

Washington responsible for fascist massacre in Odessa

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3 May 2014

In what can only be described as a massacre, 38 anti-government activists were killed Friday after fascist-led forces set fire to Odessa's Trade Unions House, which had been sheltering opponents of the US- and European-backed regime in Ukraine.

According to eye-witnesses, those who jumped from the burning building and survived were surrounded and beaten by thugs from the neo-Nazi Right Sector. Video footage shows bloodied and wounded survivors being attacked.

The atrocity underscores both the brutal character of the right-wing government installed in Kiev by the Western powers and the encouragement by the US and its allies of a bloody crackdown by the regime to suppress popular opposition, centred in the mainly Russian-speaking south and east of Ukraine.

As the Odessa outrage occurred, US President Barack Obama, at a joint White House press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, explicitly endorsed the military offensive being carried out by the unelected Kiev government against protesters occupying official buildings in eastern Ukraine.

Despite Western media attempts to cover up what happened in Odessa—with multiple reports stating that “the exact sequence of events is still unclear”—there is no doubt that the killings in the southern port city were instigated by thugs wearing the insignia of the Right Sector, which holds positions in the Kiev regime, along with the like-minded Svoboda party.

The Trade Unions House was set on fire by pro-Kiev elements after they surrounded and set fire to a tent camp of anti-government activists that had stood for several weeks in front of the building on Odessa's Kulikovo Field Square. The building itself was torched after some of the anti-government protesters barricaded themselves inside it.

As the building was engulfed in flames, photos posted

on Twitter showed people hanging out of windows and sitting on windowsills of several floors, possibly preparing to jump. Other images showed pro-regime elements celebrating the inferno. Some jeered on Twitter that “Colorado beetles are being roasted up in Odessa,” using a derogatory term for pro-Russian activists wearing St. George's ribbons.

Thirty of the victims were found on the floors of the building, having apparently suffocated from smoke inhalation. Eight more died after jumping out of windows to escape the blaze, according to local police. Ukraine authorities said a total of 43 people died in Odessa Friday and 174 others sustained injuries, with 25 still in a critical condition.

The violence started as around 1,500 supporters of the Kiev authorities, who recently arrived in the city, gathered at Sobornaya Square in central Odessa. Armed with chains and bats and carrying shields, they marched through the city, chanting “Glory to Ukraine,” “Death to enemies” and “Knife the Moskals [derogatory for Russians].”

Odessa has been among the southeast Ukrainian cities swept by protests since the February coup. At the end of March, thousands rallied in the city, challenging the legitimacy of the coup-imposed government and demanding an autonomy referendum.

The Odessa massacre is the largest death toll so far since the Ukrainian regime, at the urging of the Obama administration, renewed its full-scale military assault on anti-government protests and occupations.

Earlier Friday, interim Ukrainian President Oleksandr Turchynov said many separatists had been killed in a government offensive in Slavyansk. Kiev officials said troops overran rebel checkpoints surrounding the city of 130,000 people in an operation launched before dawn, adding that the city was now “tightly encircled.”

Despite the use of helicopter gunships, the assault

stalled, however, because of local resistance. By early afternoon, the Ukrainian troops were halted in the villages of Bylbasovka and Andreyevka, where residents flocked to their lines to argue with them and urge them not to fight.

In Andreyevka, about 200 people formed a human chain to stop armoured personnel carriers and trucks. In Bylbasovka, residents chanted “Shame! Shame! Shame!” In the nearby town of Kramatorsk, people blocked roads with trolley cars and buses in an attempt to prevent the army from entering.

At his press conference with Merkel, Obama seized on reports that two Ukrainian helicopters had been struck by ground fire. He cited unconfirmed allegations by the Ukrainian intelligence agency SBU that one was hit by a heat-seeking missile as proof that Russian forces were involved. By the evening, however, even the *New York Times* admitted that no evidence had been produced of heat-seeking missiles.

Along with Obama’s incendiary claim, his backing for Kiev’s military onslaught points to a drive by the US and its European partners to create civil war conditions and goad Russian President Vladimir Putin’s administration into intervening, in order to provide the pretext for crippling economic sanctions and a NATO confrontation with Russia.

Washington pushed for the renewed offensive just days after the Kiev regime appeared to back away from an all-out military assault, saying it was “helpless” to stop the occupations of buildings, which have spread to at least 17 cities and towns.

Putin sought to forestall the US-led push by signing a so-called peace agreement with the US, the European Union and Ukraine two weeks ago, which provided for ending the building occupations and halting plans for a military crackdown. This pact has been swept aside by Kiev and its backers. Putin’s spokesman yesterday said the “punitive operation” mounted by Ukraine had destroyed the agreement.

Russia called another emergency UN Security Council meeting Friday to denounce Ukraine’s actions. Moscow’s ambassador, Vitaly Churkin, warned of “catastrophic consequences” if the military operation continued, only to be denounced by his US counterpart, Samantha Power, who called the attack “proportionate and reasonable.”

Power, who made a name for herself by championing US military interventions in Libya and elsewhere in the name of “human rights” and the “protection of civilians,”

declared that Russia’s concern about escalating instability was “cynical and disingenuous.” In keeping with US government propaganda since the beginning of the crisis, she baldly asserted that Russia was the cause of the instability.

It was Washington and its allies, particularly the German government that orchestrated the ultra-nationalist February putsch in Kiev and then exploited the reaction of Moscow, and Ukraine’s Russian-speaking population, to accuse Russia of threatening Ukraine.

Having poured some \$5 billion into the country to install the Kiev regime via violent paramilitary operations, it is now accusing Russia, without producing any serious evidence, of doing the very same thing.

Ukraine’s initial military assault last month began after CIA Director John Brennan surreptitiously visited Kiev. A second push followed a visit by US Vice President Joseph Biden.

There is evidence of ongoing US involvement. The Russian Foreign Ministry said English-speaking foreigners had been seen among the Ukrainian forces mounting the assault on Slavyansk on Friday, echoing its previous charges that Greystone, a US military contractor, is working alongside the Ukrainian military.

In part, the US operation seems directed at preventing an autonomy referendum planned by anti-Kiev opponents on May 11. In addition, a Ukrainian presidential election, scheduled for May 25, is seen by the Western powers as a means of lending legitimacy to the coup government in Kiev. The most widely-promoted presidential candidate, billionaire oligarch Petro Poroshenko, advocates NATO membership for Ukraine and the subordination of the country to the dictates of the European Union and the International Monetary Fund.

But with the Kiev regime failing to suppress the opposition, Washington appears intent on provoking a confrontation and then accusing Russia of preventing the presidential poll from proceeding. Meanwhile, on the pretext of training exercises, US troops are being deployed in the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, as well as Poland, bringing NATO forces right up to Russia’s borders.



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