

Czech president condemns Nazi demonstration in Kiev

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In an unusually sharp tone, Czech President Milos Zeman recently criticised a Nazi demonstration in the Ukrainian capital Kiev. He told Radio F1 that something was “wrong” both with Ukraine and the European Union, which did not condemn it.

Zeman referred to a YouTube video that showed a demonstration in Kiev’s inner city on New Year’s Day. Around 2,000 right-wing extremists held a torchlit procession on the occasion of the 106th birthday of fascist leader Stepan Bandera. The leader of the far-right Svoboda Party, Oleg Tyagnibok, called on the government to officially declare Bandera a national hero of Ukraine.

The Nazi collaborator Bandera is an icon of the far right in Ukraine. During World War II, he proclaimed an independent Ukrainian state in opposition to the Soviet Union. As leader of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), he organised the ethnic cleansing of Jews, Poles and Russians on Ukrainian territory.

During the January 1 march, the neo-Nazis chanted: “Kill the Jews, Poles and Communists,” “Save the nation,” and “Ukraine for the Ukrainians”. Several participants also wore army uniforms. Members of the Right Sector, a coalition of neo-Nazis and paramilitary militias, took part, along with Svoboda. A Russian journalist was physically attacked and required medical attention.

In an interview with the daily newspaper *Pravo* on January 3, Zeman stated that the Maidan of February 2014 “was not a democratic revolution” and that the overthrow of president Viktor Yanukovich had been a deliberate “coup”. He also described Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk as the “prime minister of war.”

Zeman is a right-wing bourgeois politician through

and through. After membership in the Communist Party in the 1970s, he openly campaigned in 1989 for the reintroduction of capitalism. As a member of the Social Democratic Party (CSSD), which was composed of reformed Stalinists, he was actively involved in the privatisation of the economy and destruction of social standards. He explicitly defended the partition of Czechoslovakia and encouraged Czech nationalism.

The CSSD worked closely with the conservative Civic Democratic Party (ODS) of Vaclav Klaus to bring the Czech Republic into the European Union, which demanded further austerity measures. Zeman has been calling for the Czech Republic to join the eurozone for years. After leaving the CSSD he founded his own Party of Civic Rights (SPOZ) in 2013 and was able to narrowly defeat Karel Schwarzenberg in the presidential election. Zeman is notorious for his anti-Islamic outbursts.

It is significant that a European head of state has described the situation in Ukraine so openly, and it points to growing tensions within the EU. Until now, all Western governments have attempted to portray Yanukovich’s overthrow as a democratic revolution and the current government as a political expression of the will of the people.

Zeman has now criticised such assertions and opposed some of the most outrageous falsifications. The coup in Kiev was in fact initiated by the US and Germany. Its aim was to integrate Ukraine into the EU and NATO. US Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland admitted that since 1991 the US had invested \$5 billion to build up pro-Western forces in the country.

At the end of 2013, only a few thousand people demonstrated against the government in Kiev. There was no indication of broad support for the EU and its

representatives. Opinion polls over the previous 10 years indicated that only 30 to 40 percent of the Ukrainian population supported Ukraine joining the EU, with equally as many in favour of closer economic ties with Russia.

The spokesmen of the protests were familiar figures, such as the current Prime Minister Yatsenyuk, Vitali Klitschko and Oleg Tyagnibok. Government personnel and parliamentary representatives from NATO countries took part openly in the demonstrations, which blocked government buildings and urged the bringing down of the pro-Russian elected president, Yanukovich.

When Yanukovich refused to bow to these demands, armed right-wing groups took over leadership on the Maidan in Kiev. Svoboda bussed in its members from its strongholds in the West. The Right Sector appeared as if from nowhere. Clashes became more brutal, and snipers shot dozens of people. It is still unclear whether these killings were carried out by government forces or by political provocateurs from the ranks of the opposition.

Yanukovich agreed to a transitional government and the holding of prompt elections. Under threat from right-wing militias, he fled. His opponents took power in Kiev on February 22, 2014. This coup, prepared by the Western powers and carried out by fascist bands, was hailed in the media as a “democratic revolution.”

The takeover of power by the ultra-nationalists provoked fear and panic, particularly in the eastern part of the country with its large Russian-speaking population. Crimea split from Ukraine with Russian support and was accepted into the Russian Federation. Pro-Russian separatists took power in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Although the fascist parties that organised the torchlit procession on January 1 enjoy virtually no support within the population (Right Sector achieved just 1.8 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections), they are the forces dominating Ukrainian politics with the support of Washington and Berlin.

The establishment of a pro-Western regime in Kiev is aimed at encircling Russia geopolitically and compelling the Putin regime to subordinate itself to the West. Zeman’s statements show that this policy is intensifying conflicts within the EU. The moves against Russia have produced deepening tensions, particularly

among the eastern European states.

Poland and the Baltic states stand for a hard line and military action against Moscow. In the Slovakian government, there are conflicts over how to deal with Russia. While Prime Minister Robert Fico has expressed doubts about the efficacy of EU sanctions, President Andrej Kiska has called on the EU to take stronger measures. Due to its economic ties with Russia, Bulgaria has been especially critical of the EU’s course. In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orban has come under criticism for his moderate stance towards Moscow.



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