

Support for Poroshenko regime collapses in Ukraine

Jason Melanovski
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Recent polls reveal a collapse in support for the Ukrainian government of Petro Poroshenko, which was voted into office in the aftermath of a Western-backed coup in February 2014. The decline in popularity for Poroshenko, which extends to all the country's political parties and institutions, explodes the myth that the right-wing Maidan "revolution" was a democratic transformation.

According to Gallup polls recently conducted in the country, only 17 percent of Ukrainians now support the president. That is down from a high of 47 percent immediately after his election in May 2014. His approval rating is now lower than that of former President Viktor Yanukovich, which stood at 29 percent when was driven from office.

Poroshenko's support is lowest in the southern and eastern regions of the country. Even in western Ukraine, where his nationalist government had its base of support, he is backed by less than a quarter of the population.

According to the same Gallup poll, a mere 8 percent of Ukrainians support Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who has presided over the implementation of right-wing austerity policies and a cataclysmic decline in Ukraine's economy. The same percentage express confidence in the national government as a whole.

Another poll conducted in early January by the Center for Insights Research, an organization sponsored by the right-wing International Republican Institute, found similarly low numbers of support for the current Kiev regime. In addition, it reported that over 70 percent of Ukrainians oppose the government's conduct in eastern Ukraine, where a violent effort to suppress pro-Russian opponents of Kiev has cost the lives of over 9,000 people and created a refugee crisis.

Support in Ukraine for all existing political parties is highly fragmented, with no single party or bloc gaining support from more than 20 percent of the population.

Yatsenyuk's People's Front party would not even win a single seat in parliament, if elections were held today.

The evaporation of popular support for the entire political system takes place amid the collapse of Ukraine's economy. On Tuesday, the Ministry of Economic Development reported the country's GDP had declined by 10.4 percent in 2015. It attributed 40 percent of that drop to the ongoing war in eastern Ukraine. The country's currency, the hryvnia, also fell by 12 percent in 2015. Coal production, one of Ukraine's main industries, decreased by 38.8 percent in 2015, leaving many coal miners unemployed or without pay.

Amid the crisis, imperialist-backed "reformers" who joined the Poroshenko regime after the Maidan Revolution, such as Lithuanian-born Economic Minister Airvaras Abromavicius, have been heading for the exits. A former investment banker and proponent of austerity and privatization, Abromavicius blamed his departure on "corruption" and the Poroshenko regime's ties to various Ukrainian oligarchs. However, in his resignation Abromavicius made it clear that he is jumping ship on a sinking government. "I want my resignation to serve as a warning call, a cold shower that something is going wrong," he said.

In the wake of Abromavicius's resignation, the value of Ukrainian eurobonds dropped by 1.1 percent. Ambassadors from the US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Sweden and Switzerland all said in a joint statement they were "deeply disappointed" with the resignation of Abromavicius. He was seen as a key ally by the imperialist powers, which are increasingly concerned that Poroshenko's government will be unable to fully implement the austerity policies agreed to in various International Monetary Fund loans.

Two other "reformers," Agriculture Minister Oleksiy Pasvlenko and Infrastructure Minister Andriy Pyvovarsky, have also resigned in the last month.

As the government crisis deepens, there are increasing signs of unrest in Ukraine's working class. In December, over one thousand miners from the western Lviv and Volyn regions joined with miners from the eastern Donetsk region to protest outside the Ministry of Energy and Coal Industry in Kiev. The workers attempted to present a petition denouncing the collapse in government economic support for the coal industry and carried posters stating, "Hungry miners are the shame of Ukraine." According to reports, government officials and politicians refused to meet with the striking miners.

On January 12, in the supposedly "nationalist capital" of Lviv in western Ukraine, over 250 coal miners blocked a highway to demand payment of unpaid wages by the Ukrainian government. Several customs entry points from Poland were also blocked as part of the strike. The miners had been paid just 46 percent of their earnings in November of 2015, and had grown tired of the empty promises from the government.

Later in the month, during protests against the construction of a residential building in Kiev that will provide apartments to members of Ukrainian Security Services (SBU), government thugs attempted to disperse the protesters. Days later at another, smaller protest, *Kyiv Post* journalist Vlad Lavrov reported being attacked while attempting to ask the construction supervisor questions.

According to the Index on Censorship's Mapping Media Freedom project, since October 2015, 40 verified violations of press freedom have taken place in Ukraine. In addition to intimidating the press in an attempt to halt its declining status among the Ukrainian population, the Poroshenko regime is attempting to whip up anti-Russian chauvinism and war hysteria.

On Wednesday, in an interview with the German newspaper *Bild*, Poroshenko insisted, "The danger of an open war is greater than last year. Russia is investing a great deal in war preparations."



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