.S. economic advisers helped put Russia onto its back, there was also the expansion of NATO despite some verbal promises from George H.W. Bush’s administration that the anti-Russian alliance would not be pushed east of Germany. Instead, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush shoved NATO right up to Russia’s border and touched a raw Russian nerve by taking aim at Ukraine, too.

But Russian President Putin simply doesn’t appreciate the generosity of the United States in making these sacrifices. The “paranoid” Putin with his historical “revisionism” insists on seeing these acts of charity as uncharitable acts.

#### **‘Mr. Putin’s Revisionism’**

In Tuesday’s Post, Hiatt and his team laid out this new line of attack on the black-hatted Putin in an editorial that was headlined, in print editions, “Mr. Putin’s revisionism: His paranoia shouldn’t blot out the good the West tried to offer,” and online as “After the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. tried to help Russians.” The editorial began:

“President Vladimir Putin recently was interviewed for a fawning Russian television documentary on his decade and a half in power. Putin expressed the view that the West would like Russia to be down at the heels. He said, ‘I sometimes I get the impression that they love us when they need to send us humanitarian aid. .â€%.â€%. [T]he so-called ruling circles, elites, political and economic, of those countries, they love us when we are impoverished, poor and when we come hat in hand. As soon as we start declaring some interests of our own, they feel that there is some element of geopolitical rivalry.’”

“Earlier, in March, speaking to leaders of the Federal Security Service, which he once led, Mr. Putin warned that ‘Western special services continue their attempts at using public, nongovernmental and politicized organizations to pursue their own objectives, primarily to discredit the authorities and destabilize the internal situation in Russia.’”

That was an apparent reference to the aggressive use of U.S.-funded NGOs to achieve “regime change” in Ukraine in 2014 and similar plans for “regime change” in Moscow, a goal openly discussed by prominent neocons, including National Endowment for Democracy president Carl Gershman who gets \$100 million a year from Congress to finance these NGOs.

But none of that reality is cited in the Post’s editorial, which simply continues: “Mr. Putin’s remarks reflect a deep-seated paranoia. Mr. Putin’s assertion that the West has been acting out of a desire to sunder Russia’s power and influence is a willful untruth. The fact is that thousands of Americans went to Russia hoping to help its people attain a better life. It was not about conquering Russia but rather about saving it, offering the proven tools of market capitalism and democracy, which were not imposed but welcomed. The Americans came for the best of reasons.”

Hiatt and his cohorts do acknowledge that not everything worked out as peachy as predicted. There were, for instance, a few bumps in the road like the unprecedented collapse in life expectancy for a developed country not at war. Plus, there were the glaring disparities between the shiny and lascivious nightlife of Moscow’s upscale enclaves, frequented by American businessmen and journalists, and the savage and depressing poverty that gripped and crushed much of the country.

Or, as the Post’s editorial antiseptically describes these shortcomings: “Certainly, the Western effort was flawed. Markets were distorted by crony and oligarchic capitalism; democratic practice often faltered; many Russians genuinely felt a sense of defeat, humiliation and exhaustion. There’s much to regret but not the central fact that a generous hand was extended to post-Soviet Russia, offering the best of Western values and know-how.

“The Russian people benefit from this benevolence even now, and, above Mr. Putin’s self-serving hysterics, they ought to hear the truth: The United States did not come to bury you.”

Or, as a Fred Hiatt of the 1870s might have commented about Native Americans who resisted the well-intentioned Bureau of Indian Affairs and didn’t appreciate the gentleness of the U.S. Army or the benevolence of life on the reservations: “Above Sitting Bull’s self-serving hysterics, Indians ought to hear the truth: The white man did not come to exterminate you.”

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). You also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush**

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