

Attempts of EU, far-right opposition to set up Ukraine government collapse

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Attempts to set up a government by the Western-backed Ukrainian opposition forces that seized power in Saturday's fascist putsch have collapsed amid rising demands for social attacks on the working class from Washington and the European Union (EU), and military tensions with Russia.

EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton left Kiev yesterday after two days of fruitless talks attempting to bring the different opposition parties together in a government. The putsch, cynically hailed by the Western media as a struggle for democracy, is proving to be an operation to forcibly install a filthy dictatorship of imperialist finance capital. Opposition officials estimated this week that Ukraine needs up to \$35 billion to refinance its debts. However, the major international banks have effectively cut off credit to Ukraine, charging ruinously high interest rates that it cannot afford. Meanwhile, Russia has withdrawn its offer of \$15 billion in aid after the putsch toppled Russian-backed President Viktor Yanukovich.

EU and International Monetary Fund (IMF) officials are demanding austerity measures, such as deep cuts to state subsidies for consumer energy prices, in exchange for a \$1 or 2 billion payment to stave off immediate bankruptcy. Yanukovich rejected a planned association agreement with the EU entailing such cuts last autumn—the decision which led to the opposition protests against him—fearing that the cuts might lead to social upheavals that would bring down his regime.

Now, the pro-Western opposition, supported by gangs of fascist thugs from the Svoboda party and the neo-Nazi Right Sector group, is trying to push this reactionary, anti-democratic agenda through. Arseniy Yatsenyuk of billionaire oligarch Yulya Tymoshenko's Fatherland Party, whom Washington has identified as its preferred right-wing figurehead in Ukraine, called

on the opposition to join government and do the banks' bidding despite popular opposition. "This is about political responsibility. You know to be in this government is to commit political suicide, and we need to be very frank and open," Yatsenyuk told reporters outside Parliament.

Such remarks underscore that the opposition aims to run roughshod over the Ukrainian people, trying to use violently anti-working class forces like Svoboda or Right Sector, which openly glorify Nazism and the Holocaust, to crush whatever popular opposition emerges.

Reports of broader public opinion in Ukraine indicate popular hostility not only to Yanukovich, but also to the leading opposition oligarch, Tymoshenko. One woman told the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, "They are all crooks, the ones like the other, and Yulya [Tymoshenko] is no better."

Tensions are escalating with Russia over the Western powers' move to snatch Ukraine from Russia's sphere of influence. In a statement, the Russian Foreign Ministry attacked US and EU policy in Ukraine as driven "not by a concern for the fate of Ukraine, but by unilateral geopolitical calculations ... A course has been set to use dictatorial and sometimes terrorist methods to suppress dissenters in various regions."

Speaking to Interfax on Monday, Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev denounced the putsch in Kiev. He said, "Strictly speaking, there is no one to talk to there. The legitimacy of a whole host of government bodies raises huge doubts ... If people crossing Kiev in black masks and Kalashnikov rifles are considered a government, it will be difficult for us to work with such a government."

Medvedev added, however, that Russia would honor legally-binding energy contracts to provide Ukraine

with natural gas. “Those agreements which are legally binding must be honored. We are not cooperating with personalities or isolated individuals. These are inter-state relations. We are neighbors, close nations, and we cannot run away from one another. Whatever has been signed must be honored. For us, Ukraine remains a serious and important partner.”

The opposition has abolished the status of Russian—which is widely spoken, particularly in the east of Ukraine—as an official language. There is widespread fear of possible fighting, including Russian intervention, if opposition forces in Kiev attempt to conquer the east or take over Russian military installations in the Crimea.

NATO commander in Europe General Philip Breedlove spoke with Russian Chief of General Staff General Valery Gerasimov in a tense exchange on Monday, in which both “expressed concern over the situation in Ukraine.”

Such remarks highlight the bankruptcy of the Russian regime of President Vladimir Putin, and the disastrous geo-strategic implications of the Stalinist bureaucracy’s dissolution of the USSR, 23 years ago. Dependent on Ukrainian pipelines to transport its natural gas to European markets, the Kremlin oligarchy has no more popular base than the corrupt Yanukovych regime. It is vulnerable to similar right-wing provocations by middle class opposition forces or internal ethnic conflicts, such as the one in Chechnya, fueled by the United States and its allies. To the extent that it tries to use its military machine to block the offensive of imperialism’s far-right proxies, Moscow only runs the risk of triggering all-out war with NATO.

The only way forward is to mobilize the working class in Ukraine and internationally against the imperialist powers’ drive to impose far-right, neo-colonial regimes throughout the former USSR. In the absence of this, the imperialist powers will simply press ahead with mobilizing right-wing, middle class forces to destabilize the entire region, ultimately aiming to dismember Russia. The ex-Soviet republic of Georgia, whose US-backed government fought a brief war with Russia in 2008 after attacking Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia, is now applying for a EU association agreement like that turned down in Ukraine by Yanukovych.

In yesterday’s *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Lilia Shevtsova

of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace think-tank in Moscow indicated that pro-Western opposition forces are preparing for operations like the Ukrainian putsch throughout the territories of the former USSR, including in Russia itself.

Praising the fascist-led putsch in Kiev in Orwellian fashion as “a new form of national self-realization, with its own leaders and heroes,” and calling for Ukraine to join NATO, she wrote: “Ukraine proved to be the weakest link in the post-Soviet chain. One must keep in mind that similar uprisings are also possible in other countries.”

Pointing to the foreign policy of German President Joachim Gauck, who has called for Germany to abandon restraints on its foreign and military policies observed since the fall of the Nazi regime, Shevtsova raised the possibility that Berlin might support similar operations against Russia.

She wrote, “One can therefore hope that the Ukrainians will not be disappointed in Europe again, and also that the democratic forces in Russia will be able to overcome their current disappointment with Europe.”



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