

Western Powers and the Ukrainian Regime Call for Military Buildup against Russia

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Amid the crackdown on pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine being carried out by his Western-backed regime, Ukraine's acting prime minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, called for a military buildup against Russia in an interview on NBC News' "Meet the Press" program Sunday. He advocated measures, including US military aid to his government, that pose the risk of a direct clash between nuclear-armed powers.

This aggressive and provocative policy, centered on the standoff in eastern Ukraine between pro-Russian protesters and the military and fascist paramilitary forces of the unelected regime in Kiev, is inflaming tensions throughout Europe. Late Saturday and early Sunday, pro-regime forces attacked armed pro-Russian protesters who had set up roadblocks outside Slavyansk, killing at least one protester. A number of pro-regime fascists were also killed or wounded.

One of the pro-regime fighters killed in Slavyansk carried a badge of the fascist Right Sector militia, which led the February putsch that installed the current regime in Kiev.

"The personal belongings of a militant killed in the skirmish included a Right Sector badge number 20," said Vyachaslav Ponomarev, the leader of Slavyansk's pro-Russian forces. "Badge number one is held by [Right Sector leader Dmytro] Yarosh."

A week ago, Yarosh called for the "total mobilization" of the Right Sector fascists to crush opposition to the Kiev regime.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said it was "enraged" by the attack in Slavyansk. "It is surprising," it wrote, "that the tragedy occurred after the signing on April 17 in Geneva of the final statement of the four-sided meeting of representatives of Russia, the USA, EU and Ukraine, which calls for refraining from any violent actions, intimidation, or provocations. The Russian side insists on the strict fulfillment by the Ukrainian side of its commitments concerning the de-escalation of the situation in southeast Ukraine."

In fact—as the blank check given by the US-puppet regime in Kiev to the Right Sector makes clear—Kiev and its Western backers are ignoring the Geneva statement. Instead, they are pressing ahead with a reckless policy of militarily encircling Russia.

On "Meet the Press," Yatsenyuk called for a military escalation against Russia. "It's crystal clear that Russia is the threat, the threat to the globe, and the threat to the European Union and the real threat to Ukraine," he said. "[Russian President Vladimir] Putin has a dream to restore the Soviet Union," Yatsenyuk continued, "and every day he goes further and further. And God knows where the final destination is."

Pressed by NBC's David Gregory to ask the Western powers to send weapons to bolster his regime's armed forces, Yatsenyuk asked for help rebuilding Ukraine's economy and military.

Yatsenyuk's comments were a political travesty. The threat to world peace comes not from Russia, but from the aggressive policy pursued by Washington and Berlin and their European allies.

The program of the capitalist oligarchy around Putin is not to restore the forms of state ownership that existed under the USSR, or to reunify the 15 former Soviet republics under its control. Rather, the Kremlin is desperately seeking to find a viable defense posture as NATO and the United States deploy their armed forces ever further to the east and closer to Russia's post-Soviet borders.

The US has already sent millions of dollars in equipment to the Ukrainian army, as part of a broader military buildup by the NATO powers throughout Eastern Europe aimed at Russia. US and NATO officials have sent forces to the Baltic states, Poland, Romania and the Black Sea, despite warnings—including from within Western governments—that further escalation could provoke war with Russia.

Over the weekend, British media reported that the head of the MI6 intelligence agency briefed British Prime Minister David Cameron to the effect that Western military action in Ukraine could spiral into "all-out war with Russia." He told Cameron that Putin would not "stand idly by" if the West intervened to back the Kiev regime.

"The basic message is that it's not worth starting World War Three over Ukraine," a senior British government source told the *Mirror* regarding the briefing.

British MI6 agents and Defense Intelligence Staff are apparently traveling throughout Ukraine, spying, in particular, on pro-Russian cities in eastern Ukraine. These agents on the ground, the *Mirror* reported, "warn that the crisis could turn into a violent civil war, with much of eastern Ukraine declaring independence and effectively joining Russia."

The misgivings of British agents combing Ukraine notwithstanding, NATO is stoking up the conflict, adopting aggressive policies against Russia in ways previously reserved for defenseless ex-colonial countries targeted for US attack and regime change.

Surveying US policy towards Russia, the *New York Times* wrote on Sunday: "Just as the United States resolved in the aftermath of World War II to counter the Soviet Union and its global ambitions, Mr. Obama is focused on isolating President Vladimir V. Putin's Russia by cutting off its economic and political ties to the outside world, limiting its expansionist ambitions in its own neighborhood and effectively making it a pariah state."

Sections of the US State Department are pressing for an even harsher policy, the newspaper noted, and say they are "privately worrying that Mr. Obama has come across as weak."

These remarks point to the explosive conflicts unleashed by the decision of the leading NATO powers to back the Kiev putsch and provoke a conflict with Russia. As rival armies face off in Eastern Europe in ways unseen since the Nazi Wehrmacht fought the Soviet Red Army during World War II, Washington is serving notice that it considers the Kremlin, like the Iraqi and Libyan regimes before it, a "pariah," and will treat it accordingly.

The fate of the heads of state of previous "pariah" regimes gives some indication of the

concerns now facing Putin and top officials in Russia. Saddam Hussein was hanged after a show trial in US-occupied Iraq; Libyan ruler Colonel Muammar Gaddafi was tortured and extrajudicially murdered in the bombed-out ruins of his hometown, Sirte.

The most obvious difference, however, is that Russia is a more substantial power, which can threaten military retaliation with conventional forces and a nuclear arsenal capable of annihilating the planet. This underscores the depths of the crisis of world imperialism and the immensely reckless character of US-European policy.

While Putin stressed in his television appearance Saturday that he saw “nothing to prevent us from normalizing relations” with the NATO powers, top Russian officials have made clear that Russia is preparing a more forceful response should NATO continue to escalate the crisis.

On Friday, Russian presidential spokesman Dmitri Peskov said that the imposition of crippling economic sanctions on Russia planned by Washington and the European powers was “absolutely unacceptable.” He warned, “We can mobilize our whole society if someone starts driving Russia into a corner.”

Appearing on Russian television Saturday, Peskov said that any further enlargement of NATO to include countries further to the east would pose a serious threat to Russia. “One more step towards the Russian border,” he said, would cause “the entire European security architecture to be overhauled.”

“NATO cannot stop being a military organization,” Peskov noted, adding, “Russia will have to take measures to ensure its own security.”

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