

Far-right nationalist groups march in Kiev

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Thousands of members and supporters of far-right nationalist political parties and organizations marched in Kiev on October 14 in a parade they dubbed a “March to the Glory of Heroes.” The parade marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and gave the country’s far-right political groups an opportunity to pay their respects to Ukrainian nationalist war criminals such as Stepan Bandera. Since 2014, the date has been recognized in Ukraine officially as the “Defender of Ukraine Day.”

The march was organized jointly by the Right Sector and Svoboda political parties, along with the Ukrainian National Corps, which is a civil military organization constituted mainly of members from the far-right paramilitary Azov Battalion. Participants carried torches, flares, portraits of Bandera and flags of their respective far-right parties, while chanting right-wing slogans and performing the Sieg-Heil. Many marchers were dressed in full paramilitary garb.

Svoboda Party leader Oleh Tyahnybok xenophobically warned the crowd against foreigners within the country, stating that the UPA “fought against the Moscow invaders, against the Polish, German, Magyar occupiers. And we see that the current situation in Ukraine is pretty much the same.”

The official Ukrainian press agency attempted to downplay attendance numbers at the fascist march, stating that only 2,000 people had attended, while the march’s organizers put the numbers at approximately 20,000. It was clear, however, from videos of the event and reports from other media outlets that attendance was well above the official number given by the Ukrainian government.

The march took place as rumors swirled in the Ukrainian press that Arsen Avakov, the Minister of Internal Affairs, was preparing a coup against President Poroshenko on the same day at the march. On October 11, *Ukrainska Pravda* reported that Avakov had joked

with reporter Oleksiy Bratuschak, stating, “We’re preparing a coup.” Seconds later, he added, however, “Against Poroshenko I am not planning any subversion, I am not preparing a coup.”

Avakov is known for his relationships with Ukraine’s far-right. Through his control of Ukraine’s National Guard, he would be capable of attempting a coup against the oligarchic Poroshenko regime, which is not deemed sufficiently nationalistic or militaristic by Ukraine’s extremist right-wing groups.

There is widespread speculation within Ukraine that Poroshenko will be unable to complete the remaining years in his presidential term due to his enormous unpopularity. Poroshenko’s current approval rating is less than 20 percent.

The week following the fascist march in Kiev another political rally calling itself a meeting for “Great Political Reform” was held in the country’s capital directly in front the Ukrainian Parliament. The event was led by former Georgian president and governor of the Ukrainian city of Odessa Mikheil Saakashvili, who used the rally as an opportunity to denounce “corruption” within the Poroshenko regime.

Saakashvili had previously been an ally of the Poroshenko regime, but was stripped of Ukrainian citizenship and exiled from the country in July after a fallout with Kiev. Saakashvili was able to return to the country last month after crossing the Polish border with assistance from right-wing forces within the Ukrainian government.

The rally was also supported by the party of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, as well as the Self-Help, Democratic Alliance, Automaidan, and the far-right Svoboda parties. Tymoshenko has already announced plans to run against Poroshenko in the next presidential elections in 2019.

The protesters, carrying shields and UPA flags, clashed with police, attacked parliament members and

attempted to set up tents in an effort to initiate a new “Maidan.”

Prior to the rally, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) announced they had thwarted plans by right-wing forces to carry out “armed provocations” with rocket launchers and automatic weapons.



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