

USS Vella Gulf, a Navy cruiser, armed with Tomahawk missiles and capable of launching helicopters, entered the Black Sea in late May



Stop Nato's New War Drive

THE WESTERN MEDIA are filled with talk of the danger or the onset of a new Cold War. The villain of the piece, they all agree, is Vladimir Putin – a new Hitler. Hillary Clinton, Prince Charles and even German finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble are of one mind on this. Of course there is the little difference of 6 million Jews killed and 22 million Russians – and the fact that without the Red Army the real Hitler would not have been defeated.

The scale of the lying over Ukraine by “free and independent” Western journalists has been remarkable by all recent standards. The interference by European and American politicians in the movement to oust President Yanukovich, whose election had been declared, “free and fair” by US and EU official bodies, was equally brazen. Imagine if the tables were turned; say during the Occupy Movement, billions of dollars were dispensed to protesters from Russian “NGOs”.

Apart from the desire to drag Ukraine out of its post-independence (1991) neutral status and into the European Union, there is the determination of the US and her European allies, like Britain and Poland, to get Ukraine into Nato, along with Georgia, and bottle up Russia in the Eurasian heartland.

To this must be added the goal of bringing Russia's economy to its knees in a new arms race accompa-

nied by a high technology embargo. After all in the so-called Second Cold War, launched by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, this strategy worked, impoverishing millions.

The 2014 NATO Summit will take place in Newport, South Wales on 4-5 September. There is no doubt that high on its agenda will be Ukraine and enlargement. There will also be proposals for increased military spending – a step could easily unleash a new arms race.

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the Secretary General of Nato, makes this clear in an interview for “Prospect” (May 15) where he stated:

“We can't afford to disarm in Europe, while seeing Russia rearm and mass troops on the Ukrainian border.” To this he adds, “The cuts must stop”, by which he means defence cuts not those on social spending – which are “justified”.

He boasts that Nato has already mobilised “more ships at sea, more planes in the air, and more exercises on land” and has “agreed military-to-military cooperation including defence reforms and modernisation”. Joint Nato-Ukrainian manoeuvres are planned for June or July. All this is clearly aimed at Nato membership for Ukraine.

Rasmussen points out that the 2008 Bucharest Summit already agreed to allow both Georgia and Ukraine to become members. It now only awaits proof of their logistical

readiness – hence the “reforms and modernisation”.

Imperialist rivals

A new political period has opened up with the events in Ukraine – one that is marked by increasing imperialist rivalry in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa too. A supremely aggressive USA – with its ever-loyal servant British imperialism – is hell-bent on encircling and weakening the recent graduates to the imperialist club: Russia and China. In fact their actions are driving Russia and China closer together, creating an alliance that will attract other states eager to free themselves from US bullying and economic domination.

Not only has the US and its allies been steadily advancing NATO military forces into Eastern Europe, in total violation of the promises they made when the Soviet Union abandoned the Warsaw Pact, they now regularly use their “soft power” too – human rights NGOs, democracy movements and “colour” revolutions, like the Maidan. They believe that this can help bring about the downfall of their rivals.

Such pseudo-revolutions are possible because of the genuine grievances, political and economic, of the populations in the countries targeted. But under the leadership the US cedes them, the consequences are defeat or counter-revolution. The forces in Russia and China fighting

for justified democratic rights, free trade unions and national self-determination can become corrupted and disoriented in these circumstances, just as they sometimes were during the Cold Wars of the 1950s and '60s and again in the 1980s.

The situation today demands not only solidarity with the antifascist resistance in Ukraine, but exposing any claim that Ukraine is some sort of special victim of Russian imperialism, just at the moment when it is being seized by US and EU imperialism.

Above all it means revitalising the antiwar movement, around Europe and the world. It needs to be like the one we mobilised against the US and Nato wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

We have to revive that movement and Stop the War's call for a mobilisation against the Nato Summit in Newport (see page iv for details) presents a golden opportunity to launch it. We need to campaign at union conferences, in the schools and universities and at the People's Assembly to mobilise hundreds of thousands to Cardiff and mount a siege of the Newport summit. Our slogans should be:

- Nato: hands off the Ukraine
- Nato forces out of Eastern Europe, the Black Sea and the Baltic
- Britain out of Nato – break up the warmongering alliance
- Reject the EU Austerity Agreement for Ukraine
- Victory to the Ukrainian resistance

The disgrace of the Maidan leftists

By Dave Stockton

ONE OF the most striking features of the events in Ukraine, both before and after the February coup, was the disgraceful response of some groups on the British and international left, including Socialist Resistance (British section of the Fourth International).

First they denied the fundamentally reactionary nature of the Maidan movement. Then, when the far-right and fascist parties seized power and formed a coalition, rather than correct their error they deepened it by downplaying the illegitimacy of the regime and the fascist element within it. Then, to complete the ugly picture, they opposed the inevitable resistance to the far right and its Right Sector squads that broke out in the south and east of Ukraine.

In an ultimate disgrace, they reproduced patent lies from dodgy Ukrainian sources that claimed the victims of the 2 May massacre in Odessa had brought it on themselves, denying that they were murdered by the Right Sector fascists, despite clear contemporaneous reports, photographs and video evidence to the contrary.

That this has happened now is no accident, no “different reading of events”. Through all of this, they play down the role of Nato and the EU in egging on the Kiev regime, and of the US in promoting the fascists' participation in the government. Instead, they put all their emphasis on the threat of Russian imperialism. Exactly 100 years after the start of the First World War, with a strong wind of reaction blowing and a new period of inter-imperialist rivalry opening, for these “post-Leninists” the main enemy is anywhere but at home.

Maidan left in denial

Socialist Resistance backed the Maidan movement despite its overtly pro-European Union, neoliberal and nationalist leadership. They downplayed the increasingly obvious domination on the Square by extreme right wing forces and their repulsive fascist iconography, such as the

Continued on page iv

The disgrace of the Maidan leftists

Continued from page 1

Swastika-like “Wolfsangel” and the straight-arm salute.

The Maidan socialists minimised the Right Sector and Svoboda’s role in overthrowing Yanukovich and in imposing the new regime – in exactly the same way as the Western media and the imperialist politicians did. In particular, they tried to ignore the integration of fascist militia into the repressive forces of the new regime, via appointments to key ministries and the formation of a new “National Guard”.

Proven fraudster from 2003 Ilya Budraitskis has now popped up as the main spokesperson of the Fourth International’s Russian section, Vpered. Although he acknowledged the hegemony of fascist stormtroopers in Maidan, he concluded that the movement itself remained progressive, despite the absence of anything but reactionary demands, saying: “the incredibly sickening dissonance between the revolutionary content of the process and its reactionary form represents circumstances demanding not squeamish ethical evaluations, but action aimed at changing such an ugly equation.”¹

The “action” he advocated was the building of a “Left Sector” within the Maidan, even though countless reports indicate that the left could not even distribute leaflets in Maidan, let alone Kalashnikovs. In fact, as reality has shown, it was necessary to build a movement not within but against the Maidan – but now this has actually happened, the FI refuses to support it.

In the same way, they downplayed the interference of Western imperialism, indeed its key role in initiating the entire movement. Again this was curious, given the flood of US and EU statesmen and women into Maidan Square. The leaked phone call of the neo-conservative US Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland, demanding that Arseniy Yatsenyuk of Fatherland, not Germany’s favourite, Vitali Klitschko, should head the government – with her infamous phrase, “Fuck the EU” – should have alerted socialists. The government that was formed has many ministers from the fascist Svoboda party and handed control of security to key leaders of the neo-Nazi Right Sector.

Nuland herself came to the Maidan to glad-hand nationalists and fascists, and John McCain to hug them. Those who thought this was another Occupy Wall Street or a Tahrir Square might pause to consider why these ladies and gentlemen never appeared there with their kisses and cookies. Indeed, why they did not support genuinely democratic uprisings at all.

Like the western media – and David Cameron, Barack Obama and Angela Merkel – the “Maidan socialists” knew from day one who they thought the main enemy was: Vladimir Putin. For them, the main danger was not fascists in power in Kyiv, but a Russian military invasion of Ukraine. “Putin’s strategy is to gouge out chunks of Ukrainian territory,” wrote Liam Mac Uaid on Socialist Resistance’s website – even

though Putin has twice now refused to come to the support of the beleaguered Russophone community in the east and south.²

The secession of Crimea and its application to join Russia apparently justified this fear. Yet, even the journalists sent by the Western media found no evidence of coercion to vote yes and could not maintain that the referendum was unrepresentative of the wishes of the majority of Crimeans. Hardly surprising given that the majority of Crimeans are Russian, Crimea never voted to join Ukraine, and the new Kyiv junta tried to downgrade the status of the Russian language. Putin didn’t exactly have to force people to vote to secede!

However, this has not stopped Mac Uaid claiming it was “a flagrantly ridiculous referendum”³, a trick played by Russia and nothing more. Clearly the right of nations to self-determination – or at least Russian-speaking nations – counts for nothing for this “socialist”.

The referendum then became the pretext for international sanctions and more serious military threats aimed at Russia. For the Kyiv regime, it served as the pretext for a “campaign against terrorism”, in reality a war on the population of southern and eastern Ukraine, in which Kyiv’s forces, backed by their irregular National Guard and Right Sector militias have killed dozens, if not hundreds, of civilians.

The announcement of Nato summer manoeuvres in Ukraine itself, the entry of US and French warships into the Black Sea, plus the declared intention of offering Nato membership to Ukraine just did not show up on these leftists’ antique anti-imperialist radar. All they could see were the 40,000 Russian troops on Russian territory.

All socialists agree that Putin’s regime is repressive, homophobic, even dictatorial. But if, at the same time as stressing this, you totally ignore the offensive character of Nato’s eastward expansion and its blatant political grab for Ukraine by supporting a coup there, the implication is that “our” imperialist powers are impelled by “democratic” motives. Tell that to the Iraqis, and to the defenders of Donetsk and Sloviansk today.

Odessa

The most shameful act came when these apologists for Maidan reacted to the 2 May Odessa massacre of over 40 antifascists, who had fled from an attack by Right Sector Nazis and right wing football gangs into the nearby House of Trade Unions. An “eye-wit-

ness” article on the dubious Left Opposition’s website, shamefully reproduced without balance by Workers Liberty and shared by Socialist Resistance and International Socialist Network members, opens: “Who bears the guilt for the tragedy in Odessa? For me, the answer is obvious: Russian fascists and the police.”

The article derides the peaceful protesters for autonomy (Western media propaganda and lazy “socialists” alike call them “pro-Russian separatists” but in fact they are “anti-Maidan federalists”) in patently racist terms, showing the full contempt for Russians common today in western Ukraine: “worshippers of Stalin and lovers of the ‘Father Czar’, Russian Nazis and music-hall Cossacks, Russian-Orthodox fanatics and grandmas”.

But even this obviously twisted account can only go so far as to say: “Who set fire to the House of the Trade Unions is unknown – Molotov cocktails were being thrown by both sides.”⁴

In other words, throw a lot of mud and confusion, half-truths and lies at an event, then decide it’s “too difficult” to find out what happened. A disgraceful attempt to cover up responsibility for a fascist massacre. Worse, Suhail Ilyas, on the website of a recent breakaway from the SWP called RS21, simply claims that “news sources differ on the sequence of events” and concludes: “Neither side requires their version of events to be true, they simply need to entrench division.”⁵

Fortunately for genuine anti-fascists, there is a reliable source. We reproduce some of the evidence of what really happened on page 2 of this supplement (*Never forget Odessa and Mariupol!*).

However, Zakhar Popovych, another proven fraudster from 2003 and now leader of the Ukrainian Left Opposition, tries to blame the victims of the massacre for their own deaths at the hands of the Right Sector fascists – for, in effect, “provoking” them: “Andrey Brazhevsky, a 27 year old programmer, a member of the ‘Borotba’ organization, was killed in the ‘House of Unions’. He was in a pro-Russian ‘Odesskaya druzhina’ paramilitary unit. Another young man from the ‘antifa’ football fans movement was shot on Sobornaya Square. It appears that left activists became the infantry, the cannon fodder in the war which clearly has nothing to do with the class interests of Ukrainian workers.”⁶

It seems “the interests of Ukrainian workers” require that workers in southern and eastern Ukraine, deeply

alarmed and angered by the armed fascists and football ultras parading through their streets, should remain disorganised and defenceless. Why? So as not to provoke (!) violence.

In fact the reason the Right Sector was able to wreak such murderous havoc was precisely that the Odessa defence units were *not numerous or well-armed enough* to stop the Nazis. (Note Popovych’s use of the term “paramilitary” to “otherise” someone who jumped from a torched trade union building and was then beaten to death on the ground).

Imagine if this had happened in Britain, if the BNP or English Defence League had murdered antifascists after our side had blocked a provocative “demo for England” through their streets. Would RS21 or SR have denounced both sides because a few anti-Nazis had taken up baseball bats or stolen a few handguns from the useless police? Would they have blamed the anti-Nazis for starting it by blocking the march or pointed to the participation of non-combatants on the fascist demo? If they did, there would be uproar in their ranks – as there should be over this betrayal of workers, socialists and ethnic minorities in Ukraine.

Fraud and the Fourth International

Socialist Resistance rests its case on the evidence of a dubious grouping the FI is linked to in Ukraine: the Left Opposition.

Dubious because a number of their spokespersons have been identified as the perpetrators of a major fraud on the international left in the early 2000s, though at the time these fraudsters were attached to the Committee for a Workers’ International, whose British section is the Socialist Party.⁷

To repeatedly cite such people as witnesses, whose evidence always seems to come a couple of days after events, to contradict contemporaneous accounts, and to be unsubstantiated by photographic or video evidence is perverse in the extreme. To cite them as evidence of the progressive character of the Maidan movement and the legitimacy of the Kyiv regime, and to discredit and libel as “Russian nationalists” those revolutionary socialists, like Borotba, who are resisting that regime, in our view, marks a serious degeneration for Socialist Resistance and the leadership of the Fourth International, which takes the same line.

Fortunately, individual members and some sections of the FI (notably OKDE-Spartakos, its Greek section,

and some individuals in Socialist Resistance) have resisted this shameful political line.

The Left Opposition consistently downplays the right wing nationalist character of the forces in the Kyiv regime, demanding recognition of its “legitimacy” and painting its opponents as Russian separatists, if not agents of Putin.

At a meeting in London on 10 March, LO leader Zakhar Popovych said that he “recognised this Ukrainian government as legitimate and revolutionary. We appeal to all other governments to recognise it as legitimate. But we don’t support it politically.” In particular, “we don’t support its chauvinistic and anti-communist history.”⁸

Of course, if you recognise the coup regime as “legitimate”, when its parliament has been purged of over a hundred deputies from the east of the country, disenfranchising those regions, and its government includes ministers who elevate the Nazi-ally Stepan Bandera into national hero, and whose supporters deface Soviet war memorials, then it must seem natural to stigmatise its opponents as rebels, agents of a foreign power, etc. In short, they have adopted the narrative of Ukrainian nationalism and western imperialism.

It is time to ask if the Fourth International is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the start of World War One with its very own 4 August.⁹

FOOTNOTES

1 <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article3275>

2 <http://socialistresistance.org/6085/ukraine-the-russians-are-the-aggressors>

3 *ibid*

4 <http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2014/05/05/eye-witnesses-odessa>

5 <http://rs21.org.uk/2014/05/07/the-tragedy-of-odessa/>

6 <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article3398>

7 This is the most comprehensive account of the fraudsters: <http://komepd.wordpress.com/2014/03/31/maidan-and-a-ukrainian-story-of-a-lasting-fraud/>. It should be noted that Ilya Budraitskis is the current leader of the FI’s Russian section, Vpered, and Zakhar Popovych is the leader of the Ukrainian Left Opposition. Both are fraudsters.

8 <http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2014/03/11/russian-and-ukrainian-socialists-speak-out>

9 4 August 1914 was the day the German SPD voted for war credits, which Lenin recognised as the end of the Socialist International as an instrument for world revolution.

**NO NEW WARS
NO TO NATO**

PROTEST 30 AUGUST TO 5 SEPTEMBER

DEMONSTRATE SAT 30 AUGUST, NEWPORT

COUNTER-CONFERENCE SUN 31 AUGUST TO MONDAY 1 SEPTEMBER, CARDIFF & NEWPORT

OTHER PROTESTS AND DIRECT ACTION IN THE WEEK

Stop the War, CND, No to War: No to Nato

Gunpoint democracy: bullets and

Elections, where half the population did not vote, a military invasion of large parts of the east and south of the country, murderous attacks by fascist militia, threatened and actual intervention by rival imperialist blocs and an impending economic disaster imposed by finance capital have all failed to quell the resistance to Kyiv. **KD Tait** analyses events and calls for a revolutionary answer to the crisis

UKRAINE, 25 MAY 2014. While voters queued at polling stations in Kyiv to choose between representatives of the country's rival oligarchs, hundreds of doctors and patients took shelter in the basement of Slavyansk's hospital.

In Syria, Assad's "election" is rightly denounced as a sick fraud. But in Ukraine, presidential candidates urge "unity" at gunpoint. Nothing – not a turnout of 55 per cent, not the military offensive in the east – would be allowed to challenge the legitimacy of elections bankrolled by the United States.

In the east the elections were rejected as an illegitimate sham. The near universal boycott was the inevitable response of a population under military occupation, which has faced down the tanks and helicopter gunships of Kyiv.

The massacres and provocations carried out by Right Sector fascist killers in Odessa and Mariupol have failed to intimidate the population of the south-east.

The object of the elections was to give the new status quo a gloss of democratic legitimacy and stabilise the situation prior to disarming the resistance.

For all the anti-Russian propaganda in the West, both the Russian and western imperialists were united in pressing ahead with the elections and on the candidate who should be elected. Russian President Vladimir Putin supported the election and announced he would work with the new president – and the US threw in another \$11 million to oil the wheels (or rather grease the palms).

In terms of the result they have succeeded, if electing a president with 45 per cent of the population failing to take part can be called a success. The new president Petro Poroshenko is a billionaire oligarch who has worked with both sides of the Ukrainian political divide. He supported the Maidan and the Orange revolution but was also a founder of ousted President Viktor Yanukovich's Party of the Regions.

Germany will be delighted that he has promised to sign the second part of the EU deal and begin implementing its economic reforms. Meanwhile the US still has the government its coup installed. Under the 2004 constitution, the prime minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and the Svoboda ministers and Right Sector chiefs of the security apparatus will retain their powers undiminished. In short the regime itself has not changed one iota through Poroshenko's election. This can be seen from the fact that, while he was elected promising to "re-unite

the country" and end the military offensive against the east, the reality has been a savage all-out offensive against Donetsk, with helicopter gunships and paratroops.¹

Background

The presidential election was intended cover up the illegitimacy of the February coup – though parliament, the Rada, will continue to legislate till the autumn. This coup, financed and orchestrated by the US and its EU allies, saw organised fascists acting as the military vanguard.

On seizing power they purged the parliament of over a quarter of its members and announced their intention to sell the country to the lowest bidder – the IMF.

The seizure of power by fascists under the hated flag of wartime Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera, the threat to rescind minority language rights, the imminent devastating cuts to subsidies and the imposition of pro-coup governors on the towns of the south and east provoked a wave of resistance.

The resistance in the East rejected the authority of the regime in Kyiv, insisted that the Presidential election, set for 25 May by the coup makers, would be illegitimate and demanded a referendum on autonomy for their regions.

The demands of the federalists were for the right to elect their own governors, for a greater share of tax collected from the region to be spent in the region and for a referendum of greater political autonomy from the centre.

The response of the regime in Kyiv was to launch a military offensive – supported by fascist terror gangs. This was cynically dubbed a "fight against terrorism".

The first onslaught ended in a humiliating retreat when a column of tanks and armoured vehicles trying to take control of Slavyansk encountered a crowd of ordinary villagers blocking their advance. Local self-defence units quickly disarmed the regular soldiers, who showed no desire to kill their fellow citizens on behalf of the nationalists and fascists in Kyiv.

Unelected interim president Oleksandr Turchynov was forced to admit that large parts of the East of the country were no longer under the control of his regime; that most of the local police and armed forces would not enforce his orders.

After the failure of the first offensive to suppress anti-government opposition, the IMF stated bluntly that its bailouts were subject to the government restoring control. Under the prompting of the CIA's man in

Kyiv, John Brennan, Turchynov plucked up the courage to launch a second attack.²

Fascist terror

The normal armed forces had proved they did not have the stomach to gun down unarmed civilians so the Right Sector was given a major role in the new National Guard – a paramilitary force composed of more reliable volunteers.

They were reinforced by 300 CIA and FBI operatives³ plus hundreds of mercenaries from the US Blackwater, now renamed Academi to cover

up its crimes in Iraq. They had one aim: crush the resistance to Kyiv by any means necessary.

Despite the use of tanks, helicopters and heavy artillery, the government forces still failed to retake control of Slavyansk. Faced with the prospect of a generalized uprising, the counter-revolutionary regime in Kyiv looked for a softer target to serve as a deterrent.

They found it in Odessa (see box).

Shock troops of capital

The military offensive by the Kiev regime is the prelude to the economic offensive against the working class and peasants. The economic war will be carried out by the Kiev government according to the dictates of western finance capital in Berlin and Washington.

Fearing what an EU and IMF "reform" package will mean for their regions' heavy industry – an end to state subsidies, severing of connections with Russian markets, leading

to greater unemployment and lower wages as well as discrimination on a nationalist basis – working people have demonstrated and taken strike action.

In order for the regime to impose austerity, it must first break the ability of the working class to resist. This is the motivation for the creation of the National Guard, the new conscription law and the military tax: to pursue a genocidal war to cleanse the country of Russophones, Russians, Jews and other minorities.⁴

Given the economic agenda of the Kiev regime, and the presence of fascists in control of the judiciary and repressive state apparatus, it is entirely justified for those who opposed Maidan or who now oppose the government it installed to reject its authority and organise for its overthrow.

The resistance

The backbone of the self-defence forces in the east is comprised of

Never forget Odessa and Mariupol!

ON 2 MAY the government in organised a pogrom against anti-government protesters, in which official figures admit that at least 46 people were killed, more than 200 were injured and 78 people hospitalised.

Forces within the government orchestrated the massacre, bringing in a thousand Right Sector fascists from Kyiv and Kharkov to make an example of those who continued to defy the regime.

It now seems beyond doubt that agents provocateurs, dressed as anti-Maidan supporters, opened fire on the fascist march, and local police authorities loyal to Kyiv quickly withdrew from the scene.¹

The Kyiv ministers and local police chiefs thus provided a "justification" of the massacre – claiming that it was simply the inevitable response to a bloody and unprovoked attack.

In fact, as can be clearly seen in dozens of videos², the fascists carried out a violent attack on the peaceful anti-government protest tent camp on Kulikovo Field; the unarmed protesters took refuge in the House of Trade Unions.

The crowd of fascists – unmolested by police – threw Molotov cocktails and shot at those inside, setting fire to the building. It is now clear that many of those who perished in the House of Trade Unions were actually murdered in cold blood by fascists who gained entry to the building. Besides those who died in the flames, or were suffocated by the fumes, some perished by jumping from windows. Those who survived the fall were clubbed to death on the ground by the fascists.³

A witness from the socialist group Borotba reports: "People began to jump out of the windows of the upper floors – trying to escape the fire. But on the ground, they were finished off by nationalist paramilitaries. Thus, our comrade – a member of 'Borotba' union Andrew Brazhevsky – was killed. Deputy of regional council Vyacheslav Markin (a fellow of the leader of 'Borotba' Odessa Alexey Albu) was also brutally killed the same way when he jumped out of window... Some of our comrades, including the leader of Odessa 'Borotba' and city council deputy Alexei Albu were severely beaten by bats and kicked. They have numerous bruises, broken bones and head injuries."⁴

Some local pro-Kyiv forces it is true did try to rescue people trapped on window ledges with ladders and scaffolding. But for two days after the atrocity fascists and the police unleashed a reign of terror in the city, beating and arresting those who tried to protest the slaughter. The Minister of Internal Affairs Arsen Avakov, a man

with close connections to neo-Nazi groups, supervised and excused all this.

The official line of the government to the massacre can be taken verbatim from the Kyiv-appointed governor of Odessa, who described the murder of dozens of civilians as a "necessary measure".⁵

That this pogrom took place whilst "the whole world was watching" seemed to matter not one iota to the western media and politicians. The Kyiv government, Barack Obama and EU leaders immediately set about covering up the indisputable responsibility of the fascists and the total complicity of Ukrainian state authorities in it.

Outrageous as this response is, it should be no surprise if we remember the carnage in Iraq and Afghanistan. For all their democratic sermonising, the Nato allies are past masters at excusing atrocities. Moreover the US is well used to getting fascists to do their dirty work for them, e.g. in Latin America.

But the terror in Odessa was not enough to subdue the opposition and on 9 May another massacre was attempted, in Mariupol. When local police refused the order from a new Kyiv-appointed police chief to disperse the VE day demonstration and arrest people – the fascists shot a policeman – the police rebelled and shot the fascist leader.

Fascists and special forces were sent to quell the "mutiny". Tanks moved in and attacked the police building. Large crowds of ordinary people gathered to support the rebellious police. On their march out the fascists casually killed at least a dozen civilians.

The massacres have drawn a river of blood between the inhabitants of the South-Eastern region and the regime in Kyiv. They will never willingly submit to its usurped authority or the results of its rigged elections. The protesters in the south and east were and are right to oppose the government in Kyiv and fight for its downfall.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 <http://scgnews.com/the-odessa-massacre-what-really-happened>.
- 2 A comprehensive video is *The untold Truth of Kulikovo Field*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=whqQCx6RXkY
- 3 <http://borotba.org/neo-nazi-terror-in-odessa-more-than-40-killed-hundreds-injured.html>
- 4 <http://en.itar-tass.com/world/730770>
- 5 <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/3/21/ukraine-s-newestfightingforcestillaworkinprogress.html>

ballots cannot crush resistance



Odessa's House of Trade Unions after fascists set fire to it. Some prepare to jump from balcony, though not all to safety

autonomous units made up of army veterans, reservists and former police officers. Some estimates put the number of militias upwards of 1,000, numbering from half a dozen to more than 200 people.

Unlike the whitewashers of the Maidan counter-revolution, those of us who support the resistance have no need to excuse the errors it commits or justify the presence of reactionary political forces within it. All mass movements are heterogeneous – the question is what political forces predominate and determine its character.

There are undoubtedly volunteers involved in the resistance from right-wing Great Russian chauvinist and pan-Slav groups, including fascists. Obviously they have a reactionary agenda and are a political liability, alienating mass forces, particularly workers whose involvement is vital to victory.

But unlike their equivalents within the Maidan – these elements are not the predominant force, even amongst the armed defence groups. It is clear that there is a wide variety of views and indeed political confusion among the de facto leadership. Alongside democratic rights for the Russian language and the election of governors, the Donetsk People's Republic also calls for taxes to be spent locally and "people's control" of the mines and steel complexes in the Donbas.

The resistance by these forces is justified and necessary to prevent the Kiev regime and its Right Sector murderers repeating the Odessa pogrom and imposing its illegitimate rule. As such Ukrainian socialists are right cooperate with them in defence operations whilst rejecting any the permanent separatist agenda, or calls for a Russian invasion – as Borotba has done, despite meeting bureaucratic resistance, and continues to do.

The fact that the Donbas miners immediately came out on strike in protest at Poroshenko's attack on Donetsk shows the possibility of drawing workers into action behind the

antifascist resistance.⁵

A working class solution

In order to wage a successful struggle to establish an all-Ukrainian movement to overthrow the regime in Kiev, and defeat the attempts by either the Western or Russian imperialists to dominate and exploit the Ukrainian people, it is urgent to create a working class political leadership, a party. At the same time it is vital to build democratic councils of delegates in every locality, and self-defence forces which should include all nationalities and language groups and are pledged to defend them all against oppression and attack.

The spread of Russian nationalist slogans and insignia in the east is, in part, a spontaneous response to the virulent Russophobia of the West Ukrainian nationalist and fascist leaders like Yulia Tymoshenko, who, in an intercepted phone call on March 24, stated that it was "about time we grab our guns and go kill those damn katsaps," (an old derogatory Ukrainian word for Russians).⁶

But it is also the result of the power vacuum created by the fact that whilst the Party of the Regions and its oligarchs have lost all legitimacy, the Communist Party – despite standing up to the coup makers, and suffering severe repression and the threat of illegality from them – is still compromised by its support for Yanukovich. It seems moreover unwilling and unable to act as an alternative leadership within the resistance. In short it is a reformist party when a revolutionary party is needed.

Those like the comrades of Borotba, who openly identify themselves as revolutionary socialists have an opportunity to rally all the popular and democratic forces and appeal to workers and students across the entire country to come to the aid of their class brothers and sisters.

Despite Putin's collusion with Poroshenko, the resistance needs to continue to refuse to recognise the government in Kyiv and the elections,

which give it no right to rule. Only via democratically elected organs of working class power and local self-government will it be possible to hold free elections to a sovereign constituent assembly. The preconditions for this are a media freed from the grip of the oligarchs, a non-nationalist workers and peoples' militia, the rights of assembly, free speech, unions, parties, etc.

In the east and south socialists should be working for mass demonstrations and the launching of a general strike to immobilise the forces of state repression and demand their and the fascists' withdrawal. The captured arsenals should be opened and a mass militia of factory workers, miners and youth formed to convince the Kyiv troops not to fire – and forcefully convince the Right Sector bands that they will not repeat an Odessa in

Slavyansk, Kramatorsk, Lugansk or Kharkhov.

To direct a general strike and mass resistance, councils of delegates elected by and rooted in the factories and communities will need to be formed – much like the soviets of 1905 and 1917. In addition to resistance, they can address urgent social problems afflicting the population: poverty, unemployment, collapsing social services, low wages and rising prices.

The "reforms" the EU and its Central Bank, the US and the IMF will impose will match the misery and suffering inflicted on the country by the restoration of capitalism in the 1990s. Only this time there is a sizable – if fractious – fascist movement that could rapidly grow to mass proportion unless the working class can enter the field of political struggle.

By adopting social, economic and democratic aims which directly oppose EU/IMF austerity they can also attract and build unity with the Ukrainian-speaking and formerly Maidan-supporting left and youth who are likely to break from the neoliberal and fascist rulers.

Conclusion

The workers, peasants and youth of Ukraine face a terrible struggle to ward off the attacks of the hard-line nationalists of Fatherland, the respectable fascists of Svoboda and the open Nazis of the Right Sector.

To this must be added the fight to reject the imposition of a Greek style "economic reform". Last but not least is the threat of bloody ethnic conflict and further imperialist intervention whether from the West – which is acting as the aggressor – or from Russia.

The first step is to fight to halt the punitive expedition sent to the east of the country and to prevent the imposition of Kyiv rule.

Those on the left who say calls for armed resistance are risking bloodshed or "provoking" the regime should answer the simple question – why it is that the peaceful demonstrations that had taken place in the streets of Odessa for weeks have been shattered by Right Sector forces.

When law becomes lawlessness, resistance is necessary. Against the bullets and ballots of the counter-revolution, the workers, poor farmers and youth must look to their own defence, and fight arms in hand for the only possible solution: democratic elections to a sovereign constituent assembly, under the protection of the armed people, to determine the future legal, political and economic basis of the Ukrainian state.

In this struggle international socialists stand shoulder to shoulder with our sisters and brothers in Ukraine. We will not abandon them to semi-colonial slavery, either from the EU or Russia, nor to fascism.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 <http://rt.com/news/161772-eastern-ukraine-attack-deaths/>
- 2 <http://www.forbes.com/sites/melikkaylan/2014/04/16/why-cia-director-brennan-visited-kiev-in-ukraine-the-covert-war-has-begun/>
- 3 <http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/nachrichtendienst-usa/dutzende-agenten-von-cia-und-fbi-beraten-kiew-35807724.bild.html>
- 4 http://www.opednews.com/articles/Odessa-Provocateurs-Censo-by-Joe-Giambrone-Agent-Provocateur-Covert-Ops_Euromaidan_Evidence-140512-495.html
- 5 <http://rabkor.ru/news/2014/05/27/miners-strike-donbas>
- 6 <http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-tymoshenko-tape-language-russians/25308845.html>

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- Seamus Milne (The Guardian - invited)
- Richard Brenner (Solidarity with Antifascist Resistance in Ukraine)
- Alan Woods (Socialist Appeal)

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