

War in Europe and the Rise of Raw Propaganda

By John Pilger

Marshall McLuhan's prophecy that "the successor to politics will be propaganda" has happened. Raw propaganda is now the rule in Western democracies, especially the U.S. and Britain. On matters of war and peace, ministerial deceit is reported as news. Inconvenient facts are censored, demons are nurtured. The model is corporate spin, the currency of the age. In 1964, McLuhan famously declared, "The medium is the message." The lie is the message now.

But is this new? It is more than a century since Edward Bernays, the father of spin, invented "public relations" as a cover for war propaganda. What is new is the virtual elimination of dissent in the mainstream.

The great editor David Bowman, author of *The Captive Press*, called this "a defenestration of all who refuse to follow a line and to swallow the unpalatable and are brave." He was referring to independent journalists and whistle blowers, the honest mavericks to whom media organizations once gave space, often with pride. The space has been abolished.

The war hysteria that has rolled in like a tidal wave in recent weeks and months is the most striking example. Known by its jargon, "shaping the narrative," much if not most of it is pure propaganda.

The Russians are coming. Russia is worse than bad. Putin is evil, "a Nazi like Hitler," salivated the Labor MP Chris Bryant. Ukraine is about to be invaded by Russia — tonight, this week, next week. The sources include an ex-CIA propagandist who now speaks for the U.S. State Department and offers no evidence of his claims about Russian actions because "it comes from the U.S. Government."

The no-evidence rule also applies in London. The British Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, who spent £500,000 of public money flying to Australia in a private plane to warn the Canberra government that both Russia and China were about to pounce, offered no evidence. [Australian] heads nodded; the "narrative" is unchallenged there. One rare exception, former Prime Minister Paul Keating, called Truss's warmongering "demented."

Truss has blithely confused the countries of the Baltic and Black Sea. In Moscow, she told the Russian foreign minister that Britain would never accept Russian sovereignty over Rostov and Voronezh — until it was pointed out to her that these places were not part of Ukraine but in Russia. Read the Russian press about the buffoonery of this pretender to 10 Downing Street and cringe.

This entire farce, recently starring Boris Johnson in Moscow playing a clownish version of his hero, Churchill, might be enjoyed as satire were it not for its willful abuse of facts and historical understanding and the real danger of war.

Vladimir Putin refers to the "genocide" in the eastern Donbas region of Ukraine. Following the coup in Ukraine in 2014 — orchestrated by Barack Obama's "point person" in Kyiv, Victoria Nuland — the coup regime, infested with neo-Nazis, launched a campaign of terror against Russian-speaking Donbas, which accounts for a third of Ukraine's population.

Overseen by CIA director John Brennan in Kyiv, "special security units" coordinated savage attacks on the people of Donbas, who opposed the coup. Video and eyewitness reports show bussed fascist thugs burning the trade union headquarters in the city of Odessa, killing 41 people trapped inside. The police are standing by. Obama congratulated the "duly elected" coup regime for its "remarkable restraint."

In the U.S. media the Odessa atrocity was played down as "murky" and a "tragedy" in which "nationalists" (neo-Nazis) attacked "separatists" (people collecting signatures for a referendum on a federal

Ukraine). Rupert Murdoch's *Wall Street Journal* damned the victims — "Deadly Ukraine Fire Likely Sparked by Rebels, Government Says."

[The late] professor Stephen Cohen, acclaimed as America's leading authority on Russia, wrote:

"The pogrom-like burning to death of ethnic Russians and others in Odessa reawakened memories of Nazi extermination squads in Ukraine during World War II. [Today] storm-like assaults on gays, Jews, elderly ethnic Russians, and other 'impure' citizens are widespread throughout Kyiv-ruled Ukraine, along with torchlight marches reminiscent of those that eventually inflamed Germany in the late 1920s and 1930s ...



Marchers hold the symbol of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS, known as 1st Galician, in Kyiv, Ukraine on April 28, 2021. Israel's Foreign Ministry and Ukrainian Jews have protested the veneration of the 1st Galician and other collaborators, but their popularity soared following the 2014 coup, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported May 3, 2021. (Photo: Anna Marchenko/TASS via Getty Images)

"The police and official legal authorities do virtually nothing to prevent these neo-fascist acts or to prosecute them. On the contrary, Kyiv has officially encouraged them by systematically rehabilitating and even memorializing Ukrainian collaborators with Nazi German extermination pogroms, renaming streets in their honour, building monuments to them, rewriting history to glorify them, and more."

Today, neo-Nazi Ukraine is seldom mentioned. That the British are training the Ukrainian National Guard, which includes neo-Nazis, is not news. (See Matt Kennard's declassified February 15 report in *Consortium*). The return of violent, endorsed fascism to 21st-century Europe, to quote Harold Pinter, "never happened ... even while it was happening."

On Dec. 16, 2021, the United Nations adopted a resolution that calls for "combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism." Only the United States and Ukraine voted against it. [Fifty-one countries abstained. -Editor]

Almost every Russian knows that it was across the plains of Ukraine's "borderland" that Hitler's divisions swept from the west in 1941, bolstered by Ukraine's Nazi cultists and collaborators. The result was more than 20 million Russian dead.

Setting aside the maneuvers and cynicism of geopolitics, whomever the players, this historical memory is the driving force behind Russia's respect-seeking, self-protective security proposals, which were published in Moscow in the week the UN voted 130-2 to stigmatize Nazism. They are:

- + NATO guarantees that it will not deploy missiles in nations bordering Russia. (They are already in place from Slovenia to Romania, with Poland to follow.)
- + NATO stops military and naval exercises in nations and seas bordering Russia.
- + Ukraine does not become a member of NATO.
- + The West and Russia sign a binding East-West security pact.
- + The landmark treaty between the U.S. and Russia covering intermediate-range nuclear weapons is restored. (The U.S. abandoned it in 2019.)

These points amount to a draft of a peace plan for all of post-war Europe and ought to be welcomed in the West. But who understands their significance in Britain? What they are told is that Putin is a pariah and a threat to Christendom.

Russian-speaking Ukrainians, under economic blockade by Kyiv for seven years, are fighting for their survival. The "massing" army we seldom hear about are the thirteen Ukrainian army brigades laying siege to Donbas: an estimated 150,000 troops. If they attack, the provocation to Russia will almost certainly mean war.

In 2015, brokered by the Germans and French, the presidents of Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France met in Minsk and signed an interim peace deal. Ukraine agreed to offer autonomy to Donbas, now the self-declared republics of Donetsk and Luhansk.

The Minsk agreement has never been given a chance. In Britain, the line, amplified by Boris Johnson, is that Ukraine is being "dictated to" by world leaders. For its part, Britain is arming Ukraine and training its army.

Since the first Cold War, NATO has effectively marched right up to Russia's most sensitive border having demonstrated its bloody aggression in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and broken solemn promises to pull back. Having dragged European "allies" into American wars that do not concern them, the great unspoken is that NATO itself is the real threat to European security.

In Britain, a state and media xenophobia is triggered at the very mention of "Russia." Mark the knee-jerk hostility with which the BBC reports Russia. Why? Is it because the restoration of imperial mythology demands, above all, a permanent enemy? Certainly, we deserve better.

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U.S. Marines Built Ukraine's New Naval Command Post on Black Sea Coast

The U.S. Navy constructed a \$750,000 command center for Ukraine at its Ochakov Naval Base on the Black Sea Coast near Odessa. Work began July 25, 2017 and was done by the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) First Mobile Construction Battalion — known as Seabees — as part of the Foreign Military Construction Sales program authorized by the Arms Export Control Act. According to the August 15, 2017 *Naval Institute News* (NIN), "The center will serve as [a] major planning and operational hub, conducting command and control of Black Sea-region maritime assets during Sea Breeze, the annual joint U.S. and Ukrainian military exercise." USMC Lt. Jason McGee said in a written statement: "Our ability to maximize European reassurance initiatives in Ukraine holds strategic importance....", NIN reported.

Stars and Stripes reported July 12, 2018 that the summer's annual military exercise "was to increase combat effectiveness and demonstrate resolve among the 19 allied and partner nations participating in the training known as Exercise Sea Breeze, now in its 18th iteration." In response, Moscow warned that the multinational maritime exercise represented "playing with fire" in the Black Sea area, *Stars and Stripes* said. The naval command base "will assist Ukraine's ability to coordinate activities with allies operating in the Black Sea," NIN said. — *U.S. Naval Institute News*, August 15, 2017; *Stars and Stripes*, July 13, 2018

In related news, four Marines died March 18, when their V22-Osprey helicopter crashed in Norway during the massive U.S.-led NATO military rehearsal known as Cold Response. About 30,000 troops from 27 countries are involved in the exercise that lasts through April and is one of the largest NATO war games of its kind since the end of the Cold War.