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US, Kiev Puppet Regime Escalate Ukraine Conflict After Russian Concessions

By Alex Lantier

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Yesterday, officials in Washington and in the US puppet regime in Kiev dismissed attempts by Russian President Vladimir Putin to de-escalate the crisis in Ukraine, vowing to step up attacks on anti-Kiev regime protesters in eastern Ukraine.

On Wednesday, Putin had asked the protesters, who are calling for a May 11 referendum on autonomy or separation from the unelected regime in Kiev, to postpone the vote. He also endorsed the May 25 presidential elections planned by the Kiev regime and announced that Russian troops along the Ukraine-Russian border had returned to their normal bases.

The Kiev regime responded by threatening that military operations that have left dozens dead across eastern Ukraine and in last Friday's fascist massacre in Odessa would continue. Yesterday, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk mocked Putin's statements as "hot air."

"Ukraine hasn't planned any referendum on May 11. If terrorists and separatists, who are supported by Russia, were ordered to postpone what wasn't planned, then it's their internal affairs," he said.

Defense Secretary Andriy Parubiy—a founding member of the Social-National Party, the precursor of the fascist Svoboda Party that now holds top ministerial posts in Kiev—said attacks would continue, whether or not pro-Russian protesters canceled the referendum.

“The counter-terrorist operation will continue unhindered, despite the presence of terrorist and insurgent groups in the Donetsk region,” he said.

Bloody clashes are in particular feared for today and the weekend. Today is the anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union and the Allies over Nazi Germany. Earlier this week, several reports emerged of fears of a new fascist massacre in Odessa, directed against participants in May 9 rallies. Several officials in eastern Ukraine canceled planned festivities, citing the risk of bloodshed.

Obama administration officials turned reality on its head, denouncing Russia as the aggressor, and US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland attacked the Kremlin, saying that to date, Russia “has fulfilled none of its commitments” to reduce tensions in Ukraine.

With monumental hypocrisy, Nuland—who was caught on tape plotting the installation of Yatsenyuk during the right-wing protests that led to the putsch of February 22 in Kiev—attacked the Kremlin for its “efforts to destabilize eastern and southern Ukraine.”

US congressmen echoed the hard line of the Obama administration. “Despite the warnings issued and sanctions imposed by the US and our allies, Russia continues its aggression against Ukraine,” said Representative Ed Royce (R-California) in a House hearing on the Ukraine crisis. Royce also called for harsher sanctions to bring down Russia’s economy: “Instead, we must adopt a proactive strategy that will convince Putin that his aggression will have a significant and lasting cost to the Russian economy.”

The response of the anti-Kiev protesters in eastern Ukrainian regions around Donetsk and Luhansk undermined claims that the protests are simply an intelligence operation concocted by the Kremlin. They said they intended to ignore Putin’s request to postpone the referendum.

“The referendum will happen on May 11,” said Donetsk People’s Republic leader Denis Pushilin. “The date of the referendum will not be postponed.”

Officials in Slavyansk—which has been besieged by forces from the pro-Kiev Ukrainian National Guard and fascist Right Sector paramilitary group, suffering dozens of casualties in repeated Kiev regime attacks—also dismissed Putin’s advice to postpone the referendum.

“If we don’t have a referendum on the 11th, then we will lose the trust of the people,” a spokesman in Slavyansk said. “We face the choice: referendum or war, and we choose the peaceful way.”

The rejection by Washington and Kiev of Moscow’s attempt at an accommodation exposes the fraud of the presentation of the Ukraine crisis by Western governments and media outlets. The

aggressor is not the Kremlin, which is ineffectually seeking to work out a truce that neither the Kiev regime nor its Western backers wants.

Rather, it is Washington and its European allies that have stoked up the situation by installing and encouraging an unpopular, far-right regime in Kiev that is determined to drown internal opposition in blood.

A recent poll by the Washington, DC-based Pew Research Center found that only 41 percent of Ukrainians support the Kiev regime. Disapproval ratings are above the national average of 59 percent in the eastern Ukraine, reaching 67 percent. Popular opposition can be expected to grow this month, as the Kiev regime's unpopular 50 percent price increases for natural gas go into effect.

As for Kremlin oligarchs, while they are stunned by the drive for regime change and civil war in Ukraine unleashed by Washington and Berlin, they are above all afraid of the risk that popular opposition to the Kiev regime in Ukraine and in Russia could trigger a movement in the working class.

May Day rallies in Russia—the first since before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991—reportedly gathered millions throughout the country and over a hundred thousand in Moscow for the international holiday of the working class.

Members of the anti-Kiev self-defense militia in Slavyansk denounced Putin for making concessions to Kiev. “He is a coward. He is afraid of losing his money,” one fighter, who gave his name as Rustem, told the *Guardian* .

“Instead of helping Russian people here, he is betraying us. He will pay for this with a revolution in Red Square,” Rustem added. “Russian people will not stand by and watch this happen.”

Rustem spoke during the funeral in Slavyansk for four men killed in the nearby town of Semovka by units loyal to Kiev—three anti-Kiev militia fighters and a truck driver who died when his truck became trapped in the crossfire and burned. A separate funeral had already been held for Irina Boevets, a 30-year-old teacher who was killed by a stray bullet when she walked out onto her balcony.

As mourners filed by the coffins of the four men, they chanted slogans against Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the two heads of state who have led the imperialist intervention in Ukraine: “Glory to Russia, shame on America, shame on the EU, Shame on Obama and Merkel!”

A Slavyansk housewife said, “It is impossible to turn back to Ukraine after the events in Slavyansk. We will not forgive the killing of our people.”