

More anti-Russian propaganda from the New York Times

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23 August 2016

The *New York Times* has been spearheading a media campaign to demonize Russian President Vladimir Putin and create an atmosphere of anti-Russian hysteria. This is in preparation for a sharp escalation of US military violence in the Middle East and stepped-up preparations for war against Moscow and Beijing.

Using unsubstantiated assertions, political amalgams and outright lies in a manner reminiscent of McCarthyism, the *Times* has published virtually daily articles, editorials and columns asserting, along with Russian “aggression” in Syria and Ukraine, that the Kremlin organized the hacking of the Democratic National Committee’s computers in order to embarrass Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and tip the election in favor of Republican Donald Trump.

The claim—presented by the Clinton campaign, the *Times* and much of the US media as indisputable fact—is that Trump is a political ally, if not a direct agent, of Putin. This allegation has become the focus of an attack by Clinton and the Democrats on the fascistic Trump from the right. It has been used to line up former CIA officials and Republican neo-conservatives deeply implicated in the invasion of Iraq, torture and other crimes of the Bush administration, along with an expanding list of billionaire financiers and CEOs, in support of Clinton.

There are precedents for such exercises in state propaganda in the guise of journalism. They have all ended with mass killings, the toppling of governments and, in many cases, the murder of government leaders portrayed as the incarnation of evil—Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi, for example.

In this case, the targeted leader presides over the second biggest nuclear arsenal in the world. Regime-change in Russia poses the very real threat of a nuclear holocaust.

On Sunday, the *Times* ratcheted up its propaganda campaign, publishing a front-page article by its Moscow correspondent, Andrew E. Kramer, under the headline “More Enemies of the Kremlin End Up Dead: A Pattern That Suggest State Involvement.” One might think that the so-called newspaper of record would make sure it had an airtight case before branding the president of Russia a mass murderer. Instead, it has published, with contempt for the most elementary principles of genuine news reporting, an example of the worst sort of yellow

journalism.

The first thing to be said about the lengthy “news” article is that it contains no news. The author does not cite a single recent event. Why was it published? Why does it appear as a news piece on the front page? The answer: To advance the anti-Russian, pro-Clinton warmongering agenda of the *Times* and the ruling class forces for which it speaks.

The article is a classic amalgam, stringing together a series of cases of Russian oppositionists who allegedly were either poisoned but survived, who fled the country or who died. Some are named, many are not. In no case is medical evidence presented substantiating the claim that foul play was involved. No actual facts are presented proving Russian state involvement.

It is impossible from the article to determine whether or not the Putin government is guilty of the crimes alleged. The *World Socialist Web Site* holds no brief for Putin, the representative of a criminal oligarchy that enriched itself from the theft of state property during the dissolution of the Soviet Union and restoration of capitalism in Russia. We call on the Russian working class to deal with him and the rest of the Russian bourgeoisie with the methods of the class struggle and the fight for workers’ power. But one thing is clear: Kramer’s article is pure propaganda.

Before dealing in greater detail with the actual substance of the article, two points must be made.

First, even if one assumes that all the allegations made are true, when it comes to mass murder, Putin is a small-time amateur compared to President Barack Obama.

To this writer’s knowledge, no one has reported that Putin holds weekly meetings with top spies and professional killers to decide who is next in line to be assassinated by drone missile strikes, carried out extra-judicially on the say-so of the president. But as we know, based on the *Times*’ own reporting, Obama has presided over such “Terror Tuesdays” for years.

As a result, thousands of men, women and children have been obliterated across a swath of territory stretching from Central Asia to the Middle East to North Africa. The death toll includes at least four American citizens.

In his article, the *Times*’ Moscow correspondent expresses particular indignation over the fact that “Killings outside

Russia were even given legal sanction by the nation's Parliament in 2006." Presumably, he prefers the modus operandi of the White House, which does not bother to secure passage of a law sanctioning its assassination program.

"Other countries, notably Israel and the United States, pursue targeted killings, but in a strict counterterrorism context," Kramer writes. "No other major power employs murder as systematically and ruthlessly as Russia does against those seen as betraying its interests abroad."

Tell that to the families, loved ones and friends of the thousands of people who have been turned into headless and limbless corpses by Obama's missiles!

Second, Kramer has a record of "reporting" for the *Times* that makes anything he writes worthy only of contempt. He has been caught penning fabrications and the crudest sort of historical falsifications and lies. A reputable newspaper would have long ago showed him the door.

In April of 2014, following the US-backed, fascist-led putsch that toppled the elected pro-Russian government of Viktor Yanukovych in Ukraine, Kramer co-authored an article plastered across the front page of the *Times* purporting to present photographic evidence that Russian troops were in eastern Ukraine, leading the pro-Russian separatist rebellion against the right-wing regime in Kiev. The US State Department and the Kiev government had given the photos to the *Times*, which, in line with its role as a de facto state propaganda organ, immediately published them.

It took less than one day for the photos to be exposed as doctored and the article to be discredited as a fabrication. The *Times* was forced to retract the article, publishing a clumsy attempt at damage control under the headline "Scrutiny Over Photos Said to Tie Russia Units to Ukraine."

The following year, shortly after the government in Kiev enacted a law rehabilitating the World War II-era Ukrainian nationalist and Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera, Kramer published an article whitewashing Bandera's role in the mass murder of Jews and Poles as part of German imperialism's war of annihilation against the Soviet Union. The article was another propaganda piece, written to justify Washington's backing for its rabidly nationalist puppet regime in Ukraine.

A compendium of half-truths and lies, the article sought to foist the blame for the crimes of German fascism and its Ukrainian nationalist accomplices on the Soviet Union and the Red Army.

In his August 21 article on alleged Russian government killings, Kramer writes: "Muckraking journalists, rights advocates, opposition politicians, government whistle-blowers and other Russians who threaten that image are treated harshly—imprisoned on trumped-up charges, smeared in the news media, and, with increasing frequency, killed..."

Much of this is an apt characterization of the repression meted out by the Obama administration to those who expose the crimes of American imperialism. Kramer and his superiors

at the *Times* seem oblivious to the fate of whistle-blowers and genuine journalists such as Julian Assange (holed up in the Ecuadorian embassy in London for four years), Chelsea Manning (serving a 35-year term at a US military prison) and Edward Snowden (forced to live as a fugitive in Russia).

At one point, Kramer cites approvingly the role of multi-millionaire financier William F. Browder, a fanatical opponent of Putin who campaigned for the passage of the Magnitsky law, named after a lawyer Browder employed while he was making hundreds of millions of dollars as a financial player within the Russian oligarchy from 1995 to the late 2000s.

Magnitsky was jailed by the Russian government on tax evasion charges and died in prison in 2009. The law, passed by Congress in 2012, enables the US government to deny visas and block access to American banks to Russians accused of committing human rights abuses.

Indicative of Kramer's journalistic methods is what he leaves out about Browder. The grandson of Earl Browder, the head of the Communist Party USA during the 1930s and early 1940s, Browder allied himself with Putin when setting up his hedge fund in Moscow. They had a falling out related to Browder's investments in Gazprom, and the Kremlin shut down his Russian operation.

Thus, Kramer's heroic fighter for human rights against the Kremlin is the heir of a Stalinist hack who made hundreds of millions off of the dismantling of state industry and theft of state assets and later ran afoul of his former protector. This is the man Kramer quotes to support his allegations of Kremlin poisonings and killings. "Captains of industry and lawyers are not dying left, right and center like this in the West," says the former Putin ally.

Kramer and his fellow pseudo-journalists and accomplices of US imperialism at the *Times* are scoundrels. Critical to the political education of workers and youth coming into struggle against the growing threat of world war, dictatorship and mass poverty is a clear-headed awareness of the fundamentally reactionary role of the corporate-controlled media and the class interests it serves.

The *Times*, in particular, is fully integrated into the state. Its top personnel are state people. Kramer takes his orders from people such as the newspaper's editorial board editor, James Bennet, a former White House correspondent who served later as the *Times*' bureau chief in Jerusalem. Bennet's father, Douglas Bennet, is a longtime Democratic operative who has held high positions in the State Department, was head of the US Agency for International Development, a CIA front, and oversaw National Public Radio.



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