

Imperialist Hypocrisy and Lies on Eastern Ukraine Protests

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Global Research, April 10, 2014

[World Socialist Web Site](#)

Region: [Russia and FSU, USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation, US NATO War Agenda](#)

Amid the escalating conflict over the seizure of local government buildings by pro-Russian protesters in eastern Ukraine, US officials and the American media are hypocritically denouncing Russia for allegedly inciting the actions. These charges, presented as facts but without any substantiation, are part of an intensification of the imperialist offensive in Eastern Europe, the aim of which is to isolate, humiliate and ultimately dismember Russia. The logic of this reckless and aggressive policy, spearheaded by Washington, is war between the West and Russia, a nuclear power.

Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov threatened yesterday to crush the protests in 48 hours, prompting the Russian Foreign Ministry to warn of “civil war” in Ukraine.

Washington responded by pushing for a crackdown and dismissing the protests as a Russian conspiracy to seize Ukraine. In an editorial yesterday calling for economic sanctions against Russia, the *Washington Post* denounced the protesters as “rent-a-mobs.” The *Post* advised Washington and the European Union to “counter the Russian strategy in the short term by fully backing the Ukrainian government in taking the necessary measures to restore order.”

The day before, Secretary of State John Kerry denounced the protests in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, declaring: “Quite simply, 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.”

What hypocrisy! As Kerry well knows, he is accusing Russia of doing precisely what Washington and its European allies did by backing the February putsch in Kiev: destabilizing and then toppling the elected, pro-Russian regime of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. One of the main US arguments for toppling Yanukovich was that he cracked down on the opposition—exactly what Washington is now pressing its right-wing puppet regime to do.

The US “rent-a-mobs” were bought-and-paid-for “democracy” activists and fascist thugs from the Right Sector and the Svoboda party, whose anti-Semitic and xenophobic politics were condemned in a vote of the EU parliament in December 2012. US State Department official Victoria Nuland boasted that since the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, Washington had spent \$5 billion to build up such opposition groups in Ukraine.

Kerry and the unofficial state propaganda organs of the US media make no attempt to square their pose of righteous defenders of Ukrainian sovereignty and legality with the well-documented actions of the US government in subverting Ukrainian sovereignty to illegally install a client regime allied to fascist forces. Contemptuous of public sentiment, which is

opposed to a war over Ukraine, they feel no need to convince, but instead seek to intimidate, bully, numb and confuse.

The record includes visits by top US politicians and State Department officials, including Nuland and the US ambassador to Ukraine, to Kiev's Independence Square in the run-up to the coup to show support for the ultra-right paramilitaries who manned the barricades there. It includes official meetings between European, American and NATO officials and leaders of the anti-Russian opposition at the height of the destabilization campaign against Yanukovich. And it includes the infamous leaked telephone call in which Nuland and the US ambassador discussed who they wanted to head the puppet government that would supplant Yanukovich, agreeing on Arseniy Yatsenyuk ("Yats"), the current prime minister.

Having spent so much money on a putsch, Washington is very angry that it is not being accepted. The regions of eastern Ukrainian with close linguistic and industrial ties to Russia, which were Yanukovich's power base, were deeply repelled by the new Kiev regime and its pledge to eliminate the status of Russian as an official language and impose austerity measures demanded by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. These grievances provided the fuel for pro-Russian protests by thousands of people in Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkiv, as the few US media reports filed from the region admitted.

"Unlike the pro-Europe protest movement in Kiev, the stirrings in Donetsk have so far attracted little support from the middle class, and seem dominated by pensioners nostalgic for the Soviet Union and angry, often drunk, young men... Any crackdown that results in serious bloodshed would probably widen the appeal of the protesters in a mostly Russian-speaking region that has little liking for leaders in Kiev," *New York Times* journalists wrote from Donetsk.

In the Ukraine crisis, it is Washington and its EU allies that are the aggressors. By threatening economic sanctions against Russia and an internal crackdown that could escalate into a bloody ethnic war against Russians inside Ukraine, drawing in Russia itself, they are signaling that they will stop at nothing, even the risk of global war, to assert their economic and geostrategic interests in the region.

Acknowledging this fact does not signify giving any political support to the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin or the perspective of ethnic partition of Ukraine. The Putin regime rests on the same type of gangster oligarchy that emerged in Ukraine from the theft of state property during the dissolution of the USSR and the restoration of capitalism.

Hostile to the working class, it has no basis for appealing to the only force, deeply opposed to war, that can stop the imperialist powers' escalation in Ukraine: the working class of the former USSR, Europe and the United States.

Its moves to defend its interests in Ukraine against Western provocations, inciting Russian nationalism and raising the price it demands for Russian natural gas, will only further impoverish the working class in Ukraine and divide it along ethnic lines.

The American ruling class is able to count on a corrupt and docile media to disseminate its lies and promote its criminal foreign policy. Even as the major media black out Seymour Hersh's latest revelations showing that US-NATO allegations of Syrian chemical weapons attacks were fabrications, they trumpet lurid claims that satellite images show 40,000 Russian troops massing on the Russian-Ukrainian border.

These allegations against Russia have no evidentiary basis. The Kremlin has denied them, and NATO refuses to release even the commercial satellite photos it claims to have. CNN reporter Phil Black, who traveled along the Russian-Ukrainian border, filed a video reporting that his team “can’t find any sign of the Russian army.”

The American people are fully entitled to conclude that reports of an imminent Russian invasion of Ukraine—like the pretexts used to package all the other unpopular wars US imperialism has launched over the last decade—are a pack of lies.

The endless stream of lies and provocations are not a sign of political strength, but of the profound crisis of imperialism. To the extent that workers in the United States and Europe see what is taking place, they are deeply hostile. This opposition must be mobilized and given a conscious expression in the form of an international movement of the working class against imperialism, its political representatives, and the capitalist system as a whole.

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