

# The New York Times and Washington's "propaganda bubble" on Ukraine

By Bill Van Auken  
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In a front-page piece published in its Sunday edition, the *New York Times* presents the results of its "investigation" into the bloody events of last February in Ukraine, supposedly proving that the fall of the elected government of President Viktor Yanukovich was merely a "meltdown," rather than a Western-backed coup.

The article begins with a snide dismissal of the charge that the overthrow of Yanukovich was the result of "a violent 'neo-fascist' coup supported and even choreographed by the West ..."

It insists that "Few outside the Russian propaganda bubble ever seriously entertained" this version of events. Yet, it admits, "almost a year after the fall of Mr. Yanukovich's government, questions remain about how and why it collapsed so quickly and completely."

In its attempt to answer such questions, the *Times* seeks to pump more air into Washington's own, badly sagging, "propaganda bubble" on Ukraine. As with most examples of vile state propaganda, it relies on distortions, half-truths and outright lies.

The article purports to present a granular analysis based on interviews with former police officials and others who deserted Yanukovich, presenting this as proof that Yanukovich was "not so much overthrown as cast adrift by his own allies."

This narrative reduces Washington and its Western European allies to befuddled onlookers, whose role consisted of brokering a truce between the Yanukovich government and the violent demonstrators in Kiev's Maidan square, which quickly broke down amid violence.

It cynically excludes the extensive evidence that the overthrow of Yanukovich was the outcome of a plan worked out by the US government to install a pro-NATO regime in Kiev and thereby weaken Russia and further Washington's drive for hegemony in Eurasia.

Thus, the piece makes no mention of the infamous leaked telephone conversation between Washington's point person on Ukraine, high-ranking State Department official Victoria Nuland, and the US ambassador in Kiev, Geoffrey Pyatt, in

which Nuland spelled out the US role in preparing Yanukovich's downfall. She even dictated the parts to be played by individual opposition figures in a successor government, naming "Yats" (her pet name for Arseniy Yatsenyuk) as prime minister, the post he assumed post-coup.

Nor does it refer to Nuland's public admission in December 2013 that since 1991 Washington had pumped \$5 billion into Ukraine in an attempt to secure the kind of regime it desired. Much of this money was funneled through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), an agency created to conduct the kind of political operations formerly overseen by the CIA. NED President Carl Gershman referred to Ukraine as "the biggest prize."

What information the article does provide serves only to substantiate the very argument it ridicules—that Yanukovich was overthrown by a US-backed, fascist-led coup.

Two of the main sources quoted in the article are Sergey Pashinsky, described by the *Times* as an "opposition lawmaker," and Andriy Parubiy, identified as "the chief of the protesters' security forces."

Some rather essential information about both men is withheld from *Times* readers. Pashinsky, who is quoted describing his role in arranging the withdrawal of state security forces from Kiev, was caught on camera February 18, 2014 with a silencer-equipped sniper rifle in the trunk of his car.

There is substantial evidence that those shot on the Maidan in the subsequent days—both security forces and protesters—were killed by snipers from the US-backed opposition in an attempt to create sufficient chaos and a pretext to bring down the regime. This was substantiated by Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, who, in a leaked February 25 phone conversation with EU Foreign Affairs Chief Catherine Ashton, declared, "There is now a stronger and stronger understanding that behind the snipers, it was not Yanukovich, but it was somebody from the new coalition."

As for Parubiy, he is described as turning up in a ski mask

at the German embassy on February 20, the eve of the coup, to meet with US Ambassador Pyatt and “several European envoys.” Pyatt is quoted as claiming that the subject of the discussion was keeping large stocks of weapons seized by anti-government forces in western Ukraine out of Kiev. That clearly failed to happen. A more plausible explanation for the meeting was a planning session for the bloody events—including the sniping attack—that were to follow.

Again, what *Times* readers are not told is more revealing than what they are. Parubiy was the founder of the Social-National Party of Ukraine, an organization that modeled itself—down to its name, its use of the Wolfsangel logo and its extreme-anti-communist, anti-Semitic and white supremacist ideology—on Hitler’s Nazi party. The party later reorganized itself as Svoboda (All-Ukrainian Union), whose members were appointed to three ministries and three governorships in the regime that assumed power following Yanukovich’s ouster.

Parubiy was identified with efforts to glorify the memory of the Ukrainian World War II fascist leader Stepan Bandera, whose organization played a crucial role in the murder of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian Jews and Poles. This was Washington’s main link to the “demonstrators.” The *Times* conceals this information because it directly undercuts its attempt to ridicule charges of a “violent ‘neo-fascist’ coup.”

The main “evidence” provided by the *Times* that the overthrow of Yanukovich was not a coup consists of the testimony of former police commanders whose units disintegrated on the eve of his downfall. One said that “16 of his men had already been shot on Feb. 18 and that he was terrified by rumors of an armory of semi-automatic weapons on its way from Lviv.”

The Polish foreign minister, Radoslaw Sikorski, who was among those brokering the abortive truce deal, reported that “the police were without the power to shoot, so they were afraid of Maidan, so they left.”

As for Yanukovich himself, the Ukrainian president, conscious that his American counterpart, Barack Obama, had taken out a contract on him, and not wanting to suffer the same fate as Libya’s Gaddafi, fled Kiev.

If this is not a coup, then what is? The success or failure of the illegal and violent overthrow of any government is determined largely by which forces within the regime remain loyal and which ones support regime-change. The corrupt politicians in Kiev, the criminal oligarchs they represent and the security forces themselves came to believe that the violent neo-fascists in the Maidan, backed by US and Western European imperialism, would win, and they abandoned Yanukovich, allowing the coup to succeed.

The lead byline on this *Times* “investigation” is that of

Andrew Higgins. It is by no means his first such work. He is a disciple of the *Times* school of investigative journalism pioneered by Judith Miller, whose articles turned the newspaper into a conduit for CIA lies that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, thus setting the stage for the 2003 US invasion.

Higgins was also the principal author of a front-page piece published last April purporting to present definitive photographic evidence that the anti-Kiev revolt that swept eastern Ukraine in the wake of the February coup was all the work of Russian spies and special forces troops. It is hardly a coincidence that the co-author of this report was one Michael R. Gordon, who also co-wrote with Judith Miller the infamous 2002 story that the Iraqi regime was procuring aluminum tubes to further a non-existent nuclear weapons program.

The “photographic evidence,” supplied to the *Times* by the US State Department, was entirely fabricated. In a hypocritical retraction (buried on page 9), the newspaper was compelled to acknowledge that its claims had “come under scrutiny” and proven to be bogus.

Scrutiny is presumably the job of reporters in evaluating alleged evidence presented to them by government officials. This is not, however, what *Times* “journalists” do. Higgins, like Gordon, is a state-connected propagandist.

Prior to working at the *Times*, he was named the *Washington Post*’s China bureau chief. He was, however, barred from entering China because of a 1991 incident in which Chinese officials discovered secret government documents in Higgins’ luggage, leading to his expulsion. In its attempt to reverse Beijing’s decisions, the *Post* went so far as to recruit Henry Kissinger for its lobbying efforts.

In 2002–2003, the stable of State Department propagandists at the *Times* played a crucial role in paving the way for a war that claimed the lives of over a million Iraqis and some 4,500 US troops. Now they are involved in an even more sinister propaganda operation that threatens to ignite a Third World War.

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