

# New York Times covers up fascist atrocity in Odessa

Barry Grey  
5 May 2014

The criminal character of the US-European Union intervention in Ukraine was tragically exposed for all to see Friday when supporters of the US-installed regime in Kiev, led by neo-Nazi Right Sector thugs, set fire to the Trade Unions House in the Black Sea port of Odessa, killing 38 pro-Russian demonstrators who had taken refuge in the building.

The anti-Kiev regime protesters had retreated into the building after the Ukrainian nationalist mob set fire to their nearby tent encampment. Authorities say 30 people died from smoke inhalation and another eight were killed when they jumped from windows and balconies in an attempt to escape the blaze.

According to eyewitness accounts, those who dropped from the building and survived were surrounded and beaten by Right Sector fascists. Video footage shows bloodied survivors being attacked.

This massacre occurred on the same day that government military forces, including armored personnel vehicles and helicopter gunships, attacked towns in the southeast of the country under the control of pro-Russian opponents of the regime, which was illegally installed last February in a coup led by Right Sector paramilitaries and backed by Washington and the EU.

The Obama administration, along with the governments of Germany, France, Britain and the other European imperialist powers, bears political responsibility for Friday's atrocity. They have sponsored the Right Sector, as well as the neo-fascist Svoboda party, and seen to it that they were integrated into the new anti-Russian regime in Kiev.

The US media, led by the so-called "newspaper of record," the *New York Times*, shares political responsibility, having brazenly promulgated government propaganda and lies since the Ukraine crisis began last November. The *Times*, in particular, both in nominal "news" stories and in columns by State Department

mouthpieces such as Andrew Higgins, C.J. Chivers, Roger Cohen, Nicholas Kristof and Thomas Friedman, has promoted the line that the incipient civil war in Ukraine is the result of Russian aggression, not US-European subversion.

In order to promote this grossly distorted version of events, the *Times* has gone so far as to publish an article with fabricated "evidence" and doctored photos supposedly proving that the rebellion in southeast Ukraine is the work of Russian military and intelligence forces—a story the newspaper was forced to retract—and dismissed as Russian propaganda warnings about the fascist and anti-Semitic politics of Washington's ultra-right allies in Kiev. Chivers has also penned on-the-spot reports on the right-wing Maidan protests in Kiev sympathetically painting the ultra-nationalist paramilitaries as honest patriots and obscuring their fascist politics and pedigree.

Thus it is not surprising that the *Times* responded to the fascist murder of 38 people in Odessa on Friday by burying the story and deliberately obscuring the identity of the perpetrators. The only mention of the torching of the Trade Unions House and murder of 38 people holed up inside occurred in a story on page A7 of the Saturday edition of the newspaper—on the fourth page of the International section.

The reference to the massacre, moreover, was a fleeting mention well down in the article, carefully formulated to avoid attributing blame. The authors, C.J. Chivers (Who else?) and Noah Sneider, wrote: "Violence also erupted Friday in the previously calmer port city of Odessa, on the Black Sea, where dozens of people died in a fire related to clashes that broke out between protesters holding a march for Ukrainian unity and pro-Russian activists."

The Sunday *Times* published a front-page on-the-spot report by Chivers and Sneider from Slavyansk on the anti-Kiev government insurgents. Despite being unable to produce any evidence of the presence of Russian spies or

troops, the authors wrote that “one persistent mystery has been the identity and affiliations of the militiamen.”

To further bolster the US State Department line they wrote, in relation to a rebel leader named Yuri, whom they described as “an ordinary eastern Ukrainian of this generation,” that his background as a former Soviet special forces commander in Afghanistan “could make him authentically local and a capable Kremlin proxy.”

Mention of the torching of the Trade Unions House and murder of dozens of pro-Russian protesters in Odessa was once again relegated to the back pages. The article falsely stated that “it was not immediately clear who had started the blaze.”

The cover-up by the *Times* is consistent with the dishonest treatment provided by the rest of the so-called “mainstream” press in the US—only more crude than most. The *Washington Post* had a front-page article that featured the deaths in Odessa and acknowledged that the fire was set by supporters of the Kiev regime, but omitted any mention of the Right Sector.

The *Wall Street Journal* in a news report attributed the fire to “a clash between pro-government and anti-government mobs.” In an editorial published Saturday, the *Journal* actually implied that Russia was responsible for the mass murder. The editorial stated: “Pro-Ukraine demonstrations in the southeast are large, and the Russians have tried to beat them into silence. Some three dozen people died on Friday during clashes in Odessa.”

In downplaying the mass killing in Odessa and concealing the identity, politics and US connections of the perpetrators, the American media is not simply covering up for the fascists and the regime in Kiev, it is concealing the criminal responsibility of the Obama administration and American imperialism.

Even as Ukrainian military forces were attacking protesters in the east and fascist mobs allied to the government were burning and killing in Odessa, President Barack Obama was giving his unconditional support to the actions of the regime at a joint White House press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. “The Ukrainian government has the right and responsibility to uphold law and order within its territory,” he declared, and went on to praise Kiev for its “remarkable restraint.”

At a meeting Friday of the United Nations Security Council, US Ambassador Samantha Power put the entire blame for the violence on Moscow and called the military crackdown in the east “proportionate and reasonable.”

Nothing of any significance that the US puppet regime in Kiev does is independent of its masters in Washington.

That the US is calling the shots in the mass repression of anti-government forces in eastern Ukraine was highlighted by the separate visits to Kiev of Central Intelligence Agency Director John Brennan and Vice President Joseph Biden, after each of which the regime launched new attacks on the rebels in the east.

The United States has worked closely with the neo-fascist Svoboda party as well as the Right Sector, and signed off on their incorporation into the government it installed in Kiev after the February 22 putsch that overthrew the elected, pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich. Initially, the head of Right Sector, Dmytro Yarosh, was offered the post of deputy head of internal security, but he turned it down in order to operate more freely while providing the regime with a pretense of separation from the fascist militia.

Nevertheless, the Kiev government set up a new National Guard, recruited largely from the Right Sector and other ultra-nationalists and fascists, and has thrown it, as well as the Right Sector directly, against pro-Russian oppositionists in the east to supplement the operations of the Ukrainian military.

In an interview last month with the German publication *Spiegel Online*, Yarosh boasted of state support for his forces, saying, “Our battalions are part of the new territorial defense. We have close contact with the intelligence services and the general staff.”

The handprints of Washington are all over the fascist massacre in Odessa, and the *New York Times*, along with the rest of the “mainstream” media, is exposed as an accomplice. The cover-up of this crime by the *Times* is a guarantee that it will whitewash even greater crimes of US imperialism in the days and weeks to come.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**