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## Are You Ready To Fight Putin's Russia?

By Murray Polner

February 8, 2015

*"Who came down from the mountain and said the U.S. must police the globe from the South China Sea to the jungles of Peru"? ~ Eric S. Margolis*

For my sins, I've just finished reading the latest report by three of Washington's centrist think tanks, "Preserving Ukraine's Independence, Resisting Russian Aggression." From their peaceful, safe and posh offices they urge President Obama to get tough with Moscow and supply "defensive" weapons to Ukraine, while sanctimoniously concluding, as LBJ and Bush Junior's echo chambers did in 1965 and 2003, that "assisting Ukraine to .... defend itself is not inconsistent with the search for a peaceful political solution."

As if Iraq, Syria, ISIS, Iran, Cuba, Yemen, Obama's anti-China "pivot to Asia," and the Republican train wreckers who now control Congress aren't enough, there's a permanent taste for war among the Imperial City's hawks, now ready to fight with your kids (never theirs) to teach that bastard Vladimir Putin a lesson and show him who's boss. We did it to Grenada and Panama and we can do it again.

According to the think tankers, "The West has the capacity to stop Russia. The question is whether it has the will," sounding exactly like the blind and arrogant men who took us into Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Aside from the fact that, given Russia's military backing, sending in weapons cannot defeat the Eastern Ukrainian separatists, and that we've never had any vital interest in Crimea or the Donbass region, what then? Our think tankers are banking on the delusion that Putin, no bargain he, but no Hitler – as Hillary Clinton once mindlessly blurted out, thereby cementing her hawkish credentials for the 2016 run – will cravenly commit to a settlement because of "defensive" weapons. If that doesn't tame the feral Putin maybe our "Indispensable Nation's" volunteer military, National Guard, Reserves, even conscripts?

The truth is that every Cold War leader feared a U.S.-Soviet hot war. Dwight Eisenhower, for example, refused to intervene in the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 because, as his biographer Stephen Ambrose wrote, "Eisenhower knew that there were limits to his power and Hungary was outside those limits." Ike also shut down the Korean War. Who in authority now speak of "limits" and mean it? Like it or not, Ukraine is historically within Moscow's sphere of influence, just as all Latin America has been in Washington's sphere of influence, at least since 1823 and its unilateral Monroe Doctrine. In 1962, the US was ready to fight a nuclear war to keep the Reds out of Castro's Cuba, "our Cuba," the playground of foreign exploiters and the Mafia.

The truth is US and NATO instigated the Ukrainian civil war by brazenly drawing ever closer to the Russian border. Unanswered is why Obama has exerted no control over Joe Biden, John Brennan and John Kerry's alleged State department subordinate Victoria Nuland, all of whom spent time in secret negotiations with Kiev.

Mikhail Gorbachev, no friend of Putin, is adamantly opposed to shipping weapons to Ukraine. He has repeatedly said that in 1990 Bush senior promised him (never put into writing but never denied by the US) that, in return for allowing German unification to proceed and the former satellite states to go their own way, NATO would never approach Russia's borders. A nation that had lost some 20 million civilians and soldiers after yet another western invasion, remains understandably sensitive about foreign armies camped on their doorstep. Those who dare to speak of this today are often smeared as Putin-lovers and worse.

Then too, the presence of neo-Nazis among the Ukrainian military is rarely if ever reported by our conforming mass media. For that you need to read the British press, where Suemas Milne of the liberal *Guardian* has been on the scene since the Maidan Square uprising. He wrote, "The role of the fascistic right on the streets and in the new Ukrainian regime has been airbrushed out of most reporting as Putinist propaganda." And more: "By what right is the US involved at all, incorporating under its strategic umbrella a state that has never been a member of NATO, and whose last elected government came to power on a platform of explicit neutrality. It has none, of course."

The *Guardian* too liberal for you? Then try Tom Parfitt in the conservative *Daily Telegraph*, who reported that the Azov Battalion, one of a number of Ukrainian militias involved in the Eastern Ukrainian war, "uses the neo-Nazi Wolfsangel (Wolf's Hook) symbol on their banner and members of the battalion are openly white supremacists, or anti-Semites."

And then there's this final consideration which somehow escaped the think tankers: Russia has almost as many nuclear bombs as we do. Sending American military "trainers" and eventually more and more into a killing zone next door to Russia means that an unexpected blunder leading to an exchange of nukes could happen. Sarajevo anyone?

For now, despite intense pressure to "Do Something," Obama is offering no hint what he will do. There are of course peaceful alternatives, among them establishing Ukraine as a neutral state, unattached to any one side. But now more than ever, he needs to sit down and talk to some antiwar people who helped elect him but who he has snubbed. Andrew Bacevich for one. A West Pointer, Vietnam War veteran, recently retired professor of history and International relations whose son was killed in Iraq, he'd be an excellent partner for a private chat in the Oval Room. Maybe Bacevich could bring along his valuable book *Washington Rules*, which ends this way: "Promising prosperity and peace, the Washington rules are propelling the United States toward insolvency and perpetual war. Over the horizon a shipwreck of epic proportions awaits.... To willfully ignore the danger is to become complicit in the destruction of what Americans profess to hold dear. We, too, must choose."