

Berlin and Washington foment civil war in Ukraine

Peter Schwarz
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Recent events in Ukraine are a warning to the working class. They make clear that political leaders in Washington, Berlin and Brussels are prepared to split the country, drive it into civil war and risk a conflagration across the entire region to achieve their geopolitical goals.

Following the failure of the Ukrainian opposition and its Western supporters to overthrow President Viktor Yanukovich by means of demonstrations and replace his regime with an EU-friendly government, armed fascist gangs are being mobilized to achieve the same aim.

On Tuesday, Kiev witnessed the bloodiest clashes since the protests began three months ago. Twenty-six people, including several policemen, were killed, and some 1,000 were injured when gangs armed with paving stones, guns and firebombs engaged in violent street battles with government security forces.

Even Western media outlets, which have propagandized in support of the opposition, could not entirely ignore the role of ultra-right forces in the violent protests. The *Financial Times* reported, "Some demonstrators wearing camouflage clothing, military helmets and bullet proof vests responded with what appeared to be hand guns." The same newspaper wrote: "Right Sector, one of the most militarized protest groups, urged citizens with guns to join the encampment."

German news channel N24 reported that the "radicals of Right Sector have hijacked the protest movement." Noting that the group consists of "supporters of ultra right-wing organizations across the country," it added, "With their faces hidden behind masks or helmets, they attack the police in Kiev with batons and iron bars."

The US and German governments are supporting these paramilitary neofascist groups in order to increase pressure on Yanukovich and his government. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* expressed this bluntly. It "no longer matters if it was radical opponents of the regime or the security forces who first resorted to violence

on Tuesday," the paper stated. "Now only one thing can help: the rapid resignation of Yanukovich."

On Monday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel warmly received Ukrainian opposition leaders Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Vitali Klitschko, but turned down their call for sanctions. After the bloody riots in Kiev, she reversed herself and expressed support for sanctions against the Yanukovich government. In a joint appearance with French President François Hollande, she denounced the security forces in Ukraine for brutality.

Similar comments were made by the US government, which called on the Ukrainian government to withdraw its riot police. "There will be consequences if people cross a line," President Barack Obama threatened.

The fact that Berlin and Washington are prepared to exploit the services of paramilitary fascist gangs for their own purposes exposes the official propaganda, which states that what is at issue in Ukraine is the rule of law and democracy. In fact, the aim is to replace the regime of Yanukovich with one that will distance itself from Russia, subordinate itself to the European Union and impose brutal austerity policies on the Ukrainian working class.

This is also the aim of the opposition led by Klitschko, Yatsenyuk and Oleh Tyahnybok, whose Svoboda party openly celebrates the Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera and espouses anti-Semitism and racism.

The battle for Ukraine is part of efforts by the US and the European powers to incorporate all of Eastern Europe into their sphere of influence and isolate Russia. This process began with the restoration of capitalism, continued with the incorporation of the former Eastern Bloc countries and the Baltic States into NATO and the EU, and is now to be extended to large parts of the former Soviet Union.

Ukraine, with its network of energy pipelines, strategically important military bases and heavy industry,

is a major target of American and European imperialism. On two occasions in the last century, in 1918 and 1941, German imperialism invaded Ukraine. In World War II, Hitler's armies massacred millions of Ukrainians.

Ukraine also serves as a base to draw other former Soviet republics into the sphere of influence of the EU. In an article for *Carnegie Europe*, journalist Judy Dempsey referred to the crisis in Ukraine as "a great opportunity for the EU." She continued: "Now is the time for the EU to start selling itself, not just in Ukraine but also in Georgia and Moldova."

The installation of a client regime in Ukraine or imperialist carve-up of the country is ultimately aimed against Russia itself. Various think tanks are studying the ethnic and political tensions that could be exploited to bring about regime change in Russia and dismember that country as well.

The policies pursued by Washington, Berlin and Brussels in Ukraine, with the support of their right-wing and fascist allies, are directed against the social and democratic rights of the working class. They risk civil war and increase the danger of a military confrontation with Russia.

The Ukrainian working class cannot avoid these dangers by supporting the camp of Yanukovich. His regime is corrupt and bankrupt, representing a different faction of oligarchs than those backing the opposition. They all agree when it comes to the looting of public property and the impoverishment and suppression of the working population.

The only way forward for the working class is to build an independent socialist party that fights for the expropriation of the oligarchy and the nationalization of the banks and corporations, uncompromisingly rejects imperialism and nationalism, and fights for the unity of Ukrainian workers with the workers of Russia, Europe and the rest of the world.



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