OMNI
RUSSIA NEWSLETTER #4, JUNE 19, 2015.

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Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace, Justice, and Ecology.
(#1 March 21, 2014; #2 April 10, 2014; #3 May 16, 2014)

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The whole picture: the US ENCIRCLEMENT OF RUSSIA and CHINA: See OMNI’s newsletters/blogs on US Imperialism Westward Pacific/E. Asia,
on Iran, and related subjects.

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The Many Faces of Vladimir Putin

January 13, 2015, 10:53 am ET by Sarah Childress and Chris Amico

The larger-than-life Russian leader has held power — with one title or another — for 15 years, and is set to reign for at least a decade more. Yet Putin remains inscrutable.

Putin’s Way, FRONTLINE’s investigation into the accusations of criminality and corruption that have surrounded Vladimir Putin’s reign in Russia, premieres tonight on-air and online at 10 pm EST (check local listings).

With only a smattering of biographical details released to the public and his sometimes puzzling public appearances, scholars — and even many world leaders — still struggle to understand the man at the helm of the Kremlin.

To glean a clearer picture, FRONTLINE took a closer look at some of the most identifiable aspects of Putin’s public persona.


ANALYSES OF PBS ANTI-PUTIN “DOCUMENTARY”

New Frontline Documentary “Putin's Way”. There is something interesting about this one..

posted on Jan, 13 2015 @ 10:55 PM

I Just watched this new Frontline Documentary "Putin's Way". It's basically an entire piece about the corruption of Vladimir Putin and his connections to the KGB and now FSB etc.

What I found interesting about it however, was its leaning about the 1999 apartment bombings being a conspiracy by Putin and his connections with the "FSB" to blame Chechnya, causing a new war while allowing Putin to gain recognition and support, ultimately leading to his presidency in Russia. The documentary paints a picture of a whole conspiracy theory with those at the very top being involved, including Boris Yelstn.

It speaks of rubble being hauled off before an official investigation could take place. It mentions that this was Russia's "9/11", it even goes so far as to say many didn't believe the "official story", 
and how the government there would not allow any real investigations, specifically anything that could bring charges to the president. The parallels to some of the same "issues" with 9/11 are pretty clear.

Anyway, I find this incredibly interesting because if anyone makes a documentary in the U.S. about 9/11 which contains info that could possibly lead to charges against people at the very top, they are considered crazy "conspiracy theorists". Yet when PBS makes a film about the Russian apartment bombings being set up by Putin and the FSB, then it's still just a "documentary". Is anyone else tired of the double-standards the media and just people in general here in the U.S. continue to have?

Published on Jan 13, 2015


- 58 Comments
- FRONTLINE

Randel Cole • 2 days ago

Putin's Way sure smelled a lot like western propaganda. Much of it smacked of conspiracy theories, weak circumstantial evidence, hearsay, and the use of dissidents, who may have an ax to grind, to support western arguments. One could easily look at the JFK assassination and construct similar, "factual" arguments to prove that it was not what the record states or the Bush/Gore election that looked to the rest of the world as a rigged election similar to what Putin is accused. This program made Putin appear monstrous, and the ending, with the cornering of a rat analogy, is pure fear mongering. I happened to have watched Putin's three hour press conference last December and if this is the same man portrayed in your "documentary", then either he is a great actor who has duped his nation or the filmmakers need to be objective in their investigation reporting. There are always two sides to every story and both sides are layered with complexity and color. This program offered one side, one layer, one color.

RBWood • a day ago

I AGREE - This program made Putin appear monstrous, and the ending, with the cornering of a rat analogy, is pure fear mongering!
I thought PBS was above muck raking!
- Reply
- Share

DavEd CamerBand • a day ago

Strange that those digging into Putin's past are still alive.. considering what he is supposed to have done..

"Speculation & educated guesswork" was a phrase used in the program... and thats what
it was..
- Reply
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rayfin3  Randel Cole  a day ago

Agree with your sentiments. I spend a lot of time watching the major Russian television media, and this documentary had all the hallmarks of a hit-piece produced by NTV, ORT or Rossiya 24. I’m no Putin supporter, but the one-sided nature of this report casts a sorry reflection on the normally solid Frontline reporting. Just a couple of examples: In describing Putin’s rise to power in mid-1999 and the renewal of the war against Chechnya, there was no mention at all of the radical Chechen incursion into neighboring Dagestan in July-August 1999. Or portraying M. Khodorkovsky as a reformed oligarch- who before his arrest was trying to steer Russia in a different, more democratic direction- smacks of historical revisionism. (See the recent article in the New Yorker for a more balanced assessment of the man). [http://www.newyorker.com/magaz...](http://www.newyorker.com/magaz...)

While the American MIC is licking its chops over the renewed tension with Russia, there’s a real danger in painting the devil in only dark colors.
- Reply
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rixse  Randel Cole  a day ago

Aptly summed. The guy became the President for the third time. Even if there is corruption, well that is right here at home. All kinds starting from financial irregularities to Corporations selling politicians (oops! did i say selling, no they are just buying them) to voter fraud.. you name it. There is plenty around here. What is fascinating is in most of such documentaries and it happens always... somehow the Eastern world is always painted as dark and evil. I cannot recall seeing for once except for Australia and New Zealand, all the countries, their leaderships and their ways are corrupt. It is just the US and its supporters in Europe and Americas who are the good guys, regardless of toppling the global economy or incessant war mongering.

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FOUR ESSAYS ON UKRAINE

"The Ukrainian Muddle: Lies, Manipulation and Silence"

By Murray Polner, History News Network, posted May 6

*Much less polemical than its title implies - mainly highlights analysts who have pointed out complications in the Ukraine crisis*
"Are We Starting Another Cold War over Russian Actions in Ukraine?"

By Walter G. Moss, History News Network, posted May 4, 2014

The author is a professor of history emeritus at Eastern Michigan University.

"Annexations"

By Susan Watkins, New Left Review, March-April 2014 issue

Compares the Crimean annexation to others in recent years

Other Countries and Russia

"Why Germans Are More Ambivalent about What's Happening in Ukraine than Anybody Else"

By Julianne Fuerst, History News Network, posted April 13, 2014

The author teaches history at the University of Bristol, U.K.

THE CRISIS 2013-

AVOIDING WAR WITH RUSSIA

During the "Cold War," Dr. Jerome Frank “said that if we wanted to get along with the Russians, we should do the opposite of what we were then doing as a country; that instead of challenging them on every occasion, we should seek out ways to do things together so as gradually to ameliorate our animosity.” J. William Fulbright with Seth Tillman, The Price of Empire (1989, p. 194, in Chap. 7, “Seeing the World as Others See It”).

The following essays are placed chronologically, 2013-2015.
Baiting the Russian Bear

By Bruce Gagnon  May 4, 2013

I am as distressed as I’ve ever been having watched a 24 minute video yesterday from Odessa, Ukraine as fascist Right Sector thugs set fire to a union hall where unarmed anti-Kiev protesters had taken refuge.

You can see the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVXm9nnY-AQ

You have to be patient watching the video because it is obvious that a lot of the time the photographer was trying to be discreet as he filmed the pro-western nationalists attacking the people inside the union hall. At one point the photographer runs around to the backside of the building and films police authorities standing around talking but taking no action to stop the carnage that killed more than 40 people.

What struck me the most was that during the entire 24 minutes of watching this video I never heard or saw any signs of fire trucks. Odessa is a big city and surely must have fire departments. Only near the end of the video did we finally see some police begin to move in but by then the fire was well under way and people were leaping out of windows. Who had the power to stop fire trucks from responding?

What we know is that Right Section fascist thugs were bussed in from around Kiev and they marched through the streets of Odessa. There was a protest camp set up outside of the union hall where anti-Kiev protests were happening. As the fascists descended on the union hall many of the anti-Kiev protesters ran inside the building for safety. The pro-Kiev nationalists, supported by the US-EU, then began throwing Molotov cocktails into the building.

Never during the 24-minute video did I see any of the nationalists outside the union hall taking cover. Clearly they were not being shot at. But you do see at least one man on the ground firing his gun at those inside the building.

The news media in the US have responded by saying it is “unclear” who caused the fire. You can see a short video about media whitewashing this story at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1tykLCTVlw

I read one testimony this morning from someone who tried to help rescue those burned inside the building. He wrote:
Hello, my name is Igor R., I am 39, I live in town of Odessa. During 15 years I work as a doctor on the ambulance. Yesterday, as you know, a frightful tragedy happened in our cities, one people put to death other. Put to death cruelly - burned living. Not because they were drunk, not for the inheritance of grandmother, but because they do not divide the political looks of nationalists. First they were beating people unmercifully, cruelly, and burned them alive after.

As a doctor I rushed to give help to the one who could be rescued, but I was stopped by pro Ukrainian Nazi radicals, who did not let me walk up to the injured. One of them pushed away me rudely, promising, that soon me and other Jews of Odessa are going to meet the same fate.

I saw a fellow which could be rescued, if I was able to take him away to the hospital, but all persuasions ended with me getting hit in the face so hard that I lost my glasses.

For 15 years I saw a great deal very much, but yesterday I wanted to cry, not from pain not from humiliation, but from a weakness. What occurred yesterday didn't even have place during fascist occupation in my town in WWII. I wonder, why the whole world is keeping silent?

The US backed ‘government’ in Kiev largely came to power because the Right Sector fascists used these same violent tactics in the coup d’état a couple of months ago. The now famous "Fuck the EU" quote from US State Department operative Victoria Nuland (wife of Bush-Cheney era neocon Robert Kagan) was direct evidence of the deep involvement and interference of the US in Ukraine. This whole story just reeks of hypocrisy and arrogance on the part of the US.

Victoria Nuland was also caught last December saying "we've invested $5 billion" in the Ukraine project.... that part picks up at the 7:25 mark in this video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2y0y-JUsPTU

Note the ExxonMobil and Chevron logos on the stage next to Nuland ... and remember that the oil-i-garchy wants Russian natural gas and oil supplies. Add it up, mix in the usual modus operandi, stir and what you get is chaos, instability and regime change.

What is Russia to do? Roll over and watch themselves get more NATO ‘missile defense’ bases on their borders and fascists appointed to the 'new government'
cabinet in Ukraine? More than 27 million people were killed during Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union during WW II. The Russians are hyper-sensitive to fascists coming to power on their immediate borders - especially when the US-NATO are calling the shots.

In recent days there have been reports from eastern Ukraine that not only Right Sector fascists have been attacking unarmed protesters but also that black-clad mercenaries (Blackwater?) have been filmed chasing down the anti-fascist protesters.

The US knew that Russia would have to react, that is why we've witnessed massive corporate media demonization of Putin during the past year or so. It helps make it easier for the American people to swallow another one of our interventions.

This intervention though could lead to nuclear war.

The time is long past for peace activists to speak out opposing the Obama administration and NATO baiting the Russian bear.

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http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/05/08/to-understand-or-not-to-understand-putin/#

To Understand Or Not to Understand Putin

by DIANA JOHNSTONE. May 8, 2014

Paris.
In Germany these days, very many citizens object to the endless Russia-bashing of the NATO-oriented mainstream media. They may point out that the U.S.-backed regime change in Kiev, putting in power an ultra-right transitional government eager to join NATO, posed an urgent threat to preservation of Russia’s only warm water naval base in Crimea. Under the circumstances, and inasmuch as the Crimean population overwhelmingly approved, reinstating Crimea in the Russian federation was a necessary defensive move.

In Germany, anyone who says thing like that can be denigrated as a “Putinversteher” (a Putin understander).

That says it all. We are not supposed to understand. We are supposed to hate. The media are there to see to that.

While the West doggedly refuses to understand Putin and Russia, Vladimir Putin, on the other hand, seems to understand things pretty well.

He seems to understand that he and his nation are being systematically lured into a death trap by an enemy which excels in the contemporary art of “communication”. In a war situation, NATO communication means that it doesn’t matter who does what. The only thing that matters is who tells the story. The Western media are telling the story in a way which depends on not understanding Russia, and not understanding Putin. Putin and Russia become fictional villains in the Western version, just the latest reincarnation of Hitler and Nazi Germany.

The horrific massacre in Odessa on May 2 proved this. The photographic evidence, the testimony of numerous eye witnesses, the smoldering bodies and the shouts of the killers are all there to prove what happened. Tents erected to collect signatures in favor of a referendum to introduce a federal system into Ukraine (now a politically divided but totally centralized state) were set on fire by a militia of fascist thugs who attacked the local federalists as “separatists” (accusing them of wanting to “separate” from Ukraine to join Russia, when that is not what they are seeking). The local activists fled into the big trade union building on the square where they were pursued, assaulted, murdered and set on fire by “Ukrainian nationalists”, acting on behalf of the illegitimate Kiev regime supported by the West.

No matter how vicious the assaults, Western media saw no evil, heard no evil, spoke no evil. They deplored a “tragedy” which just sort of happened.

Odessa is proof that whatever happens, the NATO political class, political leaders and media united, have decided on their story and are sticking to it. The nationalists that seized power in Kiev are the good guys, the people being assaulted in Odessa and in Eastern Ukraine are “pro-Russian” and therefore the “bad guys”.

Understanding Putin

So despite everything, let’s try to understand President Putin, which is really not very hard. Behind every conscious action there should be a motive. Let’s look at motives. Today, UK
Foreign Secretary William Hague, who certainly gives every sign of never understanding – or wanting to understand – anything, parroted the NATO line that Russia was “trying to orchestrate conflict and provocation” in Ukraine’s east and south.

That makes no sense. Putin has absolutely no motive to want civil war to rage in neighboring Ukraine, and very strong reasons to do all he can to avoid it. It confronts him with a serious dilemma. Ongoing vicious attacks by fanatic nationalists from Western Ukraine on citizens in the east and south of the country can only incite the victimized Russian-speaking Ukrainians to call on Russia for help. But at the same time, Putin must know that those Russophone Ukrainians do not really want to be invaded by Russia. Perhaps they want something impossible. And it is perfectly obvious that any use of Russia’s military force to protect people in Ukraine would let loose an even wilder demonization of Putin as “the new Hitler” who is invading countries “for no reason”. And NATO would use this, as it has already used the reunification of Crimea with Russia, as “proof” that Europe must tighten its alliance, establish military bases throughout Eastern Europe and (above all) spend more money on “defense” (buying US military equipment).

The Western takeover of the Kiev government is clearly a provocation to draw Putin into a trap that certain Western strategists (Zbigniew Brzezinski being the chief theorist) hope will cause Putin’s downfall and plunge Russia into a crisis that can lead to its eventual dismemberment.

Putin can only wish to find a peaceful solution to the Ukrainian mess.

While Washington reverts to Cold War “containment” policy to “isolate” Russia, Putin today held talks in Moscow with Didier Burkhalter, the Swiss president and current chairman of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), in hope of initiating some sort of peaceful mediation.

**Putin Pulls Back From False Flag Plan?**

On this occasion, Putin announced that he had pulled back Russian forces from the border with Ukraine. He indicated that this was to ease concerns over their positioning, meaning claims that Russia was preparing an invasion. He also advised against holding referendums for greater autonomy in the Russophone areas until “conditions for dialogue” can be created.

However, news reports indicated that this reported military pullback caused new concerns among some Ukrainians, who felt Russia was abandoning them in their hour of need, and among some Russians, who feared the President was backing down under Western pressure.

It is not impossible that the pullback order was linked to a Novosti RIA report dated May 6, which indicated that the Ukrainian secret service was planning an imminent false flag operation in order to accuse Russia of violating the border with Ukraine.

Novosti said it had learned from security circles in Kiev that the Ukrainian secret service SBU
had secretly shipped about 200 Russian army uniforms and some 70 forged Russian officer ID into the Eastern Ukrainian protest stronghold of Donetz, to be used to stage a false attack on Ukrainian border patrols.

Novosti said the reports were unconfirmed, but they could nevertheless be taken seriously by the Russians. “The plan would be to simulate an attack on Ukrainian border troops and to film it for the media”, the report said. In connection with the plan, a dozen or so combatants from the ultranationalist Right Sector were to cross the border and kidnap a Russian soldier in order to present him as “proof” of Russian military incursion. The operation was scheduled for May 8 or 9.

By pulling Russian troops farther away from the border, Putin could hope to make the false flag operation less plausible and perhaps to forestall it.

The whole Ukrainian operation, at least partly directed by Victoria Nuland of the U.S. State Department, has been characterised by false flag operations, most notoriously by the snipers who suddenly spread murder and terror in Maidan square in Kiev, effectively wrecking the internationally sponsored transition agreement. “Pro-West” insurgents accused President Yanukovych of sending the killers and forced a rump parliament to give government power to Ms Nuland’s protégé, Arseniy “Yats” Yatsenyuk. However, there has been plenty of evidence to show that the mysterious snipers were pro-West mercenaries: photographic evidence, followed by the telephone statement by the Polish foreign minister to that effect, and finally by the German television channel ARD whose Monitor documentary concluded that the snipers came from the extreme right anti-Russian groups involved in the Maidan uprising. Indeed, all known evidence points to a fascist false flag operation, and yet Western media and politicians continue to blame everything on Russia.

So whatever he does, Putin now has to realize that he will be deliberately “misunderstood” and misrepresented by Western leaders and media. Over the heads of the American people, over the heads of the Germans, French and other Europeans, a private consensus has obviously been reached among persons we may describe as our own Western “oligarchs” to revive the Cold War in order to provide the West with an “enemy” serious enough to save the military-industrial complex and unite the transatlantic community against the rest of the world.

This is what Russian leaders are obliged to understand. What they need most to save the world from endless and useless conflict is the understanding of all those Americans and Europeans who have never been consulted or informed about this perilous shift in strategy, and who, if they understood, would surely say no.

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“The Russians are coming … again … and they’re still ten feet tall!”

So, what do we have here? In Libya, in Syria, and elsewhere the United States has been on the same side as the al-Qaeda types. But not in Ukraine. That’s the good news. The bad news is that in Ukraine the United States is on the same side as the neo-Nazi types, who – taking time off from parading around with their swastika-like symbols and calling for the death of Jews, Russians and Communists – on May 2 burned down a trade-union building in Odessa, killing scores of people and sending hundreds to hospital; many of the victims were beaten or shot when they tried to flee the flames and smoke; ambulances were blocked from reaching the wounded. Try and find an American mainstream media entity that has made a serious attempt to capture the horror.

And how did this latest example of American foreign-policy exceptionalism come to be? One starting point that can be considered is what former Secretary of Defense and CIA Director Robert Gates says in his recently published memoir: “When the Soviet Union was collapsing in late 1991, [Defense Secretary Dick Cheney] wanted to see the dismemberment not only of the Soviet Union and the Russian empire but of Russia itself, so it could never again be a threat to the rest of the world.” That can serve as an early marker for the new cold war while the corpse of the old one was still warm. Soon thereafter, NATO began to surround Russia with military bases, missile sites, and NATO members, while yearning for perhaps the most important part needed to complete the circle – Ukraine.

In February of this year, US State Department officials, undiplomatically, joined anti-government protesters in the capital city of Kiev, handing out encouragement and food, from which emanated the infamous leaked audio tape between the US ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, and the State Department’s Victoria Nuland, former US ambassador to NATO and former State Department spokesperson for Hillary Clinton. Their conversation dealt with who should be running the new Ukraine government after the government of Viktor Yanukovich was overthrown; their most favored for this position being one Arseniy Yatsenuk.
My dear, and recently departed, Washington friend, John Judge, liked to say that if you want to call him a “conspiracy theorist” you have to call others “coincidence theorists”. Thus it was by the most remarkable of coincidences that Arseniy Yatsenuk did indeed become the new prime minister. He could very soon be found in private meetings and public press conferences with the president of the United States and the Secretary-General of NATO, as well as meeting with the soon-to-be new owners of Ukraine, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, preparing to impose their standard financial shock therapy. The current protestors in Ukraine don’t need PHDs in economics to know what this portends. They know about the impoverishment of Greece, Spain, et al. They also despise the new regime for its overthrow of their democratically-elected government, whatever its shortcomings. But the American media obscures these motivations by almost always referring to them simply as “pro-Russian”.

An exception, albeit rather unemphasized, was the April 17 Washington Post which reported from Donetsk that many of the eastern Ukrainians whom the author interviewed said the unrest in their region was driven by fear of “economic hardship” and the IMF austerity plan that will make their lives even harder: “At a most dangerous and delicate time, just as it battles Moscow for hearts and minds across the east, the pro-Western government is set to initiate a shock therapy of economic measures to meet the demands of an emergency bailout from the International Monetary Fund.”

Arseniy Yatsenuk, it should be noted, has something called the Arseniy Yatsenuk Foundation. If you go to the foundation’s website you will see the logos of the foundation’s “partners”. Among these partners we find NATO, the National Endowment for Democracy, the US State Department, Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs in the UK), the German Marshall Fund (a think tank founded by the German government in honor of the US Marshall Plan), as well as a couple of international banks. Is any comment needed? Getting away with supporting al-Qaeda and Nazi types may be giving US officials the idea that they can say or do anything they want in their foreign policy. In a May 2 press conference, President Obama, referring to Ukraine and the NATO Treaty, said: “We’re united in our unwavering Article 5 commitment to the security of our NATO allies”. (Article 5 states: “The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them … shall be considered an attack against them all.”) Did the president forget that Ukraine is not (yet) a member of NATO? And in the same press conference, the president referred to the “duly elected government in Kyiv (Kiev)”, when in fact it had come to power via a coup and then proceeded to establish a new regime in which the vice-premier, minister of defense, minister of agriculture, and minister of environment, all belonged to far-right neo-Nazi parties. The pure awfulness of the Ukrainian right-wingers can scarcely be exaggerated. In early March, the leader of Pravy Sektor (Right Sector) called upon his comrades, the infamous Chechnyan terrorists, to carry out further terrorist actions in Russia.
There may be one important difference between the old Cold War and the new one. The American people, as well as the world, can not be as easily brainwashed as they were during the earlier period.

Over the course of a decade, in doing the research for my first books and articles on US foreign policy, one of the oddities to me of the Cold War was how often the Soviet Union seemed to know what the United States was really up to, even if the American people didn’t. Every once in a while in the 1950s to 70s a careful reader would notice a two- or three-inch story in the New York Times on the bottom of some distant inside page, reporting that Pravda or Izvestia had claimed that a recent coup or political assassination in Africa or Asia or Latin America had been the work of the CIA; the Times might add that a US State Department official had labeled the story as “absurd”. And that was that; no further details were provided; and none were needed, for how many American readers gave it a second thought? It was just more commie propaganda. Who did they think they were fooling? This ignorance/complicity on the part of the mainstream media allowed the United States to get away with all manner of international crimes and mischief.

It was only in the 1980s when I began to do the serious research that resulted in my first book, which later became Killing Hope, that I was able to fill in the details and realize that the United States had indeed masterminded that particular coup or assassination, and many other coups and assassinations, not to mention countless bombings, chemical and biological warfare, perversion of elections, drug dealings, kidnapings, and much more that had not appeared in the American mainstream media or schoolbooks. (And a significant portion of which was apparently unknown to the Soviets as well.)

But there have been countless revelations about US crimes in the past two decades. Many Americans and much of the rest of the planet have become educated. They’re much more skeptical of American proclamations and the fawning media.

President Obama recently declared: “The strong condemnation that it’s received from around the world indicates the degree to which Russia is on the wrong side of history on this.” Marvelous … coming from the man who partners with jihadists and Nazis and has waged war against seven nations. In the past half century is there any country whose foreign policy has received more bitter condemnation than the United States? If the United States is not on the wrong side of history, it may be only in the history books published by the United States.

Barack Obama, like virtually all Americans, likely believes that the Soviet Union, with perhaps the sole exception of the Second World War, was consistently on the wrong side of history in its foreign policy as well as at home. Yet, in a survey conducted by an independent Russian polling center this past January, and reported in the Washington Post in April, 86 percent of
respondents older than 55 expressed regret for the Soviet Union’s collapse; 37 percent of those aged 25 to 39 did so. (Similar poll results have been reported regularly since the demise of the Soviet Union. This is from USA Today in 1999: “When the Berlin Wall crumbled, East Germans imagined a life of freedom where consumer goods were abundant and hardships would fade. Ten years later, a remarkable 51% say they were happier with communism.”)

Or as the new Russian proverb put it: “Everything the Communists said about Communism was a lie, but everything they said about capitalism turned out to be the truth.”

A week before the above Post report in April the newspaper printed an article about happiness around the world, which contains the following charming lines: “Worldwide polls show that life seems better to older people – except in Russia.” … “Essentially, life under President Vladimir Putin is one continuous downward spiral into despair.” … “What’s going on in Russia is deep unhappiness.” … “In Russia, the only thing to look forward to is death’s sweet embrace.”

No, I don’t think it was meant to be any kind of satire. It appears to be a scientific study, complete with graphs, but it reads like something straight out of the 1950s.

The views Americans hold of themselves and other societies are not necessarily more distorted than the views found amongst people elsewhere in the world, but the Americans’ distortion can lead to much more harm. Most Americans and members of Congress have convinced themselves that the US/NATO encirclement of Russia is benign – we are, after all, the Good Guys – and they don’t understand why Russia can’t see this.

The first Cold War, from Washington’s point of view, was often designated as one of “containment”, referring to the US policy of preventing the spread of communism around the world, trying to block the very idea of communism or socialism. There’s still some leftover from that – see Venezuela and Cuba, for example – but the new Cold War can be seen more in terms of a military strategy. Washington thinks in terms of who could pose a barrier to the ever-expanding empire adding to its bases and other military necessities.

Whatever the rationale, it’s imperative that the United States suppress any lingering desire to bring Ukraine (and Georgia) into the NATO alliance. Nothing is more likely to bring large numbers of Russian boots onto the Ukrainian ground than the idea that Washington wants to have NATO troops right on the Russian border and in spitting distance of the country’s historic Black Sea naval base in Crimea.

The myth of Soviet expansionism

One still comes across references in the mainstream media to Russian “expansionism” and “the Soviet empire”, in addition to that old favorite “the evil empire”. These terms stem largely
from erstwhile Soviet control of Eastern European states. But was the creation of these satellites following World War II an act of imperialism or expansionism? Or did the decisive impetus lie elsewhere?

Within the space of less than 25 years, Western powers had invaded Russia three times – the two world wars and the “Intervention” of 1918-20 – inflicting some 40 million casualties in the two wars alone. To carry out these invasions, the West had used Eastern Europe as a highway. Should it be any cause for wonder that after World War II the Soviets wanted to close this highway down? In almost any other context, Americans would have no problem in seeing this as an act of self defense. But in the context of the Cold War such thinking could not find a home in mainstream discourse.

The Baltic states of the Soviet Union – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – were not part of the highway and were frequently in the news because of their demands for more autonomy from Moscow, a story “natural” for the American media. These articles invariably reminded the reader that the “once independent” Baltic states were invaded in 1939 by the Soviet Union, incorporated as republics of the USSR, and had been “occupied” ever since. Another case of brutal Russian imperialism. Period. History etched in stone.

The three countries, it happens, were part of the Russian empire from 1721 up to the Russian Revolution of 1917, in the midst of World War I. When the war ended in November 1918, and the Germans had been defeated, the victorious Allied nations (US, Great Britain, France, et al.) permitted/encouraged the German forces to remain in the Baltics for a full year to crush the spread of Bolshevism there; this, with ample military assistance from the Allied nations. In each of the three republics, the Germans installed collaborators in power who declared their independence from the new Bolshevik state which, by this time, was so devastated by the World War, the revolution, and the civil war prolonged by the Allies’ intervention, that it had no choice but to accept the fait accompli. The rest of the fledgling Soviet Union had to be saved.

To at least win some propaganda points from this unfortunate state of affairs, the Soviets announced that they were relinquishing the Baltic republics “voluntarily” in line with their principles of anti-imperialism and self-determination. But it should not be surprising that the Soviets continued to regard the Baltics as a rightful part of their nation or that they waited until they were powerful enough to reclaim the territory.

Then we had Afghanistan. Surely this was an imperialist grab. But the Soviet Union had lived next door to Afghanistan for more than 60 years without gobbling it up. And when the Russians invaded in 1979, the key motivation was the United States involvement in a movement, largely Islamic, to topple the Afghan government, which was friendly to Moscow. The Soviets could not have been expected to tolerate a pro-US, anti-communist government
on its border any more than the United States could have been expected to tolerate a pro-
Soviet, communist government in Mexico.

Moreover, if the rebel movement took power it likely would have set up a fundamentalist
Islamic government, which would have been in a position to proselytize the numerous
Muslims in the Soviet border republics.

Notes

1. See RT.com (formerly Russia Today) for many stories, images and videos
3. If this site has gone missing again, a saved version can be found here.
4. Voice of Russia radio station, Moscow, April 18, 2014; also see Answer Coalition,
5. RT.com, news report March 5, 2014
8. USA Today (Virginia), Oct. 11, 1999, page 1

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William Blum as author and a link to this website are given.
Robert Parry | The State Department's Ukraine Fiasco.  
Parry writes: "American diplomacy, by definition, is supposed to advance the national interests of the United States, not contribute to international crises that undermine those interests. Yet, by that standard, the U.S. State Department and Secretary of State John Kerry have failed extraordinarily during the current Ukraine crisis."

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US MEDIA

Robert Parry, “NYT's One-Sided Ukraine Narrative.”
Parry writes: "As part of the *New York Times*' sorry descent into becoming a propaganda sheet for the U.S. State Department, the *Times*' front-page story on the Ukrainian presidential election offered a near perfect distillation of Official Washington's false narrative on the crisis."

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Wednesday, December 17, 2014

Despite Warnings of Future War, Obama to Impose New Russian Sanctions


Instead of negotiations designed to end crisis over status of Ukraine, White House says president will sign quietly passed bill that critics says will solidify new Cold War by Jon Queally, staff writer

The White House announced late Tuesday that President Obama will sign into a law a provocative, yet largely ignored, bill passed by both chambers of Congress last week that critics say increases the chances of a future military confrontation with Russia.

Despite some reservations voiced by the president, White House spokesperson Josh Earnest said Obama will sign the bill by the end of the week, making law a bill that calls for new economic sanctions against Russia while also authorizing the sale of military equipment to the Kiev government in Ukraine and hundreds of millions of dollars in other support.

As The Hill reports:

[Earnest] said the president would sign by week’s end new legislation that imposes new penalties on Russian weapons exports and oil production imports. The legislation also targets Moscow’s national energy company if it withholds supplies from European states, and makes rolling back sanctions more difficult.

The White House had not previously said whether the president would sign the bill, signaling some concern that the unilateral steps could cause tensions with European allies that could be exploited by Moscow.

Earnest said Obama opted to sign the legislation because it “does preserve the president’s flexibility” to decide when and how to impose the new penalties.

Still, the White House spokesman acknowledged “it does send a confusing message to our allies because it includes some sanctions language that does not reflect the consultations that are ongoing.”

Critics, including former congressman from Ohio Dennis Kucinich, have raised serious objections to both the contents of the bill and how it was rushed through Congress with little debate. In a scathing op-ed warning that his former colleagues may be recklessly laying the groundwork for a new and deeper Cold War between the U.S./NATO alliance and Russia, Kucinich called the sanctions bill "a hydra-headed incubator of poisonous conflict."

In his argument against the bill, Kucinich enumerated its contents as he pointed out, based on his own experience in the House, that few members of Congress likely read its content nor fully understand the implications of what they have approved. According to his summary the new law will include:

1. Sanctions of Russia’s energy industry, including Rosoboronexport and Gazprom.
2. Sanctions of Russia’s defense industry, with respect to arms sales to Syria.
3. Broad sanctions on Russians’ banking and investments.
4. Provisions for privatization of Ukrainian infrastructure, electricity, oil, gas and renewables, with the help of the World Bank and USAID.
5. Fifty million dollars to assist in a corporate takeover of Ukraine’s oil and gas sectors.
6. Three hundred and fifty million dollars for military assistance to Ukraine, including anti-tank, anti-armor, optical, and guidance and control equipment, as well as drones.
7. Thirty million dollars for an intensive radio, television and Internet propaganda campaign throughout the countries of the former Soviet Union.
8. Twenty million dollars for “democratic organizing” in Ukraine.
9. Sixty million dollars, spent through groups like the National Endowment for Democracy, “to improve democratic governance, and transparency, accountability [and] rule of law” in Russia. What brilliant hyperbole to pass such a provision the same week the Senate’s CIA torture report was released.
10. An unverified declaration that Russia has violated the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, is a
nuclear “threat to the United States” and should be held “accountable.”

11. A path for the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty, which went into force in 1988. The implications of this are immense. An entire series of arms agreements are at risk of unraveling. It may not be long before NATO pushes its newest client state, Ukraine, to abrogate the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Ukraine signed when it gave up its nuclear weapons, and establish a renewed nuclear missile capability, 300 miles from Moscow.

12. A demand that Russia verifiably dismantle “any ground launched cruise missiles or ballistic missiles with a range of between 500 and 5,500 kilometers ...”—i.e., 300 and 3,300 miles.

The law received wide bipartisan support, but as Kucinich indicates, the dangers of further isolating and provoking Russia could result in serious future backlash.

Though Russia has been consistently characterized in the western media as the aggressor throughout this year’s crisis in Ukraine, many experts on the situation point out that the U.S. and NATO played an essential role in fomenting the uprising that resulted in a coup and that ongoing support for the new government in Kiev, alongside persistent demonization of Putin’s role, has placed eastern Europe back on the verge of a conflated military conflict.

"Under the guise of democratizing," Kucinich argues, "the West stripped Ukraine of its sovereignty with a U.S.-backed coup, employed it as a foil to advance NATO to the Russian border and reignited the Cold War, complete with another nuclear showdown."

Now, he continued, the new sanctions and shipment of new weapons to Ukraine will have predictable results. "Each Western incitement creates a Russian response,” he continued, "which is then given as further proof that the West must prepare for the very conflict it has created."

The result, he warns, is obvious. "War as a self-fulfilling prophecy."

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Three Members of Congress Just Reignited the Cold War While No One Was Looking
NATO Symbolically Lowers Flag in Afghanistan, But US War To March On
Gorbachev: US 'Triumphalism' Fueling New Cold War
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2015

MORE PARTS OF THE ENCIRCLING WALL

SWEDEN: A U.S. VASSAL STATE?, by Agneta Norberg, Space Alert!
In December, Edward Snowden, received The Right Livelihood Award, in Stockholm, for his extraordinary courageous stand when revealing what National Security Agency (NSA) is doing. He gave his speech of thanks via a TV-screen from Russia. The ceremony was held in the Swedish Parliament. In his speech Snowden pointed out that he didn’t regret anything. After the ceremony, Said Mahmoudi, professor of International Law at Stockholm University, was interviewed. He warned Snowden never to come to Sweden. The danger for being extradited to the US is obvious. Snowden shared the prize with Alan Rusbridger, The Guardian’s chief editor. After publishing Snowden’s revelations security agents came to The Guardian’s office and forced those in the office to destroy the hard-discoes containing secret material.

Sweden is, together with Israel, the third biggest ‘listening post’ country in the world. Listening posts Lerkil in the south of Sweden and Lovön, not far from Stockholm, have not been exposed to mass media’s scrutiny. For that reason, Women for Peace, in Stockholm, invited Duncan Campbell, a journalist at BBC to visit. He has specialized in writing about personal integrity, citizen’s rights and surveillance. He has for years scrutinized and revealed intelligence agencies surveillance in Great Britain and abroad. At a previous hearing in the European Parliament Campbell specifically pointed at Sweden as a key partner to the US and to Great Britain, when it comes to net-espionage. Sweden controls the cables through the Eastern Sea. Sweden has a third party agreement in surveillance with Five Eyes: The US, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. It was formed in 1949. At Lovön, the Defence Radio transmitter center is located. This center listens to all data traffic which passes through Swedish borders, where the receiver or the sender is outside Swedish borders. At the listening center Lerkil, south of Gothenburg, which is a “Third-party” to “Five Eyes” global spy-agreement, the data is sent to Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) in Great Britain and to NSA in the US. They are part of the secret “SIGINT EXCHANGE” agreement between the Swedish Corporation and their listening partners. Lerkil is a satellite communication and spy station which, without authority, copies and analyses private, secret, personal and business communications which is sent via different international telecommunication satellites. Lerkil is also involved in processing the communications via internet. Duncan Campbell concludes that Sweden should have their own Snowden to come to grips with this scandal. US/NATO exercises in the High North Not far from the Russian border on Norwegian and sometimes on Swedish soil, gigantic US/ NATO war exercises are conducted. There have been called Cold Response 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 with 16,000 troops each. The media have not covered these provocative activities. But in 2012, there was an accident where five humans died when their plane collided with the mountain of Kebnekaise in Northern Sweden. Otherwise the public wouldn´t know. In the South of Sweden similar war games are conducted at sea around the Island of Gotland in the Eastern Sea. The US has established military bases in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Hungary. Almost daily war training activities take place in these countries and are not reported in our media. But the ‘dangerous Russia’ is depicted as a big terrible threat.

In late August, 2014 before our election, the Right-Wing government signed an agreement called Host Nation Support with NATO. In the text it says: “The purpose for this Host Nation support is to make sure that Sweden will be able to give effective support for military activities on Swedish territorium in connection with military exercises, crisis management operations or
contributions. A deeper cooperation with Sweden creates conditions to promote Swedish Defence Forces ability to give and receive support. An agreement about host nation support will be applicable in the cases when NATO conducts activities in Sweden on invitation by Sweden.”

This agreement means: In a war or crisis situation Sweden has nothing to say about how many troops and how much war material will be deployed in our country. NATO, not Sweden, has the command.

We in Sweden have formed an organization to counter these dangerous steps recently taken. We will spread information about what this agreement means. We will demand that the government abolish the host-nation-support agreement. We will work for reestablishing a nonaligned policy for neutrality in war.

Agneta Norberg is a leader of the Swedish Peace Council and serves on the Global Network Board of Directors. She lives in Stockholm.

http://www.space4peace.org/newsletter/Space%20Alert%2031.pdf

CLOSING THE NOOSE AROUND RUSSIA, OR, NO GAPS IN THE RING OF FIRE AROUND RUSSIA: Alleged Threats and Counter-Threats

JUNE 15, 2015 BY BEN WATSON, The D Brief

Enough tanks, vehicles and weapons to support roughly 5,000 U.S. troops could be headed to Russia’s doorstep, The New York Times reported from Latvia on Saturday: “As the proposal stands now, a company’s worth of equipment—enough for about 150 soldiers—would be stored in each of the three Baltic nations: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Enough for a company or possibly a battalion—about 750 soldiers—would be located in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and possibly Hungary…”

“The Pentagon’s proposal still requires approval by Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter and the White House,” Eric Schmitt and Steven Lee Myers write. “And political hurdles remain, as the significance of the potential step has stirred concern among some NATO allies about Russia’s reaction to a buildup of equipment.”

“Decisions are near,” Defense Minister Tomasz Siemoniak tweeted Sunday alluding to talks with Secretary Carter about storing U.S. Army heavy equipment in Polish warehouses “for decades to come,” the AP reported.

Meantime, U.S. Marines—and their MV-22B Ospreys—will be hopping aboard NATO ships this fall to plug logistics and sea-basing gaps in its regional crisis response force strategy, the Marine Corps Times reported Sunday. “First up will be an Italian ship in September, followed by a British gator in November as Marines test what’s called the Allied Maritime Basing Initiative.”

The old Cold War tit-for-tat: “Provocative military maneuvers by Russian aircraft and ships have created alarm in European capitals [what?, who? provocative, alarming to whom?]. In response, NATO nations have launched exercises and other activities near Russia’s borders.” The Washington Post as megaphone for war-makers. Why is the “Pentagon considering positioning heavy weaponry and equipment in the Baltic states and Eastern Europe? Because Gen. Breedlove, the commander of US. European Command and Supreme Allied Commander of NATO Europe recommended such “pre-positioning” of equipment to “Defense” Secretary Carter. That’s what the US Commands that cover every inch of the planet are for, what they do in the name of “defense,” controllers and dominators, not defenders. Boys on playgrounds putting rocks on each other’s shoulders daring the other, but here with nuclear weapons. Dick

NUCLEAR CONFRONTATION: US AGGRESSION ON THE TOTAL LEVEL

Obama Upgrades Nuclear Arsenal For "Direct Confrontation With Russia" By Sherwood Ross (about the author) Permalink (Page 1 of 1 pages)

Related Topic(s): Nuclear Cover-up; Nuclear Powers; Obama Administration; Obama Nuclear, opednews.com Headlined to H3 12/23/14

President Obama’s "gift" to Americans this holiday season is to renege on his 2009 pledge "to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons."

He is upgrading the lethality level of an atomic arsenal already so deadly it can destroy all life on Earth. Then he’ll send Mr. and Mrs. America the bill, estimated by one Federal study at $1-trillion, to pay for the deadly upgrades he wants, rather than the peaceful improvements Americans need.

"The stated goal of the program is to increase the 'reliability' of US nuclear forces," writes Theodore Postol in the Dec. 29 issue of "The Nation". "But a close analysis reveals a technically sophisticated effort to ready US nuclear forces for a direct confrontation with Russia."

Author Postol, a former adviser to the Chief of Naval Operations, slams this modernization as "a reckless policy that directly undermines our safety and national security."

He writes, "No rational actor would take steps to start a nuclear war. But the modernization effort significantly increases the chances of an accident during an unpredicted, and unpredictable crisis—-one that could escalate beyond anyone’s capacity to imagine."

Why, Postol wants to know, does the White House aim to overhaul "the entire US nuclear-weapons arsenal, with a particular focus on improving the fusing systems and accuracy of long-range land- and sea-based ballistic-missile warheads and on increasing the killing power
of other nuclear warheads."

And, he says, the scale and character of these weapons' effects are so large and so deadly that any notion of using them in a controlled or limited way "is completely disconnected from reality." Postol's article is appropriately titled, "Striving for Armageddon: How the Obama Administration Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb."

Today's nuclear bombs are vastly more deadly than those the U.S. used to scourge Japan at the end of World War Two. But Postol writes that improving the reliability of fuses on the ballistic-missile warheads disguises the fact the fuses "have been modified to increase the killing power of the warheads."

What's more, "Painstaking efforts have also gone into improving their delivery accuracy" and when the results of these combined activities are summarized for Russian political leaders, "it is not hard to understand their alarm." Postol asserts that it is the U.S. that has pushed the Russians to a higher state of alert.

He reminds, "There is a long history of accidents during the Cold War that brought the United States treacherously close to disaster." In one major false alert, a training tape loaded into a computer "made it appear to US launch officers that a full-scale Soviet attack was under way."

And he believes the Russians have good reason to be worried. "With a fully modernized arsenal, the formerly 'less capable' nuclear warheads will be able to destroy Russian silo-based ICBMs with confidence. This would free up higher-yield nuclear warheads for other war-fighting tasks, enabling the US military to inflict greater damage on Russian command centers, fixed military facilities and civilian industrial infrastructures."

Despite Mr. Obama's recognition that peace depends on nuclear disarmament, Postol says, "the US is making those nightmare scenarios more likely by rebuilding the stockpile of atomic warheads as if they were just another form of conventional weapon." They aren't.

When Russia was communist and occupying much of Eastern Europe, U.S. leaders claimed they had to be armed to the teeth. Now that the Russians have scrapped the failed Bolshevik system, have become largely capitalist, and have withdrawn from Eastern Europe, President Obama is following the same Cold War policy. Only now the risks are greater than ever.#

Sherwood Ross worked as a reporter for the Chicago Daily News and contributed a regular "Workplace" column for Reuters. He has contributed to national magazines and hosted a talk show on WOL, Washington, D.C. In the Sixties he was active as public (more...)

PEACEMAKING IN RUSSIA

Our friends in the Global Harmony Association, based in Russia, have been busy producing the book Global Peace Science or Peaceloveology under the leadership of Dr Leo Semashko. You can access the Russian version of the book here: http://peacefromharmony.org/?cat=en_c&key=585

It will be translated into English soon.
CONTACT ARKANSAS SENATORS, REPRESENTATIVES, AND PRESIDENT OBAMA

None of the senators or representatives publishes his e-mail address, but each can be contacted by filling in forms offered through his website.

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END RUSSIA NEWSLETTER #4
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Dick Bennett

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