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## Ukraine: Still Smouldering Tinderbox (I)

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The international situation is very dangerous. Syria seems to be holding everyone's attention, but the Ukrainian tinderbox still smoulders. Fascists hold power in Kiev. They do not miss an opportunity to make provocative declarations or commit hostile acts against Russia or against Russian people in Ukraine. The Kiev junta is a repressive, murderous regime intolerant of political opposition.

Former Nazi collaborators like Stepan Bandera have been transformed into national heroes remembered in torch light parades evocative of Nazi Germany. Violence is exalted and tawdry fascist masculinity is openly celebrated.

Recently, Petro Poroshenko, the president of Ukraine declared that in 2016 the junta would retake control of the Donbass and Crimea. Whilst the fate of the Donbass remains uncertain, the

status of Crimea is clear. As Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said recently, Crimea is an integral part of the Russian Federation and there is nothing to «negotiate» about it. In fact, the only way Ukraine can hope to take over Crimea would be in the aftermath of a Third World War won by the United States and its NATO vassals. To say the least, this is an unlikely eventuality. Not that a world war would overly trouble the burlesque Poroshenko, who still seeks to drag the European Union (EU) and the United States deeper into the Kiev junta's conflict with Moscow. It is his lone hope for success.

Poroshenko is only nominally «president» of Ukraine. In fact, he is an executor of directives received from the US embassy in Kiev or the US government in Washington.



He has presided over the destruction and looting of the Ukrainian economy, but he continues in power, propped up by the United States and its EU vassals. The fascist or Maidan *coup d'état* in February 2014, backed by the United States, has enabled Washington to seize control of Ukraine though without Crimea and Donbass. Thus it is a victory which may eventually lead to a defeat.

US intervention in Ukraine is a grave matter and a direct attack on the security of the Russian Federation. It is also an attempt to change the course of history and to break the bonds of culture, religion and kinship dating back more than one thousand years. The first Russian state was established at Kiev in the 9th century. During the Late Medieval and Early Modern periods Ukraine was a contested borderland and no-man's land between Muscovy, then tsarist Russia, Poland-Lithuania and the Ottoman Empire. Before 1991 Ukraine never existed as an independent state, or did so only in Kiev for a few months in 1918 and 1919, and then as a puppet regime of Wilhelmine Germany or France. It is ironic that so-called Ukrainian «nationalists», then as now, could only establish their putative authority under foreign domination. Then as now, foreign powers seek to use a Ukrainian client state as a place d'armes or as a proxy to attack Russian power in Moscow.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky, an eccentric politician and member of the State Duma in Russia, had this to say recently about Ukraine. Zhirinovsky often speaks the blunt truth that others may not want to hear or will not say. «*All of the present day Ukraine*», he said on a Russian talk show, «*are the historical lands of Russia... All of Ukraine, this is Russia... When the Russian princes sat in Kiev [9th-13th centuries], was Ukraine ever a word? Who built [the cities off] Chernigov... Odessa, Nikolaiev?*» It was not Ukrainians, Zhirinovsky concluded in so many words, it was Russians.

Of course, this is a Russian point of view for which the US government has no respect. Who would dare to make a claim on parts of the United States just because at one time or another they belonged to someone else? We stole those territories, fair and square, or made war to get them, an American joker might reply, and we're not giving them back. The US ambassador or proconsul in Kiev, Geoffrey Pyatt, declared recently on Ukrainian television that Kharkov and Odessa would never again be part of Russia. «You have managed to defeat Putin», he said, «*When the troops came to the Donbass the Kremlin wanted to seize Ukraine, it wanted to create Novorossia and seize Odessa, it wanted Kharkov. Now it will never happen. What Russia and terrorists supported by it are left with is a little piece of the Donbass. We will do our best to help you regain these territories*». What an American fairy story.

More candidly, the US proconsul might have said (he certainly came close to saying it): «*we've hijacked Ukraine right from under your nose, Mr Putin, and you can't do anything about it*». Does American pride go before a fall?

It remains to be seen how the crisis in Ukraine will evolve. In the meantime, Poroshenko plays the role of a dangerous US popinjay and bootblack who can only justify his existence by selling off Ukrainian resources and spewing out clownish threats against Russia.



The Kiev junta might make a great story line for an *Opéra bouffe*, except that it's no laughing matter. Kiev's fascist militias wage war against civilians and repress political opposition. In fact, any activities connected to the USSR are illegal. Sing the Internationale, for example, and hop!, you could get ten years in prison. Come to think of it, an *Opéra bouffe* is not the right way to showcase fascist Ukraine; better a dark Kafkaesque theatre of the absurd, or vaudeville mixed with horror.



The Kiev junta has refused to repay a \$3 billion loan to Russia and blockaded Crimea, cutting off water, electricity, and food supplies. It bombards Donbass cities, targeting civilians, on a daily basis. Yet it expects cheap natural gas from Russia and transit payments for gas intended for Europe (which it often siphons off), trade benefits, and various other advantages.

The Russian government has in return attempted to avert an all-out confrontation by dampening down the anti-fascist resistance movement in Novorossia and by promoting the Minsk accords. For those who may not remember, these accords resulted from the defeat, not once but twice, of Ukrainian punitive forces attempting to put down the anti-fascist resistance in the east. Notwithstanding Proconsul Pyatt's peculiar narrative, the Donbass *opolchentsy* won the war and lost the peace. They did not have much choice for they counted on Russian support, and Moscow insisted on Minsk. Novorossia became a concept to be forgotten. Militia commanders who spoke too much about independence or Russia were mysteriously assassinated. Anti-fascist élan has been doused, though not extinguished.

Why does the Russian government pursue such a sinuous, seemingly self-defeating policy? Well, for one thing, Moscow was faced with damaging western economic sanctions and growing Russophobic hysteria excited by the United States and its EU Atlanticist vassals. Only people with top secret security clearances in Moscow or Washington can say, but the United States may have threatened the Russian government with war if it did not take a less forward policy in Ukraine. Responding as though he might have been threatened, Putin endorsed the Minsk accords, although this meant accepting the continuation of the fascist junta in Kiev and accepting in effect the US hijacking of Ukraine out of the Russian world. Putin does not use the word «fascist» to describe his Ukrainian «partners», even as the Russian Federation celebrates annually the Red Army's triumph over Nazi Germany. The Donbass is different from Crimea,

Putin says in effect. Therefore, autonomy will have to do, whatever the people in the Donbass might want.