

A HELLISH WAR IN UKRAINE: WHERE THE HELL DID THIS COME FROM?

February 28, 2022



Friday, Feb. 25, 2022, firefighters at a building following a Russian rocket attack on the city of Kyiv, Ukraine. Photo: AP

The rulers of the U.S. and Russia, and their respective propaganda machineries, are warping, inventing, covering up, distorting, and spinning conflicting narratives of how a potentially catastrophic Russian invasion of Ukraine came about. This timeline presents an objective, reality-based picture of how things got to the horrific situation we are at today with the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

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Where Is Ukraine located?

Ukraine is second only to Russia in size in Europe. To the west: Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, countries that are part of the U.S.-led NATO military alliance. To the east, it shares a 1,700 mile border with Russia.



Ukraine is a large country (second only to Russia in size in Europe). To the west, it borders Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, countries that are part of the U.S.-led NATO military alliance, and where U.S. or allied troops are stationed. To the north, Ukraine is bordered by Belarus, a country generally aligned at this point with Russia (and engaged in joint military exercises with Russia).

To the east, Ukraine shares a 1,700-mile land and sea border with Russia, slightly less than the length of the U.S.-Mexico border. The “sea” part of the border, on the Black Sea, is a waterway strategically important to Russia’s and Ukraine’s imports and exports. Ukraine is referred to as being in Eastern Europe but taking into account the large size of European Russia to the east, Ukraine is geographically located centrally in Europe.

What is the historic relationship between Ukraine and Russia?

Like much of Eastern Europe, the borders and identity of what is today Ukraine were historically fluid. With its fertile plains and rich soil, Ukraine was known historically as the breadbasket of Europe and coveted by competing powers including the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth—which, at its peak in the early 17th century, encompassed a huge swath of Ukraine. But parts of Ukraine were also occupied by Hungary, the Ottoman (Turkish) empire, Sweden, bands of Russian Cossacks (basically armed gangs) and in more recent history the armies of successive Russian czars (brutal, anti-enlightenment feudal despots).¹

By the end of the 18th century, Ukraine came under the domination of the huge Russian empire ruled by the czar. Russia’s rulers exploited Ukraine’s rich resources including coal, metal and grain production to serve Russia.

Russian occupation, and resistance to it, cohered Ukrainian nationalism which was suppressed by the czar’s secret police. The czars referred to their dominion as “little Russia” and tried to crush surging Ukrainian nationalism in the 1840s, for example banning the use of the Ukrainian language in schools.²

What was the impact of the 1917 socialist revolution in Russia on Ukraine and other formerly oppressed nations/nationalities?

A) 1917-1933: Uprooting National Oppression

The earthshaking, liberatory socialist revolution of October 1917 in Russia, led by the communist leader V.I. Lenin, overthrew the bourgeois, capitalist-imperialist regime that had come to power in February 1917 amidst the dislocation and revolutionary upheaval of World War 1 (1914-1918).

The world's first socialist society was now being forged. The world's first *multinational state based on equality* of nations, cultures and languages was established. The policy adopted and insisted on by Lenin was *self-determination* for the formerly oppressed nations and minorities who joined together in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), meaning that the unity of the new socialist state had to be voluntary.³



The socialist revolution in the Soviet Union unleashed revolutionary changes among formerly oppressed nationalities in a vast region from Ukraine in the west to the central Asian republics like Uzbekistan in the east. Uzbekistan, where women took huge strides in breaking out of centuries of oppression. Photo: Langston Hughes

The socialist revolution of 1917 involved the people of Ukraine; and so too the civil war that followed in the years 1918-21. By 1922, the new Soviet state became a *Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*. Ukraine was one of the 12 large founding republics of this Union (which also included a great number of self-governing/autonomous territories of formerly oppressed nationalities).

The Soviet revolution under Lenin's leadership, and later Joseph Stalin's, instituted bold and radical measures to overcome inequality and discrimination. Education was carried out in native languages; efforts were made to bring forward indigenous, local leadership in the formerly oppressed nations, and the Soviet state financed the mass production of books, journals, newspapers, movies, operas, folk ensembles and more in non-Russian languages. Economic resources were provided to less developed regions, where minority nationalities lived. At the same time, the Soviet state launched education and ideological struggle against what was called Great Russian chauvinism (the belief in the

superiority of the Russian people and their right to dominate and oppress other nationalities).

In Ukraine, policies to overcome national oppression flourished from the early 1920s to the early 1930s. It became a kind of laboratory and model for other parts of the Soviet Union. Special measures were also taken to protect the rights and cultures of, and to give economic support to, minority nationalities and groupings *within* Ukraine—like the Jewish people, Romas (Gypsies) and others. With all the transformation and experimentation taking place, there were tensions and problems, missteps, lessons to be learned. There was struggle for the new and resistance from the old. Yet and still, something truly emancipating was being created. For an overall picture of how the Bolshevik (socialist) revolution impacted oppressed nationalities, see at revcom.us: *You Don't Know What You Think You "Know" About... The Communist Revolution and the REAL Path to Emancipation: Its History and Our Future*, an interview with Raymond Lotta.⁴

B) Reversal of Revolutionary Nationality Policies, 1933-1945

By the mid-1930s, the Soviet revolution was facing grave threats. In 1931, imperialist Japan invaded Manchuria (a region of China) on the Soviet Union's border. In 1933, the Nazis consolidated power in Germany—making clear their intention to destroy and occupy the world's first socialist state. There were real and monumental dangers. But there were serious mistakes and problems, and grievous errors, in how the Soviet leadership under Stalin responded.

The Soviet leadership placed a premium on building unity to face these threats. And this unity was forged around a kind of national patriotism (in place of revolutionary internationalism). Russian nationalism was relied on to mobilize people to oppose and defeat the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union (which took the lives of around 26 million Soviet people).

Many of the nationality policies promoting ethnic diversity were revised and reversed through the 1930s. Emphasis was placed on the teaching and learning of the Russian language. Russian culture was extolled. Policies of indigenous leadership were reined in. With this came some ugly chauvinist measures against some nationalities who were regarded as potential collaborators with external enemies.

These policies and the orientation behind them are examples of what Bob Avakian (BA) has called “truths that make us cringe.” This refers to grievous mistakes and errors made by revolutionary leaders. These must be scientifically analyzed, as BA has done through the *new communism* that he has developed: what were the real contradictions and challenges faced by the revolution and its leadership, and what was wrong in the method and approach of leadership that led to such policies?

On the basis of undertaking that examination, BA has identified underlying dynamics, conflicts and tensions between advancing the revolution both around the world and within the socialist society on the one hand, and defending the socialist state when it does come under direct threat and attack—as the Soviet Union actually

did, in bearing the brunt of the Nazi onslaught in World War 2. The breakthrough BA has made on this can be read about in his works at revcom. us *Conquer the World*, “Advancing the World Revolutionary Movement: Questions of Strategic Orientation” and *Breakthroughs*.

Contrary to the lies of imperialism, the Soviet leadership did not “exterminate” minority nationalities. And it should not be forgotten that the Soviet Union was the *only* country in the 1930s and 1940s to enact measures and policies to save the lives of Jewish people on a vast scale.⁵

What about accusations that Stalin deliberately starved the people of Ukraine?

A big line of attack on the socialist revolution in the Soviet Union of 1917-56 concerns the famine that took place in Ukraine in 1932-1933. Anti-communist historians, Ukrainian reactionaries, and the Western media in general charge that Joseph Stalin, who led the Soviet Union from 1927 to 1953, deliberately starved the people of Ukraine.

The accusation that Stalin wanted to punish and wipe out large numbers of Ukrainian peasants and the general Ukrainian population by intentionally denying them grain is a lie—a calculated misrepresentation of reality that gets mindlessly repeated.

Here are some key points of truthful understanding:

There was a terrible famine in Ukraine (but also other regions of the Soviet Union) in the early 1930s. Many people died. *But the famine was mainly caused by a decline in grain production. This decline was mainly caused by unfavorable weather, disease to crops, and other natural factors. The food shortages, however, became worse because of serious errors in government policy. How so?*

Ukraine was the most critical grain-producing region of the entire Soviet Union—and this grain was important to meet the nutritional needs of the Soviet population, especially in the cities, and people in the military. But the government had been making excessive demands on peasant-collective farmers in Ukraine to raise output and

transfer unrealistically large amounts of grain to the central government, which distributed grain to cities and elsewhere. There was not enough grain kept for emergency reserve for Ukrainian peasants. The government eventually lowered grain delivery requirements and sent food relief to the areas that were suffering acute food shortages.

The actual facts of the 1932-33 famine versus anticommunist distortions, and evidence-based analysis of Soviet agricultural policy under Stalin, are set out on the Set the Record Straight website, in the research paper: “The Famine of 1933 in the Soviet Union: What Really Happened, Why it was NOT an ‘Intentional Famine.’”

How does the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union frame the current conflict over Ukraine?

Representatives of the interests of the U.S. empire, including “experts” in academia and in the media, insist that the clash between Russia and the U.S. over Ukraine is a continuation of a long history of conflict between “democracy” and “communism,” or, as they are branding that now, a conflict between democracy and “authoritarianism.” This is utter hypocrisy given the crimes carried out by this country around the world.⁶

As Bob Avakian wrote in “Shameless American Chauvinism: ‘Anti-Authoritarianism’ as a ‘Cover’ For Supporting U.S. Imperialism”:

Somehow, these “enlightened historians” have lost sight of the fact that the country they are living in (the “good old USA”) established, and repeatedly expanded, its territory on the basis of predatory violence on a massive scale, including genocidal

“military campaigns” against the indigenous peoples of this continent (repeatedly breaking treaties in the process), and an expansionist war of aggression which resulted in ripping off a huge part of the territory of Mexico, in the middle of the 19th century, largely for the purpose of expanding slavery. And, after all, this is a country where a “manifest destiny” was declared—to conquer territory “from sea to shining sea” (and beyond). (Read and share this entire piece at revcom.us).

The actual roots of the present conflict are framed by the restoration of capitalism in 1956 in the Soviet Union and its emergence as a global capitalist-imperialist power in conflict with the *capitalist-imperialist* U.S. empire in what is called the “Cold War.”⁷



U.S. “experts” who claim Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is driven by “authoritarianism” seem to have forgotten that their own country—the U.S.A.—seized a huge part of Mexico in the mid-1800s to expand slavery.

The Soviet Union came out of World War 2 victorious. But socialism was greatly weakened politically and ideologically. This was not a vibrant revolutionary society. In the mid-1950s, following Stalin's death, *new bourgeois* forces within the Communist Party maneuvered to seize power and consolidated the rule of a new capitalist class. They restructured the Soviet Union into a *state-capitalist* society. The major means of production—factories, infrastructure, etc.—and banks remained government/state-owned, but profit was put in command. The new rulers maintained a socialist facade as they mounted an imperialist challenge to Western imperialism.

BA has concisely and scientifically explained what imperialism is, and the nature of conflicts between imperialist powers:

Imperialism means huge monopolies and financial institutions controlling the economies and the political systems—and the lives of people—not just in one country but all over the world. Imperialism means parasitic exploiters who oppress hundreds of millions of people and condemn them to untold misery; parasitic financiers who can cause millions to starve just by pressing

a computer key and thereby shifting vast amounts of wealth from one place to another. Imperialism means war—war to put down the resistance and rebellion of the oppressed, and war between rival imperialist states—it means the leaders of these states can condemn humanity to unbelievable devastation, perhaps even total annihilation, with the push of a button. (From *We Have a World to Win*, 1999)

In that context, two rival economic and military blocs faced off in Europe. On one side, the U.S. and the nations aligned with it. Most of the countries aligned with the U.S. were part of the U.S.-led NATO military alliance. On the other, countries that had been occupied by the Soviet Union after World War 2, including East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, were part of the rival military alliance, the Warsaw Pact.

Within the (imperialist) Soviet Union itself, Ukraine—next to Russia the largest and most economically developed republic—played an outsized role in contributing to the economic (and thus the basis for the) military strength of the Soviet Union and its bloc.⁸



Imperialism means parasitic exploiters who oppress hundreds of millions of people and condemn them to untold misery and war. Syrian refugees, including children, driven from their homeland by a war where both the U.S. and Russia carried out massacres, working in a sweatshop in Turkey.



NATO tanks in West Germany, 1985. Photo: US Army

What is the significance of the collapse of the Soviet Union and NATO expansion post-1989?

In a surprising development, moves towards world war between the two superpowers and powerful economic and political contradictions within Soviet society and within that ruling class led to the rapid collapse of the Soviet Union in the period 1989-1991.⁹ It was not real socialism-communism that collapsed but the state-capitalism parading as socialism that imploded.

The U.S. and its allies welcomed the collapse of their capitalist-imperialist rival. And even though the Soviet Union had long-since restored capitalism, the rulers of the U.S. saw an opportunity to declare the “death of communism.” They attempted to facilitate the collapse of the Soviet Union by backing forces in the Russian ruling class that wanted to jettison any pretense of being a socialist country and restructure the country on openly capitalist terms and initially offered inducements to deal with the West. In February 1990, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev discussed NATO’s future role in the context of a unified Germany. Baker told Gorbachev that “there would be no extension of NATO’s

jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east.”¹⁰

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact, and the establishment of many independent nations out of what had been the Soviet Union. In 1991, Ukraine became an independent country.

By the late 1990s, the Russian-dominated economic and military camp splintered and pro-Western forces came to power in many of those countries. Despite promises made by the U.S., NATO began expanding to the east. In 1999 the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were absorbed into NATO. In 2004, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia were added to NATO. Since then, the rapid expansion of NATO to Russia’s borders—Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and (in 2020) North Macedonia have been added to NATO’s rolls—posed the question of whether Ukraine would also join NATO.

The expansion of NATO, and the U.S. insistence on the “right” to bring Ukraine into the NATO

NATO's Expanding Membership

source: NATO



NATO's expanding membership, revealing the systematic encirclement of Russia by countries hosting U.S. and allied troops, planes and missiles. Countries shaded black became part of NATO in 1949; counties in dark gray joined NATO between 1952 and 1982; countries in light gray joined between 1990 and 2020. Source: NATO

military alliance in Europe, is a major factor in the Ukraine crisis. Expanding NATO into Ukraine would potentially put U.S. forces and nuclear weapons on the borders of Russia. And NATO is far from a “defensive” alliance as the U.S. claims: NATO forces played a major role in the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Afghanistan that killed or injured hundreds of thousands of people and drove millions from their homes. NATO forces dropped nearly 10,000 bombs on Libya to force regime change there in 2011.

Several NATO countries border Russia, and taken together encircle much of European Russia,

armed with Western European state-of-the-“art” deadly weapons. Bringing Ukraine, with its extensive border with Russia into NATO, would tremendously amplify the threat to Russia.¹¹

And here it must be noted that in October 1962, the U.S. faced an analogous situation when Russia (then the Soviet Union) placed missiles in Cuba. In response, the U.S. took the world to the brink of nuclear war over the course of 12 days to force them out—experts believe this was “the closest point that the world had ever come to global nuclear war.”¹²

What is the immediate background to the current crisis?

From the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has been a focus of a fierce and escalating tug-of-war between the U.S. and Russian capitalist-imperialist powers, driven by an assessment by both the U.S. and Russia that Ukraine is a key link in each of their needs to establish a dominant position vis-à-vis their imperialist rival. The overall trajectory has been pulling Ukraine more and more, economically, and militarily, into the orbit of the U.S.

Key nodal points on that trajectory include:

- In 2004, a pro-Russian candidate, Viktor Yanukovich, was elected president of Ukraine. In response, the U.S. backed what was branded as the “Orange Revolution,” ostensibly a popular revolt but funded and orchestrated by the U.S. to drive Yanukovich from office.¹³ In a close “rerun” of the election, he was replaced by a pro-U.S. candidate.¹⁴



In 2004, the U.S. backed what was branded as the “Orange Revolution,” ostensibly a popular revolt but funded and orchestrated by the U.S. to drive a pro-Russian president from office.

- In 2006, Russia “sent a message” by briefly cutting off natural gas supplies to Ukraine claiming Ukraine was behind in payments.
- In 2008, NATO expressed a commitment to integrate Ukraine. This would move the U.S.-led military alliance directly onto the Russian border. To appreciate the impact of this, imagine the response of the U.S. ruling class if Russia or China were moving to place a military base in Tijuana.
- In 2010, Yanukovich (the pro-Russian former leader) was re-elected in what was considered a legitimate presidential election, and Russia and Ukraine signed a gas pricing deal in exchange for the extension of a lease for the Russian navy in a Ukrainian Black Sea port in Crimea.
- In 2014, Ukraine was wracked by severe economic crisis, heavily in debt to both the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Russia.¹⁶ Both the U.S. and its allies on one side, and Russia on the other, moved to exploit the crisis (which both sides were largely responsible for) and blackmail and bribe the Ukrainian government into a closer alliance.¹⁷ On February 22, 2014, the Ukrainian government agreed to a Western aid package led by the IMF.¹⁸ In the midst of this crisis, through complex international diplomacy and intrigue, Yanukovich was driven out of office.
- Alarmed by this movement of Ukraine into closer integration into U.S.-allied Western

Europe, Russia invaded and annexed the small Ukrainian region of Crimea in 2014, which it saw as vital to protecting its access to Black Sea shipping.

Since then, the U.S. has moved to consolidate Ukraine into its orbit more tightly, sending billions of dollars of economic aid and weapons, and creating more incentives for Ukraine to turn more sharply to the West. And Russia has moved to undermine the Ukrainian government, including sponsoring a pro-Russian armed insurgency in areas on the Russian border, and by pressuring the Ukrainian government with massive mobilization of troops on the Ukraine-Russia border.

At the beginning of 2022, the U.S. released almost daily intelligence reports declaring Russia would invade Ukraine. While ostensibly this “transparent” sharing of U.S. intel was to make the world aware of the danger of, and prevent war, the more underlying intent was to firm up the backing of Germany and other Western powers for crippling sanctions and other moves against Russia. Some have argued that whatever the intent, or even despite the intent of the U.S., these releases had a contradictory provocative effect of “backing” the rival imperialist-gangster into a corner.¹⁹

On February 23, Russia launched its utterly unjustified and bloody invasion of Ukraine with the horrific consequences we see today.

Refugees
fleeing the
Russian
invasion
of Ukraine.
Photo: AP



Where do the interests of humanity lie in the current situation?

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has absolutely nothing to do with taking back a part of the Russian nation nor is it about “de-Nazification” as Putin claims. It is a move by Russian imperialism to bring back into its bloc a nation that the U.S. was steadily aiming to pull away and turn into an outpost against Russia. It is a move to strengthen itself to contend in a world where the old imperialist division of the world is increasingly contested.

For its part, the U.S. has armed the Ukrainians to fight the Russians, it has sent troops and nuclear weapons to surrounding countries, and it is now moving to isolate and cripple the Russian economy. All this has nothing to do with “seeking peace,” but is part of a strategy to both weaken Russia through enabling Ukraine to put up resistance while America, for now, stays out of direct battle; and it is a way for the U.S. to strengthen its grip on its alliance.

The interests of humanity lie NOT with either imperialist bloc. Bob Avakian has said:

The interests, objectives, and grand designs of the imperialists are not *our* interests—they are not the interests of the great majority of people in the U.S. nor of the overwhelming majority of people in the world as a whole. And the difficulties the imperialists have gotten themselves into in pursuit of these

interests must be seen, and responded to, not from the point of view of the imperialists and their interests, but from the point of view of the great majority of humanity and the basic and urgent need of humanity for a different and better world, for another way. (*BASics* 3:8)

And with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the ensuing horrible suffering and death, Bob Avakian has posed this challenge in the piece “Shameless American Chauvinism: ‘Anti-Authoritarianism’ as a ‘Cover’ For Supporting U.S. Imperialism”:

What is called for, and urgently now, is to oppose all imperialist marauders and mass murderers, and all systems and relations of oppression and exploitation, while giving particular emphasis to opposing “our own” imperialist oppressors who commit their monstrous crimes “in our name” and seek to rally us to support them on the basis of a grotesque American chauvinism, which we must firmly reject and fiercely struggle against.

*For coverage and analysis of the evolution of the specific crisis right now and the danger of war, see ongoing coverage at revcom.us and follow events on **The RNL — Revolution, Nothing Less!** — Show on YouTube.*

FOOTNOTES:

1. See “How Ukraine became Ukraine” (*Washington Post*, March 9, 2015).

2. See “Ukraine’s fraught relationship with Russia: A brief history” (*The Week*, January 8, 2015).

3. In Western media, Russian oppression of Ukraine is presented as a continuum from the czars, through the communist revolution, and up to today when capitalism has been restored in Russia. In fact, the policies of the Russian Revolution in its early years (from the 1920s to the early 1930s) were the opposite of those imposed by the czars or fought for by Russia’s rulers today. This is evidenced, among other things, in the speech by the current Russian leader Putin that echoed the logic and imperialist mentality of czarist claims to Ukraine (February 21, 2022). Putin rails against Lenin, the leader of the communist revolution in Russia in 1917, for “creating a confederation and giv[ing] the right to every nation for self-determination. That was the basis of the Soviet state.”

4. For more specifics on how these policies were applied in Ukraine, the academic study *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism, 1923-1939* (Cornell University Press, 2001) by historian Terry Martin provides specific detail about the Soviet Union’s early nationality policies, as well as later reversals.

5. In the parts of Poland that the Nazis invaded and occupied, Jews were murdered or sent to death camps. In the Polish areas that came under Soviet control, Jews were protected—and as Nazi troops advanced, many were evacuated to safe, far-off areas of the Soviet Union, where they worked and lived among other minority nationalities. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives were saved. See Mark Edele, et al., *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union* (Wayne State Univ. Press, 2017).

6. See the “American Crime” series at revcom.us.

7. The reversal of the policies towards oppressed nations and nationalities by the leadership of the Soviet Union in the period leading up to, during, and after World War 2 was part of a whole set of seriously and grievously problematic methods and policies that strengthened powerful forces within the Communist Party leading the Soviet Union. In the mid-1950s, these forces consolidated power and restored capitalism, while continuing to maintain a pretense of the Soviet Union as a socialist country. Those forces, led by Nikita Khrushchev, found it expedient and necessary to establish their legitimacy by maintaining a formal pretense that the Soviet Union was a socialist country, and the “socialist” cover served its interests as it emerged as a global rival to the U.S. empire.

8. Some light is shed on the significance of Ukraine’s role in the former Soviet Union in a formulation by U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. He wrote, “It cannot be stressed strongly enough that without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and

then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire.” While that statement was made after the breakup of the Soviet Union, was framed by Brzezinski’s role in debate within the U.S. ruling class over how to confront Russia, and is detached from the reality of what constitutes a *capitalist-imperialist* power, it at least sheds light on how urgently the U.S. rulers see the necessity of not allowing Ukraine to come under the domination of Russia.

9. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the forces behind that, and the implications for revolutionary situations including now, are discussed in *SOMETHING TERRIBLE, OR SOMETHING TRULY EMANCIPATING: Profound Crisis, Deepening Divisions, The Looming Possibility Of Civil War— And The Revolution That Is Urgently Needed, A Necessary Foundation, A Basic Roadmap For This Revolution* by Bob Avakian, revolutionary leader, author of the new communism.

10. There is no dispute that Baker did make this promise. Defenders of U.S. policy insist it doesn’t really count because at the time the promise was made, nobody expected the Soviet Union would collapse (see for example “Why NATO and Ukraine are a flash point with Russia 30 years after the end of the Cold War” (PBS, February 22, 2022). This defense of the U.S. renegeing on its promise is essentially that because the Soviet Union and its bloc—the Warsaw Pact—collapsed after this promise was made, opportunities opened up for the U.S. to seize on Russia’s weak position to grab a military advantage and expand NATO, and therefore all promises to not expand NATO were void.

11. See for example “Putin’s Fixation With an Old-School U.S. Missile Launcher: Russia says the Pentagon’s European missile defense isn’t so defensive after all. Does it have a point?” by Jack Detsch in the magazine *Foreign Policy* (January 12, 2022). In addition to the quote used in this article, that piece documents that “The Mark 41 missile launcher, also known as the MK 41, has been fired more than 4,000 times since first entering service in the 1980s by the United States and its allies and over three decades has become the Defense Department’s weapon of choice for retaliatory strikes used everywhere from Iraq and Syria to the former Yugoslavia. Now Russia is worried that it could be the next target.” Note: this expert is saying there were more than 4,000 *retaliatory* U.S. missile attacks using the MK 41, not *defensive* or *intercepting*, but *retaliatory* strikes. And it must be added, describing one-sided and devastating U.S. bombing and missile attacks on Iraq, Syria and Yugoslavia—countries that have never attacked the U.S.—as “retaliatory” is as obscene as it is ridiculous.

12. For a visceral sense of how much this move by the U.S. threatened the existence of the human race, the impact that it had on people, and the hypocrisy and lies in U.S. propaganda at the time, see the section “The Cuban Missile Crisis: World in the Balance” in Bob Avakian’s memoir, *From Ike to Mao and Beyond*.

13. An article in *The Guardian* which overall celebrated the “Orange Revolution” acknowledged it was “an American creation, a sophisticated and brilliantly conceived exercise in western branding and mass marketing... modeled on other campaigns “funded and organized by the US government, deploying US consultancies, pollsters, diplomats, the two big American parties and US non-government organizations.” (See “US campaign behind the turmoil in Kiev,” November 25, 2004).

14. An analysis by a pro-U.S. academic who argues the “Orange Revolution” was “a powerful mass pro-democratic uprising” and that it led to an election that was “arguably of a similar importance as gaining independence as a result of the USSR collapse in 1991” includes this data that, looked at objectively, sheds some light on what has been portrayed as a popular uprising actually achieved: “During the presidential elections run-off following the Orange revolution in Ukraine 44 per cent of the population still voted for the candidate from oligarchic forces [the author’s characterization of forces backed by Russian imperialism]—Victor Yanukovych; and, importantly, roughly 90 per cent of those voters were the residents of the East and South of Ukraine. In contrast, 52 per cent of electorate gave their votes to the national-democratic [the author’s characterization of forces backed by U.S. imperialism] challenger Victor Yushenko; about 90 per cent of this vote was also concentrated, this time in the West and Center of the country. Thus the story of democratic breakthrough and a civil society unification around the common goal has also a different side to it—that of division, feeling of rejection, acceleration of societal animosities, and exclusion rather than democratic inclusion.” (See “How Democratic was the Orange Revolution? Reassessment from the Deliberative Democracy Perspective,” Canadian Political Science Association, May 24, 2010).

15. The election was characterized by widespread allegations of massive corruption on the part of Yanukovych’s opponent, despair over economic hardship and a perceived failure of the “Orange Revolution.” See “Pro-Russian politician set to sweep presidential election” (France24, January 16, 2010) and “Yanukovych set to become president as observers say Ukraine election was fair” (*The Guardian*, February 8, 2010).

16. For a picture of the situation in Ukraine at that time, see “Ukraine economy: How bad is the mess and can it be fixed?” (BBC, May 1, 2014).

Raymond Lotta articulated this capsulized understanding of the nature and role of the IMF: “The reality is, we live in a world of capitalism-imperialism. It is an economic system and social order organized around profit, in which a tiny handful, the ruling capitalist-imperialist class, controls the vast wealth and means of producing wealth on the planet. This is a global system of contending imperial powers. It is

a world economy dominated by competing transnational banks and corporations that finance and organize the extraction of minerals and resources destroying livelihoods and ecosystems, that coordinate the supply chains of low-cost manufacturing production based on savage super-exploitation in the oppressed nations of Asia, Latin America, and Africa. It is a system in which institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) control the economic lifeblood and shape policies and direction of economic development of the countries of the Third World.” (See “Nicholas Kristof’s Ode To Imperialism...,” *CounterCurrents*, October 21, 2013).

17. The U.S. and the European Union (EU) offered Ukraine “aid” in the form of closer integration into the EU but with the likelihood this “aid” would include severe austerity measures, including slashing social safety nets and sharply increasing the price of basic commodities like food, public transportation and energy—measures which were literally starving people in other countries and had led to mass rebellion, for example in Greece. Russia countered, offering Ukraine \$15 billion in aid and cheap natural gas, reportedly without demanding that Ukraine reject Western aid. Yanukovych and forces in the Ukrainian ruling class at that point made a call that Russia’s “offer” was a better option for stabilizing the situation than a U.S./EU bailout with all the dangers that held. This outraged the Western imperialists and other factions of the Ukrainian ruling class, who escalated their backing of protests and behind-the-scenes jockeying.

18. For documentation and background to these events, see “Russia Bails Out Ukraine In Rebuke to U.S., Europe” (*Wall Street Journal*, December 17, 2013); “With President’s Departure, Ukraine Looks Toward a Murky Future” (*New York Times*, February 22, 2014); and “Ukraine: Not a ‘Democratic Uprising’ but a Clash Between Predators” (*Revolution/revcom.us*, updated March 3, 2014).

19. On February 24, 2022, Nina Khrushcheva, a professor of international affairs at the New School in New York (who happens to be Nikita Khrushchev’s granddaughter) said: “American loud information about the possible invasion must have pushed Putin over the top. Because he must have felt that being so kind of insulted on air continuously that he has this horrible intentions in mind, he had to do something, otherwise he would look like a weakling. ... there was an information war, so he’s being accused of military invasion and he was not responding and his military people were saying, well, we’re being insulted by the West. Look at this. They’re maligning our reputation, so we have to show strength, otherwise we look like weaklings.” (See “Did the U.S. push Putin into a corner, forcing him to invade Ukraine?,” NPR, February 24, 2022).

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