

Canada supports Ukraine coup, threats to Russia

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With the full support of the country's corporate media and big business elite, Canada's Conservative government has aggressively intervened in Ukraine to support the coup fomented by the US and Germany and spearheaded by fascists. This includes issuing bellicose threats against Russia in unison with the Obama administration.

Late last week, Canadian foreign minister John Baird made a three-day visit to Kyiv to demonstrate Canada's support for the putsch. He met on Friday with the prime minister and other top officials of what Baird proudly called Ukraine's "legitimate government," although it came to power by overthrowing the country's elected president and as the result of a campaign of violence mounted by fascist militiamen organized in the Right Sector.

In addition to meeting with Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk, Baird met with the oligarch and Fatherland Party leader Yulya Tymoshenko. Prior to the putsch, the US had tapped Yatseniuk to head a new "regime-change" government because of his close ties to Tymoshenko and because he could give it a somewhat less odious public face than the other two main opposition leaders who have long been openly identified with ultra-right and fascistic politics.

These forces, however, abound in the highest echelons of the new government. Oleksander Sych, of the fascist Svoboda Party, is, the deputy prime minister, and Andriy Parubiy, the co-founder of Svoboda's predecessor party and the man who led the right-wing militias in assaulting the security forces of the deposed Victor Yanukovych, now heads Ukraine's National Security Council.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Stephen Harper spoke with Obama by phone about developments in Ukraine, then convened an emergency cabinet meeting. At the meeting's conclusion, the government announced that Canada is recalling its ambassador from Russia and suspending preparations for the G-8 summit meeting that Russia is slated to host in Sochi this June.

The government has said further actions will be taken against Russia in conjunction with Washington and the major European Union (EU) powers—i.e., Germany, France,

and Britain. Speaking Sunday, government spokesmen indicated this could include Russia's expulsion from the G-8, the expulsion of Russia's ambassador to Canada, freezing Russian assets, and other measures aimed at harming Russia's economy.

Like their US allies, Canada's government and ruling elite are cynically denouncing Russia for "intervening" in Ukraine and stoking disorder. This after Ottawa, working in tandem with Washington and Berlin, helped mount a three-month campaign for regime change in Kyiv that was led by right-wing nationalist and ultra-right wing parties and that culminated in fascist violence.

In December, Baird travelled to Kyiv to personally visit and encourage the right-wing protesters at Kyiv's Independence Square. More significantly, Canada has for years made funding pro-Western "civil society" groups in Ukraine a foreign policy priority, seeking to leverage a significant network of right-wing Ukrainian-Canadian organizations and businessmen. Although Canada's total two-way trade with the Ukraine amounts to little more than C\$300 million annually, Ukraine is one of the Canadian Foreign Ministry's "twenty countries of concentration"—i.e., strategic priorities.

Needless to say, the Canadian government—which is trying to bamboozle the Canadian people into believing that a regime-change operation aimed at detaching Ukraine from Russia's sphere of influence is a "democratic revolution"—has said nothing about the fascist forces that spearheaded it. These forces venerate the virulently anti-semitic Ukrainian nationalist forces that fought alongside the Nazis against the Soviet Union in World War II.

Similarly, the media has blacked out the fact that the government Canada worked to bring to power in Kyiv has abolished the linguistic rights of the country's native Russian-speakers and those of its other minority populations—Bulgarians, Hungarians, Romanians and Poles.

In response to the Russian intervention in the Crimea, the media has been churning out commentary and editorials arguing for the West to intensify its campaign to

strategically isolate Russia, while blithely declaring that no one wants war. In its lead editorial Monday, the *Globe and Mail*, Canada's so-called newspaper of record, urged the US, Canada and their NATO allies to make a show of "might": "As one small step, the US should consider moving some of the Sixth Fleet...into the Black Sea. Putting more NATO forces on high alert would send a signal, too."

Canada's opposition parties have enthusiastically backed the Conservative government's support and aid to the far right in the Ukraine, including its hailing of the February 22 coup, and echoed its lies. Speaking in an emergency parliamentary debate on Ukraine in late January, Thomas Mulcair, the leader of the official opposition New Democratic Party (NDP), declared, "The government is signaling its strong desire for Canada to play a positive role [in Ukraine], and we encourage them in that regard.... It's a battle about human rights, it's a battle about democracy."

On Sunday, Mulcair again solidarized himself with Canada's Conservative government, telling reporters Prime Minister Stephen Harper had apprised him of the government's moves in a Saturday telephone call, that he supported them, and shared Harper's threatening assessment that Russia had "crossed the Rubicon."

The ostensibly left-wing NDP has repeatedly provided a "humanitarian" argument for imperialist interventions and wars for regime change, be it the 1999 NATO war against Serbia, the Afghan War, the 2011 war on Libya or the French military intervention in Mali.

The Liberals announced Sunday that they are dispatching their new "star" MP, the former Thomson Reuters executive Chrystia Freeland, to Ukraine to show support for the coup-installed government. A Canadian of Ukrainian origin, Freeland has published a series of op-ed pieces in recent weeks arguing that the current crisis in Ukraine constitutes an historic opportunity to detach Ukraine from Russia and harness it to North American and European imperialist strategic aims and interests.

In so far as the opposition parties have made any criticism of the Conservative government's role in recent events in the Ukraine, it is for not moving aggressively enough to support the US-EU intervention.

The NDP criticized the Conservative government for not immediately pledging to support a US-EU financial package that was proposed at one point as a means of pushing Yanukovich into ceding much of his power to his right-wing and fascist opponents.

Such aid—and Canada's government has announced its strong support for this—is now expected to take the form of emergency International Monetary Fund (IMF) support, which will be conditional on implementation of an IMF-organized "reform" program. The latter is a euphemism for

the wholesale "free market" restructuring of the Ukrainian economy, involving massive social spending cuts, privatization, and the closing down of much of the country's heavy industry.

Ottawa has a deep, longstanding geo-political antagonism with Russia. This is rooted in the Canadian ruling elite's economic and military-strategic partnership with Washington and Wall Street, which it views as vital to asserting its own predatory interests on the world stage. A founding member of NATO, Canada is also partnered with the US in NATO and NAFTA and works alongside Washington to uphold US domination over Latin America and the Caribbean—where Canadian banks and mining companies have themselves large investments.

Canada and Russia are furthermore in direct competition in the Arctic, which both view as a major source of resource revenue in the decades to come.

In the two decades since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Canada has supported NATO's expansion to the borders of Russia and otherwise provided important support to the US's drive to offset its economic decline through military aggression. Dating back to the 1991 Gulf War and especially since the turn of the twenty-first century, Canada's elite has put paid to the notion (admittedly always a myth) of Canada being a "peacekeeper" in world affairs. Under Liberal and Conservative governments alike, Canada has been a major participant in a series of imperialist wars, undertaken a major and continuing program of military rearmament, and trumpeted a new, openly right-wing, bellicose nationalism.



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