

Ukraine's Prime Minister is "Stepping Down": 'Yats' Is No Longer the Guy

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Global Research, April 12, 2016

[Consortium News](#) 11 April 2016

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

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

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In reporting on the resignation of Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the major U.S. newspapers either ignored or distorted Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland's infamous [intercepted phone call](#) before the 2014 coup in which she declared "Yats is the guy!"

Though Nuland's phone call introduced many Americans to the previously obscure Yatsenyuk, its timing – a few weeks before the ouster of elected Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich – was never helpful to Washington's desired narrative of the Ukrainian people rising up on their own to oust a corrupt leader.

Instead, the conversation between Nuland and U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt sounded like two proconsuls picking which Ukrainian politicians would lead the new government. Nuland also disparaged the less aggressive approach of the European Union with the pithy put-down: "Fuck the E.U.!"

More importantly, the intercepted call, released onto YouTube in early February 2014, represented powerful evidence that these senior U.S. officials were plotting – or at least collaborating in – a coup d'état against Ukraine's democratically elected president. So, the U.S. government and the mainstream U.S. media have since consigned this revealing discussion to the Great Memory Hole.



Image: Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland, who pushed for the Ukraine coup and helped pick the post-coup leaders.

On Monday, in reporting on Yatsenyuk's Sunday speech in which he announced that he is

stepping down, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal didn't mention the Nuland-Pyatt conversation at all.

The New York Times did mention the call but misled its readers regarding its timing, making it appear as if the call followed rather than preceded the coup. That way the call sounded like two American officials routinely appraising Ukraine's future leaders, not plotting to oust one government and install another.

The Times [article](#) by Andrew E. Kramer said:

"Before Mr. Yatsenyuk's appointment as prime minister in 2014, a leaked recording of a telephone conversation between Victoria J. Nuland, a United States assistant secretary of state, and the American ambassador in Ukraine, Geoffrey R. Pyatt, seemed to underscore the West's support for his candidacy. 'Yats is the guy,' Ms. Nuland had said."

Notice, however, that if you didn't know that the conversation occurred in late January or early February 2014, you wouldn't know that it preceded the Feb. 22, 2014 coup. You might have thought that it was just a supportive chat before Yatsenyuk got his new job.

You also wouldn't know that much of the Nuland-Pyatt conversation focused on how they were going to "glue this thing" or "midwife this thing," comments sounding like prima facie evidence that the U.S. government was engaged in "regime change" in Ukraine, on Russia's border.



Image: Ukraine's Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk. (Photo credit: Ybilyk)

The 'No Coup' Conclusion

But Kramer's lack of specificity about the timing and substance of the call fits with a long pattern of New York Times' bias in its coverage of the Ukraine crisis. On Jan. 4, 2015, nearly a year after the U.S.-backed coup, the Times published an "investigation" article declaring that there never had been a coup. It was just a case of President Yanukovych deciding to leave and not coming back.

That article reached its conclusion, in part, by ignoring the evidence of a coup, including the Nuland-Pyatt phone call. The story was co-written by Kramer and so it is interesting to know that he was at least aware of the “Yats is the guy” reference although it was ignored in last year’s long-form article.

Instead, Kramer and his co-author Andrew Higgins took pains to mock anyone who actually looked at the evidence and dared reach the disfavored conclusion about a coup. If you did, you were some rube deluded by Russian propaganda.

“Russia has attributed Mr. Yanukovych’s ouster to what it portrays as a violent, ‘neo-fascist’ coup supported and even choreographed by the West and dressed up as a popular uprising,” Higgins and Kramer [wrote](#).

“Few outside the Russian propaganda bubble ever seriously entertained the Kremlin’s line. But almost a year after the fall of Mr. Yanukovych’s government, questions remain about how and why it collapsed so quickly and completely.”

The Times’ article concluded that Yanukovych

“was not so much overthrown as cast adrift by his own allies, and that Western officials were just as surprised by the meltdown as anyone else. The allies’ desertion, fueled in large part by fear, was accelerated by the seizing by protesters of a large stock of weapons in the west of the country. But just as important, the review of the final hours shows, was the panic in government ranks created by Mr. Yanukovych’s own efforts to make peace.”



Image: Ousted Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych.

Yet, one might wonder what the Times thinks a coup looks like. Indeed, the Ukrainian coup had many of the same earmarks as such classics as the CIA-engineered regime changes in Iran in 1953 and in Guatemala in 1954.

The way those coups played out is now historically well known. Secret U.S. government operatives planted nasty propaganda about the targeted leader, stirred up political and

economic chaos, conspired with rival political leaders, spread rumors of worse violence to come and then – as political institutions collapsed – watched as the scared but duly elected leader made a hasty departure.

In Iran, the coup reinstalled the autocratic Shah who then ruled with a heavy hand for the next quarter century; in Guatemala, the coup led to more than three decades of brutal military regimes and the killing of some 200,000 Guatemalans.

Coups don't have to involve army tanks occupying the public squares, although that is an alternative model which follows many of the same initial steps except that the military is brought in at the end. The military coup was a common approach especially in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s.

'Color Revolutions'

But the preferred method in more recent years has been the "color revolution," which operates behind the façade of a "peaceful" popular uprising and international pressure on the targeted leader to show restraint until it's too late to stop the coup. Despite the restraint, the leader is still accused of gross human rights violations, all the better to justify his removal.

Later, the ousted leader may get an image makeover; instead of a cruel bully, he is ridiculed for not showing sufficient resolve and letting his base of support melt away, as happened with Mohammad Mossadegh in Iran and Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala.

But the reality of what happened in Ukraine was never hard to figure out. Nor did you have to be inside "the Russian propaganda bubble" to recognize it. George Friedman, the founder of the global intelligence firm Stratfor, [called](#) Yanukovych's overthrow "the most blatant coup in history."

Which is what it appears if you consider the evidence. The first step in the process was to create tensions around the issue of pulling Ukraine out of Russia's economic orbit and capturing it in the European Union's gravity, a plan defined by influential American neocons in 2013.

On Sept. 26, 2013, National Endowment for Democracy President Carl Gershman, who has been a major neocon paymaster for decades, took to the op-ed page of the neocon Washington Post and called Ukraine "the biggest prize" and an important interim step toward toppling Russian President Vladimir Putin.

At the time, Gershman, whose NED is funded by the U.S. Congress to the tune of about \$100 million a year, was financing scores of projects inside Ukraine training activists, paying for journalists and organizing business groups.

As for the even bigger prize — Putin — Gershman wrote:

"Ukraine's choice to join Europe will accelerate the demise of the ideology of Russian imperialism that Putin represents. Russians, too, face a choice, and Putin may find himself on the losing end not just in the near abroad but within Russia itself."

At that time, in early fall 2013, Ukraine's President Yanukovych was exploring the idea of reaching out to Europe with an association agreement. But he got cold feet in November 2013 when economic experts in Kiev advised him that the Ukrainian economy would suffer a \$160 billion hit if it separated from Russia, its eastern neighbor and major trading partner. There was also the West's demand that Ukraine accept a harsh austerity plan from the International Monetary Fund.

Yanukovych wanted more time for the E.U. negotiations, but his decision angered many western Ukrainians who saw their future more attached to Europe than Russia. Tens of thousands of protesters began camping out at Maidan Square in Kiev, with Yanukovych ordering the police to show restraint.

Meanwhile, with Yanukovych shifting back toward Russia, which was offering a more generous \$15 billion loan and discounted natural gas, he soon became the target of American neocons and the U.S. media, which portrayed Ukraine's political unrest as a black-and-white case of a brutal and corrupt Yanukovych opposed by a saintly "pro-democracy" movement.

Cheering an Uprising

The Maidan uprising was urged on by American neocons, including Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Nuland, who passed out cookies at the Maidan and reminded Ukrainian business leaders that the United States had invested \$5 billion in their "European aspirations."



Image: A screen shot of U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland speaking to U.S. and Ukrainian business leaders on Dec. 13, 2013, at an event sponsored by Chevron, with its logo to Nuland's left.

Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, also showed up, standing on stage with right-wing extremists from the Svoboda Party and telling the crowd that the United States was with them in their challenge to the Ukrainian government.

As the winter progressed, the protests grew more violent. Neo-Nazi and other extremist elements from Lviv and other western Ukrainian cities began arriving in well-organized brigades or "sotins" of 100 trained street fighters. Police were attacked with firebombs and other weapons as the violent protesters began seizing government buildings and unfurling Nazi banners and even a Confederate flag.

Though Yanukovych continued to order his police to show restraint, he was still depicted in the major U.S. news media as a brutal thug who was callously murdering his own people. The chaos reached a climax on Feb. 20 when mysterious snipers opened fire, killing both police and protesters. As the police retreated, the militants advanced brandishing firearms and other weapons. The confrontation led to significant loss of life, pushing the death toll to around 80 including more than a dozen police.

U.S. diplomats and the mainstream U.S. press immediately blamed Yanukovych for the sniper attack, though the circumstances remain murky to this day and some investigations have suggested that the lethal sniper fire came from buildings controlled by Right Sektor extremists.

To tamp down the worsening violence, a shaken Yanukovych signed a European-brokered deal on Feb. 21, in which he accepted reduced powers and an early election so he could be voted out of office. He also agreed to requests from Vice President Joe Biden to pull back the police.

The precipitous police withdrawal opened the path for the neo-Nazis and other street fighters to seize presidential offices and force Yanukovych and his officials to flee for their lives. The new coup regime was immediately declared “legitimate” by the U.S. State Department with Yanukovych sought on murder charges. Nuland’s favorite, Yatsenyuk, became the new prime minister.

Throughout the crisis, the mainstream U.S. press hammered home the theme of white-hatted protesters versus a black-hatted president. The police were portrayed as brutal killers who fired on unarmed supporters of “democracy.” The good-guy/bad-guy narrative was all the American people heard from the major media.

The New York Times went so far as to delete the slain policemen from the narrative and simply report that the police had killed all those who died in the Maidan. A typical Times report on March 5, 2014, summed up the storyline: “More than 80 protesters were shot to death by the police as an uprising spiraled out of control in mid-February.”

The mainstream U.S. media also sought to discredit anyone who observed the obvious fact that an unconstitutional coup had just occurred. A new theme emerged that portrayed Yanukovych as simply deciding to abandon his government because of the moral pressure from the noble and peaceful Maidan protests.

Any reference to a “coup” was dismissed as “Russian propaganda.” There was a parallel determination in the U.S. media to discredit or ignore evidence that neo-Nazi militias had played an important role in ousting Yanukovych and in the subsequent suppression of anti-coup resistance in eastern and southern Ukraine. That opposition among ethnic-Russian Ukrainians simply became “Russian aggression.”



Image: Nazi symbols on helmets worn by members of Ukraine’s Azov battalion. (As filmed by a Norwegian film crew and shown on German TV)

This refusal to notice what was actually a remarkable story – the willful unleashing of Nazi storm troopers on a European population for the first time since World War II – reached absurd levels as The New York Times and The Washington Post buried references to the

neo-Nazis at the end of stories, almost as afterthoughts.

The Washington Post went to the extreme of rationalizing Swastikas and other Nazi symbols by quoting one militia commander as calling them “romantic” gestures by impressionable young men. [See Consortiumnews.com’s “[Ukraine’s ‘Romantic’ Neo-Nazi Storm Troopers.](#)”]

But today – more than two years after what U.S. and Ukrainian officials like to call “the Revolution of Dignity” – the U.S.-backed Ukrainian government is sinking into dysfunction, reliant on handouts from the IMF and Western governments.

And, in a move perhaps now more symbolic than substantive, Prime Minister Yatsenyuk is stepping down. Yats is no longer the guy.

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](#)).

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