

The New York Times “Reporting on Ukraine.” Paying Lip Service to Neo-Nazism, Bashing Russia

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On 8 January 2015, Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk demonstrated once again that he is either a liar or an ignoramus (inspired by Russophobia) when he told a German TV channel, “I will not allow the Russians to march across Ukraine and Germany, as they did in WWII.” Putting aside his ludicrous bravado – analogous to a crazed, dying gnat promising to stop a bull elephant — only the untaught do not know that it was Hitler’s Nazi Germany that invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. Moreover, while most military historians specializing in the history of the Eastern Front (including this writer) know that the Red Army played by far the greatest role in saving Europe from prolonged Nazi rule, only an ignoramus or liar like Mr. Yatsenyuk would say, “We all very well remember the Soviet invasion of Ukraine and Germany, and we have to avoid it.”

Mr. Yatsenyuk, you’ll recall, was the darling of Victoria Nuland and Geoffrey Pyatt; two U.S. officials who plotted to place him into Ukraine’s government as Prime Minister. Coincidentally, Mr. Yatsenyuk became Prime Minister. Imagine that! Yet, he clearly is in over his head as a leader of what historian J. Arch Getty has labeled the “erratic state” of Ukraine.



But, “erratic” is far too mild a word to use when describing a statement made by Prime Minister Yatsenyuk in June 2014. It was then that Mr. Yatsenyuk pandered to all of his neo-Nazi supporters fighting for his regime in eastern Ukraine by asserting – on the homepage of the Embassy of Ukraine in the United States of America, no less — that Russians in eastern Ukraine were “subhumans.” (Check the widely available screenshot.) Hitler would have been proud.

But, if Yatsenyuk is either a Russophobic ignoramus or liar who spreads filthy propaganda about Russians and Russian history to people who have no sense of history, what are we to call the editors, columnists and reporters at the *New York Times*, who do the very same thing?

The *Times* commenced its latest propaganda campaign against Russia on 28 November 2013, when it published an overwrought editorial titled, “Ukraine Backs Down.” Clearly,

some Russophobe's head must have exploded. Who, but an outraged Russophobe would conclude that President Vladimir Putin's "strong-arm tactics" against Ukraine would cost Russia its chance "to find its place in the democratic and civilized world."

"Civilized World?" Seriously? "According to data recently released by the Organization for Co-operation and Development (OECD)," the Russians are the most educated people in the world. "More than half of Russian adults held tertiary degrees in 2012 — the equivalent of college degree in the United States — more than in any other country reviewed" (*USA Today*, Sept. 13, 2014). Moreover, given the resounding contributions to the civilized world by Pushkin, Karamzin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Mendeleev, Prokofiev, Tolstoy, Chekov, Nureyev, Akhmatova, Bakhtin, Pasternak, Lomonosov, Tchaikovsky, Solzenitsyn, Berdyaev, Rublev, Chagall, Euler, Balanchine, Zoschenko, Rachmaninov, Bulgakov, Chaliapin, Gorbachev, Diaghilev, Kliuchevsky, Sholokhov, Mussorgsky, Eisenstein, Glinka, Shostakovich, Kapitsa, Lermontov, Kantorovich, Repin, Herzen, Nabokov, Gagarin, Kandinsky, Mayakovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Nijinsky, Kalashnikov, Zamyatin, Tarkovsky, Sakharov, Bely, Gurevich, Faberge, Alekhine, Stravinsky and my beloved mentor, the polymath Utechin (who wrote *A Concise Encyclopaedia of Russia*) – just to name a few — doesn't the editorial board at the Times sound almost as ignorant or deceitful as Mr. Yatsenyuk?

More to the point, just four days before Mr. Yatsenyuk issued his deceitful or ignorant Russophobic rant, the *Times* reached a new Russophobic low when it published propaganda designed to whitewash evidence that President Yanukovich was overthrown in a violent and illegal coup.



Ukraine's Neo-Nazis

Its propaganda piece was titled: "Ukraine Leader Was Defeated Even Before He Was Ousted." It was written by the same reporters, Andrew Higgins and Andrew E. Kramer, who performed similar hatchet jobs for the *Times*, when reporting on the actual events in Kiev

during the period February 18-21, 2014 — which led to the coup of February 22.

Then, the *Times* was quick to blame the Yanukovych regime for the sniper fire that sparked regime change. Consider the February 20, 2014, article written by Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer, titled: “Converts Join With Militants in Kiev Clash.” Although the article mentions snipers only once, they are mentioned in the context of “thousands of riot police officers, volleys of live ammunition...and the looming threat of martial law.” In addition, Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer claimed, “few antigovernment protesters could be seen carrying weapons.” (Their observation would be refuted months later by a scholarly paper that identified snipers, fighting on the side of the protesters, who fired on police, news reporters and fellow protesters. These snipers were located in or on the Conservatory Building, the Hotel Ukraina, Kinoplaty, Kozatsky Hotel, Zhovtnevyi Palace, Arkada Bank building, Muzeinyi Lane building, the Main Post Office, and Trade Union building, among others.) Thus, when Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer heard “reports” that “the police had killed more than 70 demonstrators,” they automatically concluded that “most of the gunfire clearly came from the other side of the barricades.”

Buried within another article written by these reporters that same day was an admission that they did not know “which side” the snipers were on. But the article was titled “Ukraine’s Forces Escalate Attacks Against Protesters,” and it began with the following inflammatory opening sentence: “Security forces fired on masses of antigovernment demonstrators in Kiev on Thursday in a drastic escalation of the three-month-old crisis that left dozens dead and Ukraine reeling...”

Predictably, Mr. Kramer and Mr. Higgins failed to substantiate the “reports” that the police killed more than 70 demonstrators. Even worse, however, was their failure to identify the ideological affiliations of those persons who formed the militant groups — called the “hundreds” (*sotni*) — that did much to transform a previously peaceful demonstration into a violent confrontation.

Although Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer correctly acknowledged that the *sotni* “provided the tip of the spear in the violent showdown with government security forces,” they failed (or refused) to report that many leaders and members of the *sotni* were self-declared fascists and neo-Nazis from *Pravyi Sektor* (Right Sector) and *Svoboda* (Freedom).

Andriy Parubiy, for example, was one of the founders of the neo-Nazi “Svoboda” party. Mr. Parubiy was “the man controlling the so-called ‘Euromaidan security forces’ that fought government forces in Kiev” (Nazemroaya, *Flashpoint in Ukraine*, p. 91). Immediately after the coup, he served as Kiev’s secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine.

Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer repeatedly misled their readers by calling members of *Svoboda* and *Pravyi Sektor* “nationalists;” as if these violent goons were indistinguishable from the thousands of “nationalists” who had been conducting a largely peaceful protest. Thus, readers of the *Times* — like readers of most other newspapers in the West — would not learn that fascists and neo-Nazis hijacked a largely peaceful protest and steered it toward a coup.

Continuing their propaganda in their whitewash piece of January 4, 2015, Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer attempted to persuade their readers that President Yanukovych “was not so

much overthrown as cast adrift by his own allies.” Supposedly, political allies deserted him because they had been spooked by a rumor that the so-called protesters were now heavily armed by weapons seized from an arsenal in L’viv. Supposedly, those guns never reached Kiev.

Supposedly, Yanukovych’s allies were shocked and repulsed by the bloodshed resulting from the massacre of protesters by government snipers on February 20. Supposedly, security forces began deserting Yanukovych after: (1) Parliament issued a resolution on the evening of the 20th ordering all Interior Ministry Troops and police to return to their barracks and (2) Yanukovych entered negotiations on the 21st in which the matter of investigating the sniper massacre was put on the table. Supposedly, the government snipers were not about to wait around for such an investigation.

Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer assert that their conclusions were based upon ‘interviews with prominent players, including former commanders of the Berkut riot police and other security units. Yet, they apparently did not interview the former commandant of Ukraine’s Security Service (SBU), Major-General Oleksandr Yakymenko.

Why? Presumably, because, during a 12 March 2014 interview with Eugenie Popov on *Rossiya 1* TV, Mr. Yakymenko claimed that his “counter-intelligence forces were monitoring the CIA in Ukraine during the protests... [T]he CIA was active on the ground in Kiev and collaborating with a small circle of opposition figures” (Nazemroaya, *Flashpoint in Ukraine*, p. 93).

Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer have nothing to say about CIA involvement. But, as James Carden recently asked in the pages of *The National Interest*, “Can anyone imagine, for an instant, that the Times would publish a purported piece of news analysis of, say, the last hours of the Allende and Mossadegh regimes, without so much as a mention of possible CIA involvement? Of course not.”

Mr. Yakymenko also said that “it was not the police or government forces that fired on protesters, but snipers from the Philharmonic Building [Music Conservatory Building?] that was controlled by opposition leader Andriy Parubiy,” who was “interacting with the CIA.” He said that “twenty men wearing ‘special combat clothes’ and carrying ‘sniper rifle cases, as well as AKMs with scopes’ ran out of the opposition-controlled Philharmonic Building [Music Conservatory Building?] and split into two groups of ten people, with one taking position at the Ukraine hotel” (Nazemroaya, *Flashpoint in Ukraine*, pp. 93-94). The other half moved in the direction of the Dnipro hotel near Muzeinyi Lane. (Katchanovski)

This is the same Mr. Parubiy who Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer found credible, when he asserted that the guns stolen from L’viv were not used by protesters in Kiev. Had they been more competent, Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer would have recalled an earlier article in the *Times* by Alison Smale — titled “Tending Their Wounds, Vowing to Fight On” – that would have cast suspicion on Parubiy’s assertion.

On April 6, 2014, Ms. Smale quoted one wounded protester who asserted: “I knew this time we would need force and that there would be blood if we wanted to break free.”

Another wounded protester, Yuri Kravchuk, was the leader of a sotni and a close friend of the leader of the neo-Nazi Svoboda party. According to Ms. Smale, he carefully skirted “questions about the arrival of guns stolen from a government depot in the western Ukraine

city of L'viv," but did assert that fresh new arrivals from L'viv and two other cities in western Ukraine were able to carry the fight to the police on that fateful February 20.

Thus, in order to buy into the whitewash propagated by Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer, a reader must believe that the men came from L'viv, but not the guns. Yet, according to another source, "Maidan eyewitnesses among the protesters said that organized groups from L'viv and Ivano-Frankivsk regions in Western Ukraine arrived on the Maidan and moved into the Music Conservatory at the night of the February 20th massacre, and that some of them were armed with rifles" (Katchanovski, p. 24).

The inclusion of Parubiy's lie is simply part of their whitewash sob story about the poor protesters who, on the morning of February 20, were "bedraggled" and occupying but a "few hundred square yards, at best, of scorched and soot-smeared pavement in central Kiev," before many were cut down by "a hail of gunfire," from Yanukovych's forces.

One of the few assertions that Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer get "right" about February 20 is: "[T]he shock created by the bloodshed, the worst in the Ukrainian capital since World War II, had prompted a mass defection by the president's allies in Parliament and prodded Mr. Yanukovych to join negotiations with a trio of opposition politicians." Yet, logically, if the sniper fire created the bloodshed that prompted a mass defection by Yanukovych's allies, whether Yanukovych "was not so much overthrown as cast adrift" or whether he was indeed overthrown in a slow-moving, multi-stage, violent coup, largely depends upon which side caused the sniper massacre.

One of the major flaws in the whitewash perpetrated by Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer on January 4th is their failure to explain who killed the policemen. "At least 17 of them were killed and 196 wounded from gunshots on February 18-20, including three killed and more than 20 wounded on February 20" (Katchanovski, p. 22).

Is it a coincidence that Kiev's coup regime also has failed to investigate the killing of the police? After all, "A parliament member from the Maidan opposition stated that he had received a phone call from a Berkut commander shortly after 7:00 AM that 11 members of his police unit were wounded by shooters from the Music Conservatory building." After the parliament member notified Mr. Parubiy, a Maidan Self-Defense search was conducted, but no shooters were found. However, within 30 minutes after Parubiy's supposed inspection, the Berkut commander called again to report that his casualties had increased to 21 wounded and three killed" (Katchanovski p. 21).

Actually, there is plenty of evidence that Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer might have considered, were they competent and unbiased journalists. First, on March 5, 2014, the world learned of the first unbiased suggestion that the snipers who shot people on the Maidan were not government snipers, but came from the ranks of the protesters. *EUBusiness.com* reported that "Estonia's top diplomat told EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton in an audio leaked Wednesday about allegations that Ukraine's pro-Western leaders may have had a hand in the February 20-21 bloodbath in Kiev."

"There is now a stronger and stronger understanding (in Kiev) that behind the snipers, it was not (ousted president Viktor) Yanukovych, but it was somebody from the new coalition,' Urmas Paet tells Ashton in the audio leaked on YouTube."

The *EUBusiness* article notes: "Dozens of protesters and around 15 police officers were

killed, and parliament impeached Yanukovych the next day.” According to the audio, “Paet told Ashton he was informed in Kiev that ‘they were the same snipers killing people from both sides.’” He appears to have received that information from a Maidan leader, physician Olga Bogomolets, who supposedly claimed that people on both sides were killed by the same type of bullets.

Then Paet added: “It’s really disturbing that now the new coalition, they don’t want to investigate exactly what happened.” (The authenticity of the audio has been confirmed by Estonia.)

Then, there’s the matter of a 10 April 2014 investigation into the sniper fire, conducted by German TV’s “ARD Monitor,” that Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer appear to have ignored. According to ARD Monitor, “there is this video that appears to show, that the demonstrators were hit from the back. The man in yellow on this recording goes even further. He was among the protesters who were on Institute Road for several hours that day. His name is Mikola, we met up with him at the scene of the events. He tells us that members of the opposition demonstrators were repeatedly shot in the back.

Mikola: “Yes, on the twentieth, we were shot at from behind, from the Hotel Ukraina, from the 8th or 9th floor.”

According to ARD’s report, “[T]he hotel on the morning of February 20 was firmly in the hands of the opposition. We talk to eyewitnesses from the Hotel Ukraina, journalists, and opposition figures. They all confirm to us on February 20 the hotel held by the opposition was heavily guarded. It would therefore have been very difficult to sneak in a government sniper.”

ARD then tracked down a radio amateur who had recorded Yanukovych’s snipers talking to each other that day. Their radio traffic shows them discussing the fact that someone is shooting at unarmed people – someone they do not know.

1st government sniper: “Hey guys, you over there, to the right from the Hotel Ukraina.”

2nd government sniper: “Who shot? Our people do not shoot at unarmed people. ”

1st sniper: “Guys, there sits a spotter aiming at me. Who is he aiming at there – in the corner? Look! ”

2nd sniper: “On the roof of the yellow building. On top of the cinema, on top of the cinema. ”

1st sniper:” Someone has shot him. But it wasn’t us. ”

2nd sniper:” Miron, Miron, there are even more snipers? And who are they? ”

ARD then interviewed Oleksandr Lisowoi, a doctor from Hospital No. 6 in Kiev, who confirmed that both protesters and government militia forces were shot by the same type of bullet. According to Dr. Lisowoi, “The wounded we treated had the same type of bullet wounds, I am now speaking of the type of bullets that we have surgically removed from the bodies – they were identical” Thus, Dr. Lisowoi confirmed what Estonia’s Foreign Minister, Urmas Paet, had told EU Foreign Policy and Security Policy chief, Catherine Ashton.

But, the failures by Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer to examine these reports, even if to dismiss

them, pale in significance, when compared with their failure to deal with the most comprehensive and compelling examination of the sniper fire to date, Professor Ivan Katchanovski's 29-page scholarly paper titled, "The Snipers Massacre on the Maidan in Ukraine."

http://www.academia.edu/8776021/The_Snipers_Massacre_on_the_Maidan_in_Ukraine

Professor Katchanovski presented his paper to a seminar in Ottawa, Canada on 1 October 2014. Thus, Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer had plenty of time to digest its contents before writing the slop that the *Times* published on January 4th.

Like Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer, Professor Katchanovski emphasizes the significance of the sniper fire on February 20. "The massacre of several dozen Maidan protesters on February 20, 2014 was a turning point in Ukrainian politics and a tipping point in the escalating conflict between the West and Russia over Ukraine" (p. 2).

Unlike Mr. Kramer and Mr. Higgins, however, Professor Katchanovski brings tons of evidence to his investigation. "Evidence used in this study includes publicly available but unreported, suppressed, or misrepresented videos and photos of suspected shooters, live statements by the Maidan announcers, radio intercepts of the Maidan snipers, and snipers and commanders from the special Alfa unit of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), ballistic trajectories, eyewitness reports by both Maidan protesters and government special unit commanders, public statements by both former and current government officials, bullets and weapons used, types of wounds among both protesters and the police, and the track record of politically motivated misrepresentations by the Maidan politicians of other cases of violence during and after the Euromaidan and historical conflicts. In particular, this study examines about 30 gigabytes of intercepted radio exchanges of the Security Service of Ukraine Alfa unit, Berkut, the Internal Troops, Omega, and other government agencies during the entire Maidan protests. These files were posted by a pro-Maidan Ukrainian radio amateur on a radio scanners forum, but they never were reported by the media or acknowledged by the Ukrainian government" (pp. 2-3).

"The timeline of the massacre with precision to minutes and locations of both the shooters and the government snipers are established in this study with great certainty based upon the synchronization of the sound on the main Maidan stage, images, and other sources of information that independently corroborate each other" (p. 3). For example, although the current Ukrainian government announced on November 19, 2014, that its extensive investigation produced no evidence of "snipers" in Hotel Ukraina, Professor Katchanovski has produced evidence of "an announcer on the Maidan stage [who] publicly warned the protesters about two to three snipers on the pendulum (second from top) floor of the Hotel Ukraina" (p. 5).

"[A] *BBC* video shows a sniper firing at the *BBC* television crew and the Maidan protesters from an open window on the pendulum floor of the hotel at 10:17 AM, and the *BBC* correspondent identifies the shooter as having a green helmet worn by Maidan protesters" (p. 7). And, "In the late afternoon, a speaker on the Maidan stage threatened to burn the Hotel Ukraina...because of constant reports of snipers in the hotel" (p. 8).

Although Professor Katchanovski admits, "a possibility that some protesters, specifically armed ones, including 'snipers,' were wounded or killed by the police fire cannot be ruled out" (p. 10), unlike Mr. Higgins and Mr. Kramer, he concludes: "Analysis of a large amount of

evidence in this study suggests that certain elements of the Maidan opposition, including its extremist far right wing, were involved in the massacre in order to seize power and that the government investigation was falsified for this reason.” (p. 2)

He adds, “the [Ukrainian] government deliberately denies or ignores evidence of shooters and spotters in at least 12 buildings occupied by the Maiden side or located in the general territory held by them during the massacre.” (p. 5) So, too, do Mr. Higgins, Mr. Kramer and the *Times*.

Outraged by the *Times* whitewash of January 4, I immediately emailed the following letter to the editor:

To the editor:

In their extremely incomplete “investigation by the New York Times into the final hours of Mr. Yanukovych’s rule,” Andrew Higgins and Andrew E. Kramer do correctly assert that “the shock created by the bloodshed” caused by sniper fire on the morning of February 20, 2014 “prompted a mass defection by the president’s allies in Parliament and prodded Mr. Yanukovych to join negotiations with a trio of opposition politicians.”

Unfortunately, this latest *Times* investigation — like all its reporting since last February — assumes that Yanukovych’s police killed the protesters (and police!) on the morning of February 20. Moreover, the *Times* fails to mention, let alone rebut, a well-known, well-researched, and comprehensive analysis by Ivan Katchanovski, which concludes: “Analysis of a large amount of evidence in this study suggests that certain elements of the Maidan opposition, including its extremist far right wing were involved in the massacre in order to seize power...”

Yet, if Professor Katchanovski is correct, then the entire *Times* investigation is misdirected.

Consequently, until the Times seriously addresses the issue of the snipers, its reporting on regime change in Kiev should be viewed with the same skepticism that Times reporters derisively give to the so-called “Russian propaganda bubble.”

Walter C. Uhler

Needless to say, the *Times* failed to publish my letter.

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