

Western-backed Ukrainian opposition seizes power in fascist-led putsch

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The intervention of the United States, Germany, France and other European powers in Ukraine led to a putsch by far-right forces on Saturday. The negotiated settlement that Foreign Ministers Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany, Laurent Fabius of France, and Radoslaw Sikorski of Poland imposed in Kiev, aiming to provide a semi-legal façade for the opposition's power grab, did not survive for a single day.

On Friday, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich agreed to form a national unity government within ten days that included opposition representatives and to reinstate the 2004 constitution passed after the US-backed Orange Revolution, depriving him of control over the heads of the security services. Presidential and parliamentary elections were to be held by December, during which time Yanukovich was to remain president, though only as a powerless figurehead.

The agreement signed was worthless.

France, Germany and Poland, with the United States operating in the background, had worked hand-in-glove with opposition leaders Vitali Klitschko of the Udar party, Arseniy Yatsenyuk of oligarch Yulia Tymoshenko's Fatherland Party, and Oleh Tyahnybok of the fascist Svoboda. As the opposition had relied on fascist thugs to provide the muscle for its street protests, a negotiated settlement with them was impossible.

After signing the deal Friday night, Yanukovich fled the capital Kiev, clearly fearing that if he stayed he would meet the same fate as Muammar Gaddafi, who was murdered at the end of the NATO war in Libya.

Opposition protesters, numbering around 25,000, are led by far right groups including the overtly fascist Right Sector, led by Dmitry Yarosh. They had formed militias who had taken control of the capital, surrounding the president's administration and

parliament.

Parliament—dominated by the opposition parties and supported by the former ruling Party of the Regions, which disowned Yanukovich—voted to free Tymoshenko, who became prime minister in the Orange Revolution. It annulled her seven-year prison sentence for embezzlement. She flew from the eastern city of Kharkiv to Kiev to address protesters.

Legislators ousted Yanukovich in extra-legal fashion. Parliament voted 328-0 to impeach him, which was treated as an accomplished fact even though it requires approval by the Constitutional Court. Parliament then appointed Arsen Avakov as Interior Minister and Oleksandr Turchynov as speaker of the parliament, both from Fatherland. Turchynov was given temporary presidential powers. He told MPs they have until Tuesday to form a government.

An order has been given to arrest former ministers and for state security and the prosecutor's office to investigate "grave crimes against the Ukrainian people, including those by former state leaders."

In a further indication of the rightist character of the regime that has been installed, parliament voted that Ukrainian is the only official language, disenfranchising around one fifth of its population, which mainly speaks Russian.

The atmosphere is so poisonous that Ukrainian Chabad Rabbi Moshe Reuven Azman has called on Kiev's Jews to leave the city and even the country if possible. He cited "constant warnings concerning intentions to attack Jewish institutions."

Yanukovich reportedly flew to Kharkov, near the border with Russia late Friday, when his private plane was reportedly stopped by security forces. The president's own spokesman said Sunday that he does not know where Yanukovich is.

He released a pre-recorded television address, describing events in the Ukraine as a coup and a “repeat of the 1930s, when Nazis came to power in Germany and Austria.” MPs had been “beaten, pelted with stones and intimidated,” he added, and the parliamentary speaker, Volodymyr Rybak, forced to resign because he had been physically beaten.

The European powers and Washington were the driving forces behind this putsch, aiming to break Ukraine from Russia’s sphere of influence. They have gone very far towards fulfilling longstanding geostrategic ambitions—firstly those of Germany, which has repeatedly sought to bring Ukraine under its control, and then of the US, which has sought to weaken and isolate Russia ever since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

Ukraine’s central government has now been seized by fascistic elements in alliance with various sections of the oligarchy, including some of those who were loyal to Yanukovich until last week.

It was possible to successfully organise such a putsch, utilising a few thousand fascist thugs and an “opposition” united by little more than a common desire for money and power, because Yanukovich’s regime proved corrupt and devoid of any popular support. It represented no one save that wing of the oligarchy that considered an alliance with Russia to be more conducive to its own self-enrichment than membership in the EU.

Yanukovich’s reliance on Russia to fend off the hostile moves of Washington, Berlin and Paris failed miserably. Last November, Russia agreed to buy \$15 billion worth of Ukrainian bonds signed after Yanukovich cancelled the signing of an association agreement with the EU. Russian negotiator Vladimir Lukin refused to sign the agreement drawn up by Germany, France and Poland, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov calling on the EU powers to “rein in the opposition” that has emerged “following the lead of armed extremists and pogromists who pose a direct threat to Ukraine’s sovereignty and constitutional order.”

However, Moscow has been almost permanently on a back foot since the onset of the Ukraine crisis. Its various manoeuvres are dictated by the fact that the regime headed by Vladimir Putin articulates nothing other than the interests of Russia’s own oligarchs, who

are richer, but just as rotten as their Ukrainian counterparts.

Ukraine’s eastern districts, including Donetsk, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Dnipropetrovsk, the Crimea and Sevastopol have threatened to seek autonomy, if not outright independence. They have been in meetings with the Russian Duma’s Foreign Affairs Committee Chief, Alexei Pushkov.

These are the most economically vital industrial areas in the country. The Crimea is particularly sensitive for Russian national security and is home to Russia’s Black Sea fleet, in Sevastopol.

The crisis in Ukraine testifies to two historically determined and essential political issues that must now be resolved.

Firstly, at no point in the unfolding crisis has the Ukrainian working class had the chance to take an independent stand in defence of its own interests. This has left events to be dominated by competing oligarchs and the imperialist powers, who are now threatening to divide the country, which could end in civil war and even a great-power war for control of Ukraine.

The only social force capable of halting the intrigues of the imperialist powers and defeating their fascist hirelings is the international working class.

Secondly, the absence of a fight-back in the working class is bound up with the decades-long attack on its political consciousness by Stalinism. The ability of the US and its European allies to dictate events is the direct outcome of the dissolution of the USSR and the restoration of capitalism by the Stalinist bureaucracy under Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin.

This laid the basis for the rule of Russia’s mafia cliques under Putin and opened up the former Soviet republics to the predatory ambitions of the imperialist powers.



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