

In today's #vatniksoup, I'll discuss about one of the less-known events of the Russo-Ukrainian War: the 2014 Odessa clashes.

It's often used by pro-Kremlin propagandists to prove that the "neo-Nazis" in Ukraine were "persecuting" the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine.

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The Odessa Trade Union House fire is not as widespread propaganda narrative, probably due to the lack of any US-involvement. It's still spread by Kremlin mouthpieces like @aaronjmate, who framed the incident as done by "neo-Nazis".



GRU asset and former RT journalist Yana Yerlashova even made a propaganda "documentary" of the event, putting the blame on the "Ukrainian neo-Nazis". The incident has been often used to incite unrest between the Ukrainian and Russian-speaking populations inside Ukraine.

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In early 2014, the city of Odessa saw a lot of both pro-Ukraine and pro-Russia protests. On 26 Jan 2014, 2000 pro-Ukrainian protestors marched on the regional state administration building but were blocked off by the Yanukovych's men and other pro-Russian activists.

УКРАЇНСЬКА ПРАВДА

A convoy of up to 2,000 people is moving to the Odesa Regional State Administration

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 2014, 3:20 P.M.











Seeing how many people gathered to defend the regional state administration, the oppositionists turned around and retreated in an organized manner.

This is reported by " Dumskaya ".

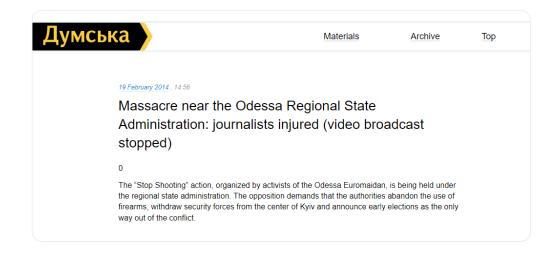
The column under the flags of Ukraine and the UPA returns back to Duke.

People chant opposition slogans - "Gang away", "Glory to heroes", "One great one Ukraine".





This type of confrontations continued over the next month, and on 19 Feb, the violence finally erupted. Around 100 unidentified men wearing masks and helmets, armed with baseball bats, attacked a pro-Ukraine demonstration. Two cameramen and three journalists were injured.

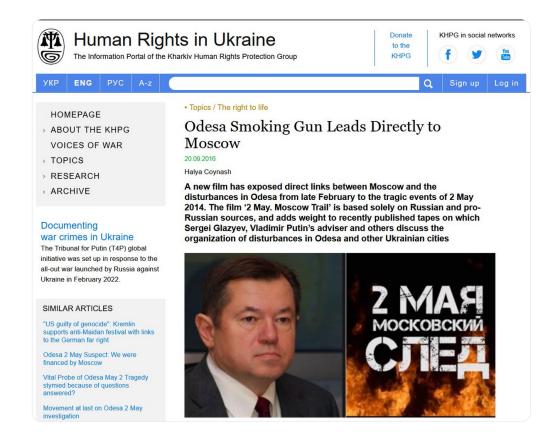


In Odessa about 100 unidentified men wearing masks and helmets and armed with baseball bats assaulted a pro-European opposition demonstration near the regional administration headquarters.

At least three journalists, two cameramen with Pervy Gorodskoi television and a photojournalist with the Odessa editorial office of Komsomolskaya Pravda, were hurt.

A woman is in critical condition after she was shot in Khmelnytsky during the storming of a local Security Service of Ukraine office by anti-government Maidan protesters. A car reportedly drove up to the building and opened fire, with six to eight bullets hitting the woman in her chest.

As we now know, the pro-Russian side was funded and supported by the Kremlin & especially by a Russian politician Sergey Glazyev. The so-called Glazyev tapes exposed that Glazyev was actively organizing and funding the pro-Russian movement in Kharkiv, Odessa & other cities.



Glazyev Tapes: What Moscow's interference in Ukraine means for the Minsk Agreements

www.raamoprusland.nl/dossiers/oekraine/359-glazyev-tapes-what-moscow-s-interference-in-ukraine-means-for-the-minsk-agreements

More and more details emerge about the Kremlin's involvement in the uprising in Ukraine. The Glazyev Tapes show how deep that involvement was, writes political analyst **Andreas Umland**, based in Kiev. Sergey Glazyev, advisor of Putin, called for popular uprisings in Kharkhiv, Odessa and Dnepropetrovsk, to create the preconditions for the puppet state of Novorossia. This must have consequences for Minsk.

by Andreas Umland

What are the origins of the armed conflict that has been raging in eastern Ukraine since 2014? Which role did Russia play in the emergence and escalation of the originally unarmed confrontation, in the Donets Basin (Donbas), after the victory of the Euromaidan revolution? When, how and to what degree exactly did Moscow get involved? Which relative weight did local sources of the conflict have when compared to the impact of foreign factors, i.e. the Kremlin's covert actions in Ukraine?



After Yanukovych fled Kyiv, a pro-Russian mob armed with clubs and ranging from 5000 to 20 000 people protested on the streets of Odessa. Few days after this, a group of 300-500 protesters attempted to seize the Odesa Oblast Council building while it was holding a session.

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1.34pm

According to Interfax, there was also a pro-Russian demonstration in Odessa with between 5,000 to 20,000 participants, some armed with clubs.

The mob's playbook came directly from the Kremlin puppetmaster Vladislav Surkov - they replaced the Ukrainian flag with a Russian one, and demanded a referendum on the

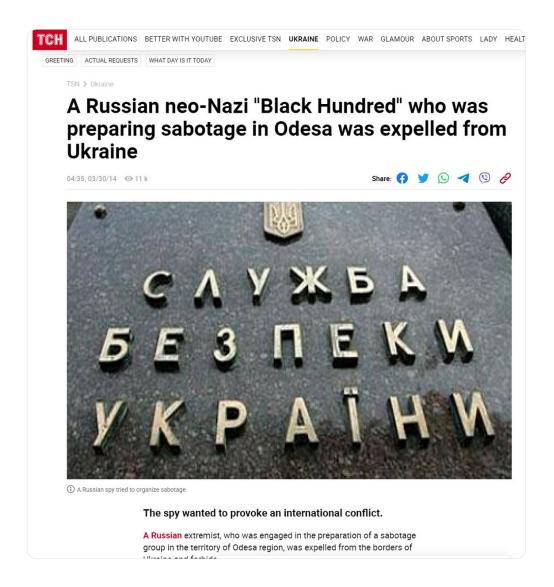
establishment of an "Odessa Autonomous Republic" - just like they did in Luhansk and Donetsk.





On 30 Mar 2014, Russian ultranationalist Anton Rayevsky was captured, arrested and deported from Ukraine for allegedly working for the Kremlin and organizing these pro-Russian events. They also found antisemitic and anti-Ukrainian materials in his possession.





Some pro-Russian keyboard warriors then tried to make the "Odessa Autonomous Republic" happen online, but the local pro-Russian actors had already jumped on to the Kremlin's next plan to make Odessa part of the wider federated state called "Novorossiya".

In Odessa the team spoke to a group of approximately ten activists of the pro-Maidan Self Defense about their opinion of the Geneva Statement. Overall, they perceived the agreement as a temporary inhibiting factor, but not as a decisive mechanism to solve the current situation. They insisted that the separatists in the East should first leave the buildings which they had occupied. The team asked also two leaders of the local anti-Maidan movement for their view on the Geneva agreements. They were skeptical about its chances, or that the government would implement it. From their point of view, the most important elements of a political solution were immediate freedom of all political prisoners and disarming/disbanding mercenaries brought into Odessa Oblast from other regions.

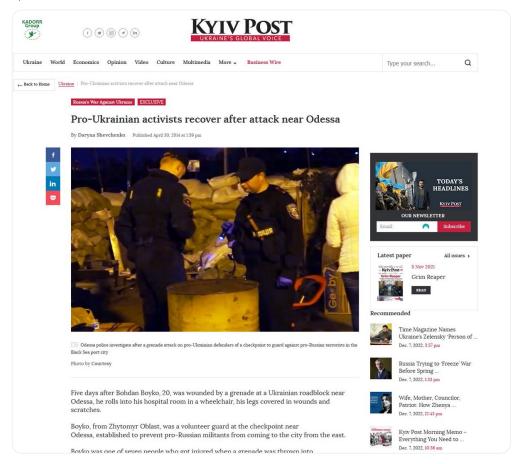
The anti-Maidan leaders also insisted, that the Kyiv Maidan and Right Sector should disarm first and a referendum at the regional level on constitutional reforms be conducted. They aimed not at secession, but at the establishment of a wider federative state called "Novorossija" within Ukraine.



the OVA

The tensions in the Odessa region remained high, and for example on 25 Apr 2014, a hand grenade was thrown at a joint pro-Ukrainian checkpoint, injuring seven people. Russian media reported the incident as an "accident due as a result of reckless behavior with weapons".

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The pro-Russian side had agreed to dismantle their camp on 2 May on Kulykove Pole, in front of the Trade Union House, in preparation for the Victory Parade. The police was trusted to detain the radical activists from both sides while avoiding any excessive use of force.



At around 2 PM,1500 football fans and ultras, along with right-wing Right Sector members and ordinary people gathered for a pro-Ukraine protest at the Sobornaya Square. They were then attacked by 300-strong mob of pro-Russian, Odesskaya Druzhina members with bats & firearms.

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As was later reported, the police did absolutely nothing to keep these two groups separated, and a report by the Council of Europe even suggested that the pro-Russian protestors and the police were secretly colluding with each other.

In other words: the police were bribed. 14/22

20. Law enforcement officers were reported to have taken certain measures during the early phases of the clashes but later it appears that they made little, if any, effort to intervene and stop the violence. In addition to the impression of general passivity, video footage posted on the Internet gave rise to allegations of collusion between some members of the police force and pro-federalism protesters. Thus, numerous files posted on the Internet show armed pro-federalism protesters standing, and at least one of them, believed to be Mr Vitalii Budko, shooting, from behind the police cordon, police officers making no attempt to arrest them.³⁵ Another video³⁶ shows Mr Fuchedzhy, who had been lightly injured in the arm, climbing into an ambulance in which Mr Budko was sitting, apparently uninjured. A few seconds later a seriously injured police officer, assisted by two other officers, was apparently refused entry to the ambulance, which then drove off. Another circumstance which raised suspicion was the use by a number of police officers of red adhesive tape around the protective gear on their arms, similar tape being used by certain pro-federalism protesters as arm-bands to identify themselves.³⁷

72. **Breach of duty by the police.** The investigation in casefile no. 186 relating to the events of 2 May covers both intentional and unintentional breach of duty on the part of police officers. The PGO informed the Panel that they were investigating whether there had been any deliberate failure to act by police officers, any police conduct that had facilitated the criminal activities of certain persons and/or any deliberate collusion.

After this, numerous fights broke out. Protestors were throwing stones and petrol bombs, and they built barricades throughout the city. The first activist to open fire was pro-Russian activist Vitaly Budko, who opened fire with an AK-74 automatic rifle.





Based on eyewitnesses, he was covered by the police and later, after pro-Ukrainian protestor Igor Ivanov was killed, fled the scene with police commander Dmitry Fuchedzhy.

Fuchedzhy later fled to Russia and obtained Russian citizenship.

An amateur YouTube video appears to show a line of riot police shielding pro-Russian activists, **one of whom fires a gun** while chunks of paving stone rain down from the crowd on the other side.

A number of reports also spoke of armed protesters using the rooftop of the Afina shopping centre to fire pistols and throw Molotov cocktails.

There seems little doubt that the gunshots - and reports of casualties - fuelled the anger of the pro-Ukrainian crowd.

Serhiy spoke of a "see-saw battle" of about 15 minutes, before the "proseparatists" started to withdraw.

Police said at least three people were shot dead in the running battles before the deadly fire at the Trade Unions House.

Over the next few hours the clashes fragmented but a key development appeared to be a move by pro-Ukrainians against the tent city in Kulykovo Pole square.

Serhiy said: "People started streaming toward the station, taking Zhukovskoho Street and then taking Pushkinska Street. They chanted 'Long live Ukraine!' and 'Odessa is Ukrainian!'."

He said tents in the pro-Russian camp were burning when he arrived and those there had moved to the entrance of the nearby Trade Unions House.

"Eventually, they were driven in," he said.

After the murder of Ivanov, the two parties started fighting aggressively. The pro-Ukrainian protesters torched the camp on Kulykove Pole, and the pro-Russian forces fled to the Trade Union House. After the pro-Russian protestors camped inside the house, both parties...

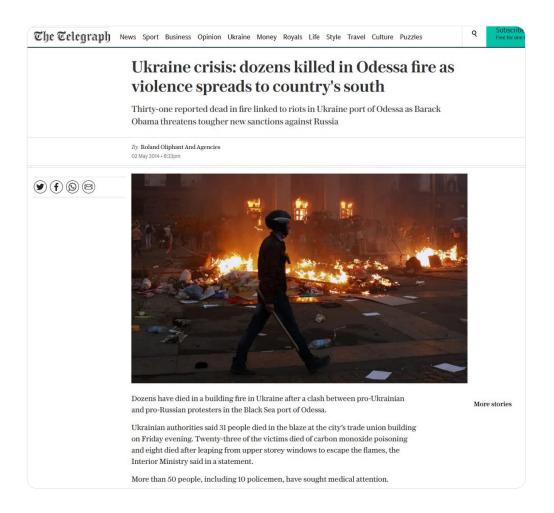




...started throwing Molotov cocktails at each other. The building caught on fire, and a total of 42 people died from either carbon monoxide poisoning or from jumping off the building.



The Kremlin has naturally blamed the deaths on the pro-Ukrainian protestors, whereas the forensic examination of the fire by the Ukrainian Ministry concluded that four out of the five fires could've actually started only from inside the building.



122. **Cause of the fire in the Trade Union Building.** It appears from the authorities' submissions to the Panel that the report of the forensic examination of the fire in the Trade Union Building, conducted by the Scientific Research and Forensics Centre of the MoI Department in Mykolayiv Region, was obtained on 7 July 2014. The report concluded that the building could have caught fire as a result of one or more persons bringing combustible materials and a source of fire into the building. The forensic examination identified five independent fire centres: in the lobby of the building; on the left hand and on the right hand staircases between the ground and first floors; in a room on the first floor; and on the landing between the second and third floors. The fire centres other than in the lobby could only have been started as a result of the actions of persons inside the building.

Volodymyr Nemyrovsky, Governor of Odesa Oblast, later stated that the whole conflict could have been avoided had police fulfilled their duties, and accused the police of inciting the confrontation and taking bribes from the separatists' side. Several police officers...

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..even wore the red armbands worn by the pro-Russian side. The high number of deaths could also be due to the delay of the emergency services - it took the first crew 40 minutes to arrive to the scene, even though the nearest fire station was less than a 5 minute drive away.21/22

26. The dispatch centre for the fire brigade was first called at 7.31 p.m., ⁴⁴ immediately after the first tents on Kulykove Pole had been set on fire, and was thereafter repeatedly called. ⁴⁵ Although the closest fire station was less than five minutes' drive from Kulykove Pole, ⁴⁶ the first fire engines did not arrive until over thirty minutes later: in its internal inquiry the SES determined the time as 8.09 p.m. ⁴⁷ What purports to be the audio recording of the telephone calls to the dispatch centre was later posted on the Internet. The dispatcher can be heard telling callers that there was no risk involved in burning tents in an open space, and then hanging up; at some point she consulted a superior as to whether she should continue to respond in this way and was instructed to do so. When the first calls were made about the fire inside the Trade Union Building, the dispatcher responded that the information had been taken into account; however, there was a delay of approximately ten minutes between the first call concerning the Trade Union Building and the order to send the first fire engine.

To conclude: The Odessa fire was a real tragedy, but it could've been avoided if the Kremlin and Glazyev didn't fund the pro-Russian movement, and if the police and the fire department would've taken their job more seriously and not be blinded by bribes.



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Also, Volodymyr Bodelan, former head of Odesa firefighters, was heavily criticized for his "improper performance of his official duties".

He later fled to Russia and was later given a high-ranking post in Russian-occupied Crimea.

A case was filed against the head of the State Emergency Service in Odesa because of the fire in the House of Trade Unions

Bodelan's actions during the extinguishing of the fire in the House of Trade Unions by rescuers are being investigated



Photo: izmail-news.com

The State Service for Emergency Situations has launched an official investigation against Volodymyr Bodelan, the head of the Main Department of the State Emergency Service in the Odesa region, on suspicion of improper performance of his official duties. This is stated in the order of the head of the State Emergency Service Serhiy Bochkovsky No. 294 of May 30, Ukrainian News reports.

The document emphasizes that the investigation was started with the aim of clarifying all the circumstances and objectively verifying the facts stated in the collective complaint of the residents of Odessa.

The press service of the State Emergency Service reported that Bodelan's actions during firefighting \underline{at} $\underline{the Trade Union Building in Odesa}$ on May 2 are under investigation.

It is noted that the State Emergency Service commission verified the stated facts directly at the scene of events in Odesa from June 3 to 6.



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Main suspect in Odesa 2 May 2014 tragedy given high-ranking post in Russian-occupied Crimea

22.10.2020

Halva Covnash

Having spent six years claiming that the tragic fire in Odesa on 2 May 2014 was a 'massacre', and that Kyiv is protecting the perpetrators, Russia has not only shielded Volodymyr Bodelan, a main suspect, but has given him a top position in occupied Crimea





Having spent six years claiming that the tragic fire in Odesa on 2 May 2014 was a 'massacre', and that Kyiv is protecting the perpetrators, Russia has not only shielded a main suspect, but has given him a top position in occupied Crimea. Volodymyr Bodelan, the former head of the Odesa Emergency Services, has just been appointed deputy head of the Simferopol district in Crimea, after fleeing arrest in early 2016 and receiving Russian citizenship.

In reporting Bodelan's new position, the Russian newspaper Kommersant cites assertions made by the Odesa official on 14 May 2014. 12 days after the fire in

Bodelan was on Kulikove Pole during the events and called the dispatch centre around a minute after the first emergency call was made **instructing the controllers to only send out fire engines on his command**.

Three emergency services officials were charged at the end of February 2016 under Article 135 § 3 of the Criminal Code (leaving people in danger). Viktor Hubai, deputy head of the Emergency Services Regional Department was remanded in custody, while the head of the shift Yury Shvydenko and duty chief operator Svitlana Koyeva were placed under house arrest. It is Koyeva's voice that can be heard on the tape ignoring the calls for help. It is not clear whether any of these prosecutions have resulted in convictions.

Obviously the question must still arise as to whether individuals should obey orders that place lives in jeopardy, however it is surely unequivocal that the person who issued the orders should not be forgotten if charges are being laid. Bodelan is the son of a former Odesa mayor with considerable influence in the region, which may have also contributed to the disturbing unwillingness to hold Bodelan to account. There was effective sabotage of the prosecution, since Bodelan was not arrested at the same time as his subordinates, giving him ample opportunity to leave the country around 1 March 2016.

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