

# Ukraine *in* K*risis*

In March and April 2014, as the Russo-Ukrainian crisis veered further toward outright war, Frank Lee wrote three superb articles for CHARTIST's new website. These articles - titled *Reflections on the Revolution in Ukraine* parts I,II and III - challenged some important emerging myths in the Western version of events. Now as civil war erupts these three articles are put together in this consolidated ebook.

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# Reflections on the Revolution in Ukraine

# Part I



## **Frank Lee asks why the West is uncritically backing a government with fascists in Kiev**

Victor Yanukovich was elected President of the Ukraine in 2010 narrowly defeating Yulia Timoshenko with 49% of votes cast to Timoshenko's 45%. The Ukrainian Presidential term of office lasts for five years. Yanukovich's party, The Party of the Regions, together with its coalition partner, the Communist party of the Ukraine, also had a majority in the Ukrainian Parliament, with Mykola Azarov as Prime Minister. The membership of the European Union was one of the more salient issues during this time, and was the trigger for the recent upheavals.

Negotiations for Ukraine's initial stage of eventual membership of the EU - the Association Agreement - had been going since 2011, with both Yanukovich and Azarov favourably disposed, although the communist coalition partners were not. This did not go down at all well in Moscow and Azarov tried to assuage Russian

misgivings by urging Russia "to accept the reality of Ukraine signing the EU agreement". The commitment of Yanukovich was eventually to be tested to destruction since he was being pulled in two directions, by Russia on one hand, and the EU on the other. For their part the Russians offered the Ukraine a \$15 billion loan, a discount on gas prices, and membership of the customs union of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. But the EU was having none of it: President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso stated that the EU will not tolerate "a veto of a third country" (Russia) in their negotiations on closer integration with Ukraine. Thus Yanukovich was forced into a choice which would be certain to alienate and anger one of the powerful interested partners on his borders.

Negotiations dragged on into 2013. Yanukovich was invited to sign the Association Agreement, but there were a number of conditions. The most significant of these were those concerning an IMF loan. The conditions were very much in the tradition of IMF Structural Adjustment Programmes (the scourge of the developing world). This was enough to scupper the EU deal. Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov stating that "the issue that blocked the signature of the EU deal were the conditions proposed by the IMF loan being negotiated at the same time as the Association Agreement, which would require large budget cuts and a 40% increase in gas bills." This, for a country already verging on bankruptcy. In store for the Ukraine was the usual neo-liberal IMF austerity package: deregulation, privatisation, and liberalisation – the Greek medicine. Yanukovich therefore took the Russian deal.

This seemed like a normal business decision, but it was not perceived as such in the western Ukraine. Then the whole thing kicked off.

## THE BATTLE OF MAIDAN AN THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

Immediately this became known the mass protest in Kiev the west saw on their TV screens, with demonstrators waving Ukrainian and EU flags. This seemed to be a mass popular protest and the demonstrators were to set up camps in Independence Square, but the carnival atmosphere was not to last. Ultra-nationalist groups (fascists) began to appear among the generally moderate majority and battles with the Berkut (riot police) began on a daily basis which the opposition forces finally won. A victory for democracy and 'peoples' power' as stated in the Guardian editorial? Not quite. For nobody should be in any doubt about the political complexion of these nationalist groups who now hold six portfolios in the new 'government' based in Kiev. Nor should anybody be in any doubt about both the overt and covert role played by both US and EU officials in the formation of the future interim government. Throughout this period EU and high-ranking US officials openly engaged in Ukraine's internal affairs. The US Ambassador, Geoffrey Pyatt and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Victoria Nuland were strolling around Independence square reassuring the protestors that America stood behind them. This action could never have taken place without being sanctioned at the highest

level by the White House. EU representative Catherine Ashton carried out much the same function for the EU although at a more official level. As to the outcome:

**"The ultra-right Svoboda Party has scored six major cabinet ministries in the government of Arseniy Yatsenyuk approved by the Ukrainian parliament on Thursday. Svoboda is the Neo-Nazi, ultra-right, anti-Semitic, Russophobic party with its base of support in the Western Ukraine, with links to the Front Nationale in France and the BNP in the UK.**

**The most important post was claimed by a co-founder of Svoboda, Andriy Parubiy. He was named Secretary of the Security and National Defense Committee, which supervises the defense ministry and the armed forces. The Parubiy appointment to such an important post should, alone, be cause for international outrage. He led the masked Right Sector thugs who battled riot police in the Independence Maidan in Kiev."**

***Dmitry Yarosh. Leader of Right Sector. The Ukraine's own Ernst Roehm***

The Right Sector is an openly fascist, anti-Semitic and anti-Russian organisation. Most of the snipers and bomb throwers in the crowds were connected with this group. Right Sector members have been participating in military training camps for the last two years or more in preparation for street activity of the kind wit-

nessed in the Ukraine over the last few months.

The Right Sector, as can be seen by the appointment of Parubiy, is now in a position to control major appointments to the provisional government and has succeeded in achieving its long time goal of legalizing discrimination against Russians. The new parliament has passed legislation that declares Russian speakers no longer have equal rights with Ukrainians.

He is also associated with Prime Minister Yatsenyuk's Fatherland Party. Dmytro Yarosh, leader of the Right Sector delegation in parliament, was named Parubiy's deputy. These appointments of those openly fascist to positions of control over the armed forces are particularly alarming given the possibility of provocations against the Russian naval base in Sevastopol.

Oleksandr Sych, a Svoboda parliamentarian from Ivano-Frankivsk best known for his attempts to ban all abortions in Ukraine, including those resulting from rape, was named deputy prime minister for economic affairs. Svoboda was also rewarded with the Education Ministry under Serhiy Kvit, as well as the Ecology Ministry and the Agriculture Ministry under Andriy Makhnyk and Ihor Shvaiko, respectively. Earlier in the week Svoboda Member of Parliament Oleh Makhnitsky was named prosecutor-general of the Ukraine.

Others with ultra-right associations with the Ukrainian National Assembly – Ukrainian National Self Defense (UNA-UNSO) also received cabinet posts. Tetyana Chernovol, portrayed in the Western press as

a crusading investigative journalist without reference to her past involvement in the anti-Semitic UNA-UNSO, was named chair of the government's anti-corruption committee. Dmytro Bulatov, known for his alleged kidnapping by police, but also with UNA-UNSO connections, was appointed minister of youth and sports.

Yatsenyuk's Fatherland Party, and figures close to it, obtained ten cabinet posts, including deputy prime minister for EU integration, interior, justice, energy, infrastructure, defense, culture, social issues, and a minister without portfolio. Yegor Sobolev, leader of a civic group in Independence Maidan and politically close to Yatsenyuk, was appointed chair of the Lustration Committee, charged with purging followers of President Yanukovich from government and public life.

In a society where oligarchs play such an important political and economic role it is unsurprising that Volodymyr Groysman, mayor of Vinnytsa and close associate of oligarch Petro Poroshenko, was chosen as deputy prime minister for regional affairs. Groysman was also close to former President Viktor Yushchenko. The new finance minister, Oleksander Shlapak, is a representative of oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskiy, the second wealthiest man in the Ukraine.

**“The remaining cabinet posts went to technocrats, a doctor who organized medical services for the Maidan protestors, and a retired police general.”**  
*(Global Research 02/03/2014)*

The interim cabinet matches exactly the government Victoria Nuland recommended in her intercepted call with the U.S. ambassador in Kiev where she revealed the U.S. plan for a coup in Ukraine. Vitali Klitschko and his UDAR party are excluded, likely because of their close relationship with German chancellor Angela Merkel. Yatsenyuk's Fatherland Party received the majority of portfolios. And as Nuland demanded, so long as Svoboda leader Oleh Tyahnybok did not receive a major cabinet post, Svoboda could receive several ministries.

## THE FALLOUT

After the assumption of power by the new regime in Kiev the former government parties, the Party of the Regions and the Communist Party were banned in 10 of the western regions of the Ukraine. Additionally party offices were burned down and former members of Yakunovich's coalition and supporters were intimidated, verbally and physically assaulted by supporters of the new regime.

Then came the bombshell, though not entirely unexpected, - and now a virtual *fait accompli* - to be formalized in the referendum 16th March - of the Crimea's secession from the Ukraine, an event which has stoked up an international crisis with the big beasts getting involved in geopolitical positioning and a propaganda war.

One can only speculate about the consequences -

national, regional and international – of the events in Kiev and the future reaction to these events in the Eastern and southern Oblasts of the Ukraine; an arc stretching from Odessa, through Crimea, East to Murriopol, on the Black sea and Sea of Azov, and east and north up to Donestk, Lugansk and the old Ukrainian capital of Kharkov. This is about half the country where most of the industry is situated, particularly in the Don Bass area. Will they, the staunch and solid electoral base for Yanukovich, be willing to be governed by the new regime in Kiev? Or will they follow the Crimean secession?

We shall wait and we shall see.

# Reflections on the Revolution in Ukraine

## Part II



### **Frank Lee reports on the Crimean Referendum, the double-standards of western government & media reactions and the challenges facing the unelected Kiev regime**

The ongoing crisis in the Ukraine has reached another point of (perhaps unexpected) development. It was obvious to most impartial observers that the parliament of the Crimea had staked its position very early – namely, that they were unwilling to accept the authority of the unelected Kiev regime. The first calls for a referendum came as early as February and March 2014. This seemed to chime with what the majority of Crimea’s population, mostly ethnic Russians, also seemed to think, and so it turned out. The arrival of Russian troops would probably not have made any difference to the eventual outcome, but just to make sure Putin sent his special forces to protect his military assets in Sevastopol. Under a prior arrangement with

the Ukraine Russia held a 25 year lease on the Sevastopol naval base, for which it also paid US\$500 million per annum. Moreover the conditions of Russia's leasehold also included the right to station up to 16,000.00 naval and military personnel in the Crimea.

Having said this, the results of the referendum – which did not come as any great surprise – was rather tarnished by the obvious presence of Russian soldiers at checkpoints, Simferopol airport, railway stations and other strategic locations. This caused the spokespersons for the western alliance – EUSA for short – to go into propaganda overdrive and drive its media sycophants into a state of near apoplexy. It was argued that the referendum was illegal since it violated the constitution of the Ukraine. However, whatever the legal position in the Crimea, the upholders of the Ukrainian constitution – the Kiev regime – were undoubtedly illegal, having come to power by mob violence, so that it was scarcely in a position to declare the Crimean referendum illegal. It has also been pointed out that the referendum in Kosovo resulted in a secession from the disintegrating state of Yugoslavia, took place in the presence of a foreign occupying force, as did the referendum in the Falklands.

What the whole Ukrainian imbroglio is clearly demonstrating is the barefaced hypocrisy and double standards of the western media – including the soi-disant doyen of the liberal-left, the Guardian. No lie it seems is big enough as long as it serves the noble cause of the western alliance. Whether these neo-con foreign policies and neo-liberal economic policies are 'noble' re-

mains something of a moot point, however.

## UKRAINIAN DOMESTIC POLITICS

What next? The problems facing the Kiev regime are considerable. Firstly there is the ongoing embarrassment of the neo-fascist element now entrenched in the government, and its all too ubiquitous presence on the streets, where Svoboda and Sector 5 paramilitaries swagger around in Kiev as if they own the place, and in a certain sense they do. After all they spearheaded the revolution, notwithstanding the fact that they probably only represented a minority in the general protest movement. As has already been made clear they now hold six ministerial portfolios some in extremely sensitive areas. How far does the regime control these ultra-radicals?

It is all very reminiscent of Germany in 1934, where the Nazi paramilitaries, the SA, under the command of Ernst Roehm were calling for a second revolution, which is exactly what Dmitry Yarosh, leader of Sector 5, is calling for. Moreover, he has called for nationalization of selected industries – classic fascist economic policy – in the Ukraine, and has gone on record that he will blow up the gas pipeline from Russia to western Europe if Russia invades the Ukraine. This coming from a minister in a ‘government’ duly recognised by the west.

Recent incidents have brought to light this acute PR problem, not only for the head of the Kiev regime,

Arseniy Yatsenyuk, but also his western backers. One such incident is reported as follows:

“When state-owned Ukrainian TV broadcast celebrations of Russia’s annexation of Crimea on Moscow’s Red Square, a group of nationalist politicians cried betrayal. They burst into the office of the channel’s executive, accused him of being a Russian stooge, punched him and forced him to sign a resignation letter.

The assault, which prompted condemnation in the West, presents an important test for Ukraine’s new pro-Western government. ... For Ihor Miroshnichenko, a lawmaker with the nationalist Svoboda party, those scenes of Russian domination were all too much.

And the broadcast of Russian celebrations seemed to add insult to injury.

To vent his rage, he led a group of Svoboda colleagues in storming the office of the First National channel’s chief, Oleksandr Panteleymonov, used an insulting term used to describe Russians and punched him repeatedly, while an aide recorded the scene on video.”

According to de facto head of state Yatsenyuk,

‘These are not our methods’. A country which is going toward the European Union will continue to profess the basic principles and values of the European Community.’

**“His position is complicated by the fact that Svoboda, a vocal force in parliament that took part in the protests that ousted the pro-Russian government, received several key posts in the Cabinet – including prosecutor general, the very figure who will be in charge of investigating the TV station attack.”**

***(Maria Danilova, Associated Press Kiev)***

But they were the methods by which, whether by design or default, Yatsenyuk and his regime came to power. This is the problem with revolutions, they open a Pandora’s Box of unforeseen and unwelcome outcomes. And this particular incident is just one among many.

Of course Hitler had a short method of dealing with the SA paramilitaries: their leadership was wiped out by the SS during the infamous ‘Night of the Long Knives’ in June 1934 and the rank and file drafted into the army. Unfortunately for Yatsenyuk he doesn’t have an SS to do the requisite dirty work, even if he wanted to.

The Upcoming election in May for the Ukrainian Parliament provides another litmus test for the Kiev regime. Given the fact that there has been a de facto ban on both the Communist Party and The Party of the Regions, Yanukovich’s party, in the western Ukraine, and a process of ratification to make the ban legal which is now before the Parliament, how fair and free is this forthcoming election likely to be? It would also be a good bet that parties favouring separatism in the

East – the Progressive Socialist Party of the Ukraine, for example – or openly separatist parties, will wish to contest the election. Noises coming from Kiev would seem to suggest that this will not be allowed. Thus whole swathes of the Ukrainian electorate will be effectively disenfranchised.

This last point brings up yet another problem: what will happen in the Eastern Oblasts. There have already been mass demonstrations in Kharkov and Donetsk for a Crimean style referendum, and this has led to a number of arrests including one Pavel Gubarov, a leading separatist from the Donetsk region and member of the Progressive Socialist Party of the Ukraine. He is now awaiting trial in Kiev. This fissure in Ukrainian politics is not likely to go away any time soon, and could lead to open conflict.

## **THE UKRAINIAN ECONOMY**

Turning to the economics, the regime in Kiev has further deep-going problems to deal with; problems which look frankly intractable. Namely, the country is effectively bankrupt. It is now being bounced into a fast tracked membership of the EU by a non-elected government in the belief that EU membership is, for some obscure reason, thought to be the *deus ex machina*. In fact, EU membership could simply exacerbate the situation as has been the case in the peripheral regions of western Europe. We need to pose the question as to why, a predominantly, poor, agricultural country, with an industrial base which is basically

technologically obsolescent, and which could not compete with the industries of western Europe, wishes to join and open its markets to the EU. This would be the right royal road to under-development, as local industries would simply disappear, or be subject to take-over by foreign multinationals. The Ukraine would join a long list of East European states which now form a low-wage, outsourcing hinterland for western multinationals.

Additionally, since Ukraine will be in need of considerable credits and loans, it can expect a man from the IMF to come knocking on the door and insisting that the country 'reforms' its economic and financial structures before Ukraine gets any cash. – for 'reforms' read the dreaded Structural Adjustment Programme: cuts in public expenditure, devalue the currency, privatise state assets, end subsidies, deregulate, open the economy to financial flows ('hot money') lower wage costs ... the usual and devastating neo-liberal package which we have seen operationalised from Chile, to Thailand to Greece.

This destabilization process of Ukraine will not be easily reversed. If only the protest movement had waited until the democratic presidential elections in 2015, much of this might have been avoided. But outside forces wished to force the issue and had no time for such fuddy-duddy notions such as democratic elections. These geopolitical issues will be dealt with in the next bulletin.

# Reflections on the Revolution in Ukraine

## Part III



### **It's the Geopolitics stupid!**

At a recent meeting held in Paris to discuss the future of Ukraine, US Secretary of State, John Kerry, and his Russian counterpart, Foreign Secretary Sergey Lavrov, were unable to find sufficient common ground to come to any firm decisions regarding the future of the country. Kerry rejected the legality of the referendum in the Crimea and, for his part, Lavrov, was firm in his stance on the dubious legality of the present regime in Kiev. It was always going to be tough for the two interlocutors to come to any productive outcomes in this diplomatic context.

Additionally Lavrov insisted upon the virtual semi-detachment of Ukraine's eastern oblasts which did not go down at all well in Kiev. The Russian plan was to essentially impose a political solution where Ukraine's eastern and southern provinces have greater autonomy, the right to speak the Russian language and the

ability to pursue much more independent policies from the central government. U.S. and Ukrainian officials say they worry such a formula could provide the Kremlin with a virtual veto over Kiev's political system.

The plan was briefly outlined by Lavrov thus.

“We are certain that Ukraine needs profound constitutional reform. In all fairness, we can't see any other way to ensure the stable development of Ukraine but to sign a federal agreement,” Mr. Lavrov said in an interview on Saturday (29/03/14) with Russian state media. “Some may know better and are, perhaps, capable of finding some magic spell to ensure living in a unitary state with people in the West, on the one hand, and the southeast, on the other.”

All of which illustrates the position of Ukraine as being on the geo-political fault-lines between the US and its EU allies and Russia. It seems that national sovereignty is now off the agenda for both sides as they jockey for position. It would now appear that the Ukraine which was, is no more, partition and separation are beginning to look inevitable. Had the Presidential elections in Ukraine taken place as they were scheduled, and which Yanukovich would probability have lost, the story might have been very different. Unfortunately, and as I said in my last bulletin, there were outside forces who had little patience with Presidential elections and were more interested in regime change.

Which brings me to one Ms Victoria Jane 'f\*\*k the EU' Nuland (born 1961) the Assistant Secretary of

State for European and Eurasian Affairs at the United States Department of State. She who along with US Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt were strolling around among the crowds at the Maidan offering cookies, doughnuts, as well as encouraging and comforting words. As I said at the time, this could have only taken place with clearance from the White House.

Why do I see fit to mention her and why is she of any importance? Well for one she was engaged in determining the personnel of the interim Ukrainian administration. In a bugged telephone conversation with Pyatt, Nuland argued that boxing champion Klitschko of the Udar (Punch in English) party was not to be included in any forthcoming administration but that the Deputy (and acting) leader of the Fatherland Party, Yatsenyuk (Tymoshenko's party) should be included. Apart from this faux pas there was the admission elsewhere by Ms Nuland that the US has invested \$5 Billion in The development of Ukrainian, 'Democratic Institutions'.

But perhaps most importantly is the fact that Ms Nuland is the wife of one Robert Kagan. Mr Kagan is an American historian and is important in as much as he was one of the co-founders of The Project for the New American Century, (PNAC) an international relations think-tank based in Washington DC, established in 1997 together with arch US foreign policy hawks, Richard Perle and William Kristol. Their stated goal was to 'promote American global leadership'. Their position that 'American leadership was both good for America and good for the world' and that

this should be vigorously asserted as a main plank of US foreign policy. Kagan himself was to state that ‘the US is an empire and should be an empire.’ The position of these neo-conservatives, or neo-cons as they became known, was frankly comparable to jihadist ambitions to reshape the world to conform to Sharia law. The neo-cons wanted to shape the world to the American way, which is presumably good in the sight of God. If this took regime change, then so be it. Nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of the great crusade.

If these people had merely been some eccentric fringe group – of which there are many on the other side of the pond – it would not have mattered. But it becomes clear that with its members in many key administrative positions in the department of State, that the PNAC has exerted influence on high level government official in the administration of both Bush and Obama. This fact notwithstanding its organization was much reduced by 2006. The worldview had by now become embedded in American strategic thinking. The Westphalian doctrine that no state shall attack another start unless the other state directly threatened its interests, was now considered passé, and regime change, as we have seen in Iraq, Libya and possibly Syria, is now regarded as an acceptable instrument of foreign policy. As Guardian columnist George Monbiot was to write, “to pretend that this battle begins and ends in Iraq requires a wilful denial of the context in which it occurs. That context is a blunt attempt by a super-power to reshape the world to suit itself. (*The Guardian* 11 March 2003)

The collapse of communism in the Soviet Union in 1990/91 and the touted ending of the Cold War, saw the imposition of a virtual Treaty of Versailles on Russia, under the puppet dictator and buffoon, Boris Yeltsin. Russia, like Germany in 1919, was to be kept down, humiliated, and have its nose rubbed into its new status at every opportunity. Moreover, its economy was almost destroyed by the economic shock therapy imposed by the IMF/World Bank, under the tutelage of one Jeffrey Sachs. The various ex-Warsaw Pact states – Poland, Hungary, DDR, the Baltics, Czech Republic – were drawn into the EU and then NATO. NATO itself was expanded rather than wound down.

This was an interesting development since the EU's foreign policy orientation underwent a profound change (its economic policies had already changed – for the worse). Initially the EU was supposed to be a third force standing between American capitalism, and Soviet communism. This at least is how De Gaulle saw it: Non-aligned with an independent foreign policy akin perhaps to Yugoslavia under Tito. Additionally, the policy outlined by Jacques Delors was one of managed capitalism of the Germany sozialemarktwirtschaft variety and French etatisme seemed more attractive than the deregulated, financialised systems of the US and UK.

As things unfolded, however, the Delors' model was discarded and a neo-liberal regime foisted upon Europe. The drive to the east meant that EU widening prevented the type of EU deepening that De Gaulle

and Delors had had in mind. But now foreign policy was also to become Americanised. The UK, of course had always been incorrigibly Atlanticist, but it would have been safe to assume that continental powers – particularly France – would be less so. After denouncing the Iraq War – along with Russia and Germany – France now (under a socialist government!) is actually front-running US imperialism (let's call it what it is) and taking the initiative in regime change operations in Libya, Mali and almost Syria.

Thus we now have a situation whereby the EU has effectively become the spearhead of US operations of subversion and regime change (in the name of enlargement) in driving east into Europe right up to the Russian frontier. In the case of Romania US missiles are already being installed, and the plan is for a broader deployment throughout Europe.

Europe apparently has a neo-con foreign policy to complement its neo-liberal economic policy.

**“... it is not only Great Britain that is Atlanticist. The continental European states are no less so, despite their seeming intention to construct a political Europe. Proof of this is given by the central position of NATO in this political construction. For some European countries (the ex-COMECON states) NATO's protection, that is that of the US, against their “Russian enemy” is more important than their adherence to the European Union.”**

***(The Implosion of Capitalism – Samir Amin – p.203)***

And so the great game continues. One of the principal things to emerge from this has been the absolute spinelessness of European leaders and their willingness to do the US's dirty work. One wonders whether this EU is any longer worth belonging to: the Ukrainian imbroglio has been a great game-changer in this respect.

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