

US Backed “Pro-Democracy” Kiev Regime: Neocon Fugitive Given Ukraine Province

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Ukraine’s President Poroshenko has tapped another international “carpetbagger” to rule his people, ex-Georgian President Saakashvili, a neocon hero wanted in his homeland for embezzlement and human rights abuses who now governs Odessa, reports Robert Parry.

The latest political move by the U.S.-backed “pro-democracy” regime in Ukraine was to foist on the people of Odessa the autocratic Georgian ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili, a neoconservative favorite and currently a fugitive from his own country which is seeking him on charges of human rights violations and embezzlement.

New York Times correspondent David M. Herszenhorn justified this imposition of a newly minted Ukrainian citizen on the largely Russian-speaking population of Odessa by [saying](#) that “the Ukrainian public’s general willingness to accept the appointment of foreigners to high-level positions underscores the deep lack of trust in any government after nearly a quarter-century of mismanagement and corruption.”



Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia and U.S. President George Bush at a NATO meeting. (Photo credit: NATO)

But Herszenhorn made no apparent effort to gauge how willing the people of Odessa are to accept this choice of a controversial foreign politician to govern them. The pick was made by President Petro Poroshenko and is just the latest questionable appointment by the post-coup regime in Kiev.

For instance, shortly after the Feb. 22, 2014 putsch that ousted elected President Viktor Yanukovich, the new U.S.-endorsed authorities in Kiev named thuggish oligarch Igor Kolomoisky to be governor of Dnipropetrovsk in southeastern Ukraine. Kolomoisky, regarded as one of Ukraine’s most corrupt billionaires, ruled the region as his personal fiefdom until he was ousted by Poroshenko earlier this year in a dispute over Kolomoisky’s use of strong-arm tactics to maintain control of Ukrainian energy companies. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Ukraine’s Oligarchs Turn on Each Other.”](#)]

Poroshenko also has granted overnight Ukrainian citizenship to other controversial foreigners to hold key positions in his government, including Finance Minister Natalie Jaresko, an ex-U.S. State Department official whose qualifications included enriching herself through her management of a \$150 million U.S.-taxpayer-financed investment fund for Ukraine. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Ukraine Finance Minister’s ‘American Values.’](#)”]

Beyond his recruitment of questionable outsiders, Poroshenko has made concessions to Ukraine's far-right nationalists, including signing legislation to extend official recognition to Ukrainian fascists who collaborated with the Nazis in killing Jews and Poles during World War II. In a bitter irony, the new law coincided with the world's celebration in April of the 70th anniversary of Russian and U.S. troops bringing an end to the Holocaust. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[How Ukraine Commemorates the Holocaust](#)."]]

Now Poroshenko has given Saakashvili his own province to govern, rescuing him from an obscure existence in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. According to a New York Times [profile](#) last September, Saakashvili was there "writing a memoir, delivering 'very well-paid' speeches, helping start up a Washington-based think tank and visiting old boosters like Senator John McCain and Victoria Nuland, the assistant secretary of state."

McCain and Nuland were key neocon backers of the coup that ousted Yanukovich and touched off the bloody civil war that has killed thousands of ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine, while also reviving Cold War tensions between the West and Russia. Before the coup, McCain urged on right-wing protesters with promises of U.S. support and Nuland [was overheard](#) hand-picking Ukraine's new leadership, saying "Yats is the guy," a reference to Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who became prime minister after the coup.

According to the Times profile, Saakashvili also "entertained David H. Petraeus, the former director of the Central Intelligence Agency," another neocon favorite who ran into legal trouble himself when the FBI discovered he had shared top-secret information with his biographer/lover and then lied about it to FBI agents. Petraeus, however, received only [a suspended sentence](#) and a fine in contrast to intelligence-community whistleblowers who have faced serious prison time.

Models, Nude Artist and Massage Therapist

While cooling his heels in Brooklyn, Saakashvili fumed over charges leveled against him by prosecutors in his home country of Georgia. According to the Times profile, Saakashvili was accused of "using public money to pay for, among other things, hotel expenses for a personal stylist, hotel and travel for two fashion models, Botox injections and hair removal, the rental of a yacht in Italy and the purchase of artwork by the London artist Meredith Ostrom, who makes imprints on canvases with her naked, painted body. ...

"Mr. Saakashvili is also accused of using public money to fly [his massage therapist](#), Dorothy Stein, into Georgia in 2009. Mr. Saakashvili said he received a massage from Ms. Stein on 'one occasion only,' but Ms. Stein said she received 2,000 euros to massage him multiple times, including delivering her trademark 'bite massage.' 'He gave me a bunch of presents,' said Ms. Stein, who splits her time between Berlin and Hoboken," including a gold necklace.

The Georgian prosecutors also have charged Saakashvili with human rights violations for his [violent crackdown](#) on political protesters in 2007.

However, in Herszenhorn's May 31 article about Saakashvili's appointment as Odessa's governor, the Times correspondent (who has [behaved more like a pro-Kiev propagandist](#) than an objective reporter) wrote that the criminal charges against Saakashvili and other officials from his government are "widely perceived as a campaign of political retribution."

Herszenhorn didn't say where he had gained that perception, but it is true that Official Washington's neoconservatives will broach no criticism of their longtime hero Saakashvili, who was a big booster of the Iraq War and even named a boulevard in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi in honor of U.S. President George W. Bush.

Saakashvili apparently felt that his close ties to the Bush administration would protect him in summer 2008 when he provoked a border clash with Russian troops over the rebellious territory of South Ossetia. Georgia suffered a sharp military defeat and Saakashvili's political star quickly faded among his countrymen, leading to his party's rejection at the polls and his exile.

But Saakashvili's love of the high life might find similar attitudes among some of the other "carpetbaggers" arriving in Ukraine to take Ukrainian citizenship and get top jobs in the post-coup government. Estonian Jaanika Merilo, an associate of Finance Minister Jaresko's, was brought in to handle Ukraine's foreign investments, but Merilo is best known on the Internet for her provocative party photos.



Janika Merilo, the Estonian being put in charge of arranging foreign investments into Ukraine. (From her Facebook page via Zero Hedge)



Janika Merilo, an Estonian brought into the Ukrainian government to oversee foreign investments. (From her Facebook page via Zero Hedge)

Yet, as much fun as some of these well-connected politicians and bureaucrats may be having in Kiev, the plight of the average Ukrainian continues to worsen as "free-market" reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund take hold. Those "reforms" have included slashing old-age pensions, removing worker protections, and hiking the price of heating fuel.

Now, the latest "democratic" reform is to appoint a neocon politician on the run from his own country's criminal justice system to govern what is likely to be a hostile population of ethnic Russians in Odessa.

On May 2, 2014, neo-Nazi street fighters set fire to Odessa's Trade Union Building and burned alive dozens of ethnic Russians who had taken refuge there. The building was also spray-painted with Nazi slogans, including praise for the Galician SS, a Ukrainian force that fought with the Nazis and slaughtered Jews. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Ukraine's Dr. Strangelove Reality](#)."]]

Overseeing that tense city now is an unelected ex-Georgian neocon politician who is facing charges in his homeland for human rights abuses and misuse of government funds — more "democracy promotion" in the tragic land of Ukraine.

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 Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on

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