

10 years since the far-right coup in Kiev

A Ukrainian socialist
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This article was written by a Ukrainian socialist living abroad.

Last week, Volodymyr Zelensky's authoritarian regime celebrated the anniversary of the far-right coup in Kiev against the backdrop of the horrific consequences the 2014 coup had for Ukraine's multi-millioned population and humanity as a whole.

That coup and the ensuing war, which has already cost hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian lives, were deliberately instigated by American and German imperialism with the goal of bringing a puppet regime to power that would be willing to hand Ukraine over to their direct control.

The conspirators in Washington and Berlin enlisted the support of opposition parties to the pro-Russian regime of Viktor Yanukovich, one of which was the neo-fascist Svoboda Party, which openly support the actions of Nazi collaborators from Stepan Bandera's Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). Following the coup, Svoboda became the first neo-fascist party to enter a government in Europe since the end of World War II.

The imperialists were fully conscious that the coup they were preparing would lead to a military escalation with Russia. They did not try to avoid it at all, but on the contrary, they believed that such a military escalation was necessary to achieve their goals.

And after the coup, which provoked the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the civil war in Donbass, in which 3,400 people were killed between 2014 and 2022, Ukraine has been armed to the teeth by NATO with yearly training exercises.

The United States and NATO have also systematically armed and trained Ukrainian forces and far-right formations first under the Poroshenko and then Zelensky regime. Even in the lead up to the open war that broke out in 2022, the imperialist powers and the Kiev government worked closely with neo-Nazi elements like the Azov Battalion to wage an indirect war against Russia in East Ukraine.

All these facts put the last nail in the coffin of US propaganda about a sudden and unexpected, "unprovoked" invasion of Ukraine by Putin's regime in February 2022.

Although Putin's invasion was a desperate response to NATO expansion, this does neither justify the actions of the Putin regime nor change its reactionary character. Just as the

Zelensky regime speaks for the interests of the Ukrainian oligarchy, the Putin regime speaks for the interests of the Russian oligarchy. Both emerged out of the Stalinist bureaucracy's destruction of the Soviet Union and restoration of capitalism and are deeply hostile to the working class.

Immediately following the coup, the working class of Ukraine faced attacks on its social and democratic rights. Arson attacks on party headquarters, physical violence against party members began and parties were banned. The new regime daily restricted the right to express dissent and to assemble peacefully without fear of fascist attack. Prices, inequality and poverty increased exponentially. The policies pursued by the Poroshenko regime and now the Zelensky government have benefited the oligarchy, exacerbating inequality and pushing more and more working class people into abject poverty.

The coup d'état also entailed intensified efforts by the state to rehabilitate the World War II-era fascists from the OUN and its paramilitary wing, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). The Communist Party and communist symbols were banned, while fascist forces were rehabilitated and their crimes glorified or minimized. The new regime began to distort historical facts and remake textbooks for its own purposes. It renamed streets and destroyed monuments, including those of many leaders of the October Revolution and the Trotskyist Left Opposition to Stalinism that hailed from Ukraine.

Among the monuments destroyed was one of the Bolshevik Vitaly Primakov, the adopted son of the famous Ukrainian writer Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky. Primakov was a member of the Military Revolutionary Committee that organized the October insurrection in 1917, became commander of the Ukrainian Red Cossacks during the civil war and later a member of the Left Opposition.

Monuments and streets, dedicated to Yevgeniia Bosh, a leader of the Bolshevik Party and member of the Left Opposition in Ukraine, as well as of Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, participant in the October armed uprising in Petrograd, and Soviet military commander who signed the Declaration of the 46, were renamed or demolished. A bust of the famous German revolutionary and anti-militarist Karl Liebknecht was also destroyed.

At the same time, a wave of attacks was unleashed on the historical truth about the victory of the Soviet people over Nazi Germany in World War II. The government systematically tried

to present the Red Army in the eyes of the Ukrainian people not as liberators but as occupiers of Ukraine. And this despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Ukrainian population has ancestors who fought in the ranks of the Red Army against fascism!

With the beginning of the war in February 2022, the government began to destroy monuments to Soviet soldiers all over western Ukraine, destroying their burial places and the burial places of victims of the Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists.

All this was aimed at undermining the collective memory, the memory of the working class, at suppressing the history and truth about the achievements of the October Revolution and the struggle of the Left Opposition against Stalinism.

It is in this history that one must look for the roots of the events of 2014 and the war in Ukraine. All these events can only be understood as the direct result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 by the Stalinist bureaucracy, which led to the creation of bourgeois Ukraine.

The restoration of capitalism was the culmination of Stalin's betrayal of the internationalist program of the 1917 October Revolution. In Ukraine, this nationalist reaction formed the basis for the policy of forced collectivization and the ensuing famine that killed millions of people, and the perversion of the Bolshevik national policy which suppressed Ukrainian cultural and national aspirations and undermined the unity of the peoples within the Soviet Union.

With the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, bourgeois nationalists began to raise their heads, including in Ukraine. In September 1989, the "People's Movement of Ukraine for Perestroika" was formed, which was engaged in fomenting national discord between the Russian and Ukrainian working classes and called for separatism. On the territory of western Ukraine, bourgeois Ukrainian nationalists began not only dismantling monuments to Lenin and Soviet soldiers. Under the guise of fighting Stalinism, they also rehabilitated the fascist collaborators and murderers of women, old men and children from the OUN-UPA (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army). They glorified them by building monuments to Bandera and naming streets after him. It was then that the harassment and attacks on workers of Russian nationality and on communists and members of the Komsomol (the youth organization of the Communist Party) began.

Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists everywhere engaged in this harassment, using force not only against ethnic Russians but also the Russian language, forcing many to leave the cities of western Ukraine.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, what had started in the 1980s gained even more momentum, especially under the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko, who came to power after the US-backed "orange revolution" of 2004. His government not only promoted the glorification of fascists but also gave Nazi collaborators such as Roman Shukhevych the title of "heroes of

Ukraine."

But no matter how strong the machine of propaganda and historical falsification is, the proletariat of Ukraine will sooner or later break it, winning not only the struggle for historical truth but also in the struggle against Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism and those whom it serves.

Already, every day the numbers of those who do not agree with this war are growing, who realize that its root causes are the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the ultra-right February coup in Kiev and NATO expansion. There are more and more of those who are waking up from the decade-long stupor. Among them are not only the Ukrainian workers who were destined by Zelensky's authoritarian regime to be nothing more than cannon fodder but also those who are already in the war. They are looking at the government in Kiev and are realizing what fate is in store for them. Already facing injustice, they are beginning to think about what they are fighting and dying for.

Some of them still think that once they win this war, they will go and overthrow the government that sent them to war. Others are already prepared to desert the battlefield or to turn their guns on "their" regime. And this mood exists not only in the Ukrainian working class but also in the Russian working class, which is, ultimately, in the same situation as the Ukrainian working class.

Sooner or later, this war will lead to a popular explosion. However, without an independent workers' party and a revolutionary leadership, the Ukrainian and Russian working class cannot win. Above all, it cannot win without returning to the internationalist traditions of the great October proletarian revolution. The revival of these traditions can only be achieved through a fight for orthodox Trotskyism, which is the Marxism of the 21st century, and embodies Bolshevik traditions. That is why socialist-minded workers and young people who are opposed to this war must fight for the building of the Ukrainian and Russian sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International!

For a compilation of the most important statements by the WSWs on the 2014 coup and its aftermath, review this topic page.



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