

Leaked phone call on Ukraine lays bare Washington's gangsterism

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The US media has shown remarkably little interest in the tape of a telephone call between Victoria Nuland, the State Department's top official on Europe and Eurasia, and the US ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, which was posted on YouTube and became the subject of international controversy beginning last Thursday.

What coverage has been provided has mainly focused on Ms. Nuland's use of the decidedly undiplomatic phrase "Fuck the EU" in spelling out Washington's attitude to the role being played by its European partners in the crisis that has gripped Ukraine for nearly three months. The media's other slant on the story has dutifully echoed the State Department's own attempt to deflect the controversy by denouncing the public airing of a private conversation as "a new low in Russian trade-craft."

The Russian government has vigorously denied the US charge that Moscow is responsible for the leak. The accusation is, in any case, rather rich coming from a government that has been exposed as spying on the phone conversations of hundreds of millions of people in the US and around the world.

The real political significance of the phone conversation between Nuland and Pyatt is left largely in the shade. This is no accident, as the call provides a devastating exposure of the criminal and imperialist character of US policy in Ukraine and debunks the phony "democratic" pretensions of the Obama administration.

In his State of the Union speech last month, Obama declared: "In Ukraine, we stand for the principle that all people have the right to express themselves freely and peacefully, and to have a say in their country's future."

What the tape makes clear, however, is that Washington is employing methods of international

gangsterism, including violence, to effect a political coup aimed at installing a regime that is fully subordinate to US geo-strategic interests. This operation has no more to do with democracy than the US-orchestrated coups in countries like Chile and Argentina some 40 years ago.

The precise goal of US efforts is to shift political power into the hands of a collection of Western-aligned Ukrainian oligarchs who enriched themselves off of the private appropriation—theft—of state property carried out as part of the Stalinist bureaucracy's dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. In doing so, it aims to turn Ukraine into a US imperialist beachhead on the very border of Russia, whose territory it also wants to divide and subjugate to neocolonial status as part of its drive to assert American hegemony throughout the strategic landmass of Eurasia.

The Nuland-Pyatt conversation is concerned with the nuts and bolts of this venture. They involve the whipping up of anti-Russian Ukrainian nationalism and aid to far-right political forces that serve as a battering ram against the government of President Viktor Yanukovich. The Ukraine president's turn toward a deal with Russia rather than integration into the European Union was the spark for the current campaign for regime-change.

Nuland makes clear that behind the scenes, Washington is dictating which leaders of the opposition—referred to as "the big three"—should enter the government to swing it behind Washington and what role the others will play. Arseniy Yatsenyuk of the Fatherland Party, who served as minister of economy and minister of foreign affairs in the ill-fated government brought to power by the so-called Orange Revolution orchestrated by Washington in 2004, is identified by the assistant secretary of state as "the guy

who's got the economic experience, the governing experience.”

Nuland proposes that two other prominent right-wing leaders of the anti-Yanukovych protests—ex-boxer Vitali Klitschko, the chief of the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reforms, or Udar (an acronym that means “punch”), and Oleh Tyahnybok, leader of the neo-fascist Svoboda party—remain “on the outside,” continuing to whip up right-wing mobs. Yatsenyuk, she adds, “needs to be talking to them four times a week.”

She and the ambassador refer to two of these figures as “Yats” and “Klitsch,” the kind of names normally reserved for poodles.

During her latest visit to Kiev, which coincided with the leaking of the phone call, Nuland met and posed publicly with the three opposition leaders mentioned in the taped conversation—“Yats,” “Klitsch” and the man who is playing the decisive role in the organization of the violent protests in Maidan Square, Svoboda leader Tyahnybok.

Tyahnybok was reportedly banned last year from entering the US because of rabidly anti-Semitic speeches praising his followers for striking fear in “the Moscow-Jewish mafia ruling Ukraine,” and hailing World War II-era Ukrainian fascists for fighting Russians, Germans “kikes and other scum.” This, however, did not give Nuland pause.

During her previous visit to Ukraine in December 2013, Nuland, the grand-daughter of Jewish immigrants who fled to America to escape pogroms in Tsarist Russia, provided a uniquely repellent spectacle, handing out cookies in Maidan square to Svoboda thugs who venerate the mass murderers of Hitler's SS.

Nuland personifies the continuity of US foreign policy, from the crimes of the Bush administration to the deepening of these crimes under Obama. She served as a chief foreign policy advisor to Dick Cheney when the then-vice-president was spearheading the policies of aggressive war, rendition and torture abroad and erecting the infrastructure of a police state at home.

Her husband is Robert Kagan, the right-wing foreign policy pundit who served as the founding chairman of the Project for a New American Century, the neo-conservative Washington think tank that played a key role in the political and ideological preparation for the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan.

Today she promotes a similar policy on the very

borders of nuclear-armed Russia. The tensions which this has engendered are reflected in the “Fuck the EU” remark. In pursuit of its geo-strategic interests, Washington is growing increasingly impatient over the reluctance of Germany, at least to this point, to go for a frontal confrontation with Moscow.

This time around, the aggressive policy of US imperialism enjoys the backing of various pseudo-left elements who swallow whole the slogans of democracy and humanitarianism, ranging from the post-modernist charlatan Slavoj Zizek to the International Socialist Organization, which manages to publish a lengthy report on the events in Ukraine without once mentioning the machinations of Washington.

Washington's incendiary policy poses a threat of civil war in Ukraine and increases the danger of a global conflagration. The Ukrainian working class cannot extricate itself from this crisis under the wing of either Yanukovych or his right-wing opponents, which represent rival factions of oligarchs who agree on destroying the living standards and rights of the working population. The workers will find a way forward only by building their own independent mass socialist movement, implacably opposed to imperialism and committed to the unification of their struggles with those of workers in Russia, Europe and the rest of the world.



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