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Ukraine's Neo-Nazi Imperative

By Robert Parry

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Exclusive: The mainstream U.S. news media is flooding the American people with one-sided propaganda on Ukraine, rewriting the narrative to leave out the key role of neo-Nazis and insisting on a “group think” that exceeds even the misguided consensus on Iraq’s WMD, reports Robert Parry.

After the Feb. 22 coup in Ukraine – spearheaded by neo-Nazi militias – European and U.S. diplomats pushed for a quick formation of a new government out of fear that otherwise these far-right ultra-nationalists would be left in total control, one of those diplomats told me.

The comment again underscores the inconvenient truth of what happened in Ukraine: neo-Nazis were at the forefront of the Kiev coup that ousted elected President Viktor Yanukovich, a reality that the U.S. government and news media have been relentlessly trying to cover up.

Although real-time reports from the scene in February chronicled armed and organized militias associated with the neo-Nazi Svoboda party and the Right Sektor attacking police with firebombs and light weapons, that information soon became a threat to the Western propaganda theme that Yanukovich fled simply because peaceful protesters occupied the Maidan square.

So, the more troubling history soon disappeared into the memory hole, dismissed as “Russian propaganda.” The focus of the biased U.S. news media is now on the anti-Kiev militants in the

Russian-ethnic areas of eastern Ukraine who have rejected the authority of the coup regime and are insisting on regional autonomy.

The new drumbeat in the U.S. press is that those militants must disarm in line with last week's agreement in Geneva involving the United States, European Union, Russia and the "transitional" Ukrainian government. As for those inconvenient neo-Nazi militias, they have been incorporated into a paramilitary "National Guard" and deployed to the east to conduct an "anti-terrorist" campaign against the eastern Ukrainian protesters, ethnic Russians whom the neo-Nazis despise.

The new role for the neo-Nazi militias was announced last week by Andriy Parubiy, head of the Ukrainian National Security Council, who declared on Twitter, "Reserve unit of National Guard formed #Maidan Self-defense volunteers was sent to the front line this morning."

Parubiy is himself a well-known neo-Nazi, who founded the Social-National Party of Ukraine in 1991. The party blended radical Ukrainian nationalism with neo-Nazi symbols. Parubiy also formed a paramilitary spinoff, the Patriots of Ukraine, and defended the awarding of the title, "Hero of Ukraine," to World War II Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera, whose own paramilitary forces exterminated thousands of Jews and Poles in pursuit of a racially pure Ukraine.

In the hasty structuring of the post-coup government in February, part of the compromise with the ascendant neo-Nazis was to give them control of four ministries, including Parubiy in the key position heading national security. To give him loyal and motivated forces to strike at the pro-Russian east, he incorporated many of the storm troopers from his Maidan force into the National Guard.

Leaving Out the History

Yet, how is Parubiy described in the U.S. mainstream media? On Sunday, Washington Post correspondent Kathy Lally, who has been one of the most biased journalists covering the Ukraine crisis, wrote a front-page article about the state of Ukraine's military in which she relied on Parubiy for a key part of her story.

Lally simply identified him as "secretary of the National Security and Defense Council," without explaining Parubiy's extreme-right politics or the illegitimate way that he got his position. Lally then let him assert that Russia is "intent on making the government fail and seeing it replaced by one deferring to Moscow."

But Lally is far from alone in representing the deeply prejudiced "group think" of the U.S. press corps regarding Ukraine. Often the only way that American readers can get any sense of the key role played by the neo-Nazis is in the repeated denials of that reality.

New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof returned to his family's ancestral home in Karapchiv in western Ukraine to interview some of its residents and present their views as the true voice of the people.

“To understand why Ukrainians are risking war with Russia to try to pluck themselves from Moscow’s grip, I came to this village where my father grew up,” he wrote. “Even here in the village, Ukrainians watch Russian television and loathe the propaganda portraying them as neo-Nazi thugs rampaging against Russian speakers.

“‘If you listen to them, we all carry assault rifles; we’re all beating people,’ Ilya Moskal, a history teacher, said contemptuously.”

Of course, Moskal’s description is hyperbole. The Russian media is not making those claims, although it has noted, for instance, that the neo-Nazi militias – now reformulated as “National Guard” units – did kill three eastern Ukrainian protesters last week, deaths announced by the Kiev government.

But Kristof doesn’t stop there in his nostalgia for his father’s old home town, which he depicts as a noble place where everyone loves the music of Taylor Swift and dreams of their place in a prosperous Europe – if only President Barack Obama would send them weapons to kill Russians (or go “bear-hunting” as Kristof cutely wrote in a previous column).

On Sunday, Kristof wrote: “For people with such fondness for American culture, there is disappointment that President Obama hasn’t embraced Ukraine more firmly.”

Source of Ukraine’s Ills

Kristof also blamed Ukraine’s economic woes on Russia when a more honest explanation would be that the free-market “shock therapy” that Western advisers imposed on Ukraine after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 allowed a dozen or so well-connected “oligarchs” to plunder the country’s wealth and amass near total economic and political control. They are the principal reason for Ukraine’s pervasive corruption and poverty.

But Kristof appears to be readying his New York Times readers to support the violent crushing of the popular resistance in eastern Ukraine, which was President Yanukovich’s political base. Kristof is a renowned R2Per, urging a “responsibility to protect” civilians from government force, but his sense of responsibility appears to be highly selective, fitting with his favored geopolitical priorities.

More broadly, the U.S. news media’s hiding of Ukraine’s neo-Nazis has become a near obsession, indeed, done in greater uniformity across the mainstream press and even much of the blogosphere than the misguided consensus on Iraq’s WMD in 2002-03 that led to the disastrous Iraq War.

From a purely news point of view, you might think the inclusion of Nazis in a European government for the first time since World War II might make for a good story. But that would go against the preferred American narrative that the protesters in the Maidan were peaceful and idealistic – and that they were set upon by the evil Yanukovich who simply fled because he could no longer withstand their moral pressure.

Left out of this narrative is that Yanukovych signed an agreement on Feb. 21 brokered by three European governments in which he agreed to reduce his powers, accept early elections to vote him out of office, and – most fatefully – pull back the police. It was then that the neo-Nazi militias, from western Ukraine and organized in 100-man brigades, attacked the few remaining police, seized government buildings and sent Yanukovych and many of his officials fleeing for their lives.

As I was told by one of the Western diplomats involved in the aftermath, there was an urgency to cobble together some interim government because otherwise the neo-Nazis would have been left in total control. He said the various parties in parliament moved expeditiously to impeach Yanukovych (though constitutional procedures weren't followed) and replace him with an interim president and government.

To placate the neo-Nazis, they were given control of four ministries, including the appointment of Parubiy to handle national security and make the neo-Nazi militias part of the official government security apparatus as National Guard.

But that history has been whisked away from information that the mainstream U.S. news media makes available to the American people, all the better to lead them into a new Cold War. [For more on this U.S. propaganda