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US puppet regime in Kiev escalates violence after fascist massacre in Odessa

By Alex Lantier

5 May 2014

Fighting escalated across eastern Ukraine over the weekend after Friday's massacre in Odessa, carried out by far-right supporters of the Western puppet regime in Kiev. Reports of the atrocity confirmed that it was an act of terror aimed at pro-Russian protesters and intended to inflame tensions throughout Ukraine and with Russia.

Some 1,000 well-armed football hooligans from Kharkiv and fascist thugs from the Right Sector militia attacked pro-Russian protesters, forced them into the city's trade union hall, then besieged the building, shooting at it with small arms and torching it with Molotov cocktails. In all, 42 people died and 170 were wounded, making it Kiev's single bloodiest act of repression against the protests. Odessa police allowed the assault to proceed, then jailed pro-Russian protesters who managed to survive both the flames and Right Sector thugs who attacked anyone they saw jumping from the building.

On Sunday, over 1,000 protesters in Odessa stormed police headquarters to force the release of the 67 detainees, shouting slogans such as "Odessa is a Russian city" and "One for all and all for

one.” Once inside the building, they took down the Ukrainian flag and negotiated with police to free the detainees.

Thousands of people also gathered over the weekend in front of the trade union building to lay flowers at the site and pay their respects to those who had died.

On Saturday, Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov declared that the regime’s military crackdown on pro-Russian protesters in the east would continue, saying, “We are not stopping.” He vowed that operations with “special units” would continue throughout eastern Ukraine.

The Odessa massacre is an indictment of the reactionary intervention of Washington and Berlin to install an unelected regime in Kiev in the fascist-led putsch of February 22. The neo-Nazi Right Sector was used by the Western imperialist powers as the shock troops for the coup.

Washington and Berlin relied on their corrupt media establishments to package the putsch as a popular revolution for democracy while they prepared to crush popular opposition by means of mass killings carried out by their ultra-right allies.

Responsibility for the atrocity lies first and foremost with the imperialist backers of the Kiev regime. The massacre itself was in all likelihood discussed and prepared with Western officials, as were the two waves of military assaults on eastern cities controlled by antigovernment rebels. The first crackdown came after a secret April 12-13 visit to Kiev by CIA Director John Brennan, the second followed an April 21-22 visit by US Vice President Joseph Biden.

New reports have emerged substantiating the close ties between US intelligence agencies and the Kiev regime. Citing sources in the German security services, *Bild am Sonntag* reported Sunday: “The Ukrainian transitional government in Kiev is advised by dozens of specialists of the CIA secret service and the FBI federal law enforcement agency.”

According to *Bild*, the CIA and FBI officials are working with security forces in Kiev to “help end the rebellion in the east of the country and build a functioning security infrastructure.”

Over the weekend, fighting mounted throughout the Donetsk region. Dozens of armored personnel carriers and 20 helicopters surrounded and attacked pro-Russian militias in Slavyansk on Friday, and fighting continued this weekend. Pro-Russian forces in Slavyansk reported 10 killed and 40 wounded in attacks by Right Sector forces, but told Russian media they continued to hold the city and were organizing offensives to recapture checkpoints seized by pro-Kiev forces.

In addition to attacking pro-Russian protesters in the port city of Mariupol, pro-Kiev units reportedly retook large sections of the industrial city of Kramatorsk, killing 6 people and leaving only the center of the city in the hands of pro-Russian forces. The Novokramatorsky and

Starokramatorsky machine-building plants, the Energomashseptsstal metallurgical plant, and the Kramatorsk instrument-making plant—employing 50,000 workers altogether—were all shut down.

The Odessa massacre epitomizes the recklessness and criminality of the Kiev regime and its Western backers. Having provoked a crisis by installing an unpopular regime through a putsch, they are unleashing mass killings calculated to goad the Kremlin into a disastrous war in Ukraine, while diverting social anger caused by Kiev's antiworker policies by stoking up a civil war.

The day before the Odessa massacre, the Kiev regime imposed a deeply unpopular 50 percent gas price hike dictated by the International Monetary Fund. This measure will bankrupt large numbers of Ukrainian working families.

Russian officials have stated that they do not plan to invade eastern Ukraine, but they have also said they will intervene militarily to halt mass killings of ethnic Russians and pro-Russian forces there. The day after the Odessa massacre, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov claimed the Kremlin was receiving "thousands" of calls from Ukraine asking for Russian protection.

"People are calling in despair, asking for help. The overwhelming majority demand Russian help," he said, adding that the Kiev regime and its backers are "up to the elbows in blood."

Yesterday, Peskov warned that the situation "is only getting worse." He added, "We believe we should have a common interpretation of what is happening in Ukraine, but unfortunately we do not see that Europe and the US are sane in their assessments."

While the Kremlin oligarchs are doubtless desperate to find a "common interpretation" and reach a deal with imperialism, no such deal is on offer. Driven by deepening class tensions at home and the intensifying geopolitical conflicts built up over decades of imperialist interventions in the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Balkans since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union, the NATO powers are seeking not peace, but confrontation.

They have seized on the Ukraine crisis to deploy troops, warships and fighter jets all along Russia's western border, sending soldiers to Poland, the Baltic States and Romania, and ships to the Black Sea.

The installation of a rabidly anti-Russian regime in Ukraine was itself part of a broader campaign to destabilize and dismember Russia, while placing America and Europe on a permanent war footing. With this extraordinarily reckless policy, which risks triggering a global war involving nuclear weapons, the financial aristocracies of the various imperialist powers aim to maintain their supremacy in world politics.

In a series of interviews with Germany's *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, NATO General Secretary Anders Fogh Rasmussen called the Ukraine crisis a "turning point" and demanded that NATO "rearm." The newspaper asked Rasmussen if the turning point was on the scale of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, or Washington's launching of a "war on terror" throughout the Middle East after the September 11 attacks.

Rasmussen replied in the affirmative: "In this first time since the end of World War II, a European country has violently taken over territory. We thought that what we saw in Crimea and are experiencing in east Ukraine belonged to the past. But it is happening in the 21st century! We must react!"

In fact, there was little violence during the Crimean referendum—and certainly nothing on the scale of the atrocities unleashed by NATO's fascist proxies. However, the claim that the Ukraine crisis is Europe's September 11 underscores that it will be exploited to launch vast military operations abroad and attacks on democratic rights at home.

In a remarkable article in the *Daily Beast*, the president emeritus of the US Council on Foreign Relations, Leslie Gelb, called for the Pentagon to massively arm the Kiev regime against Russia. The arms he mentioned were similar to those supplied to the Al Qaeda-linked forces mobilized by Washington against the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

"This military aid should go through American special operations forces and be in the nature of roadside bombs (IEDs), mortars, grenades, other explosives, and effective small arms. US training should be provided, if not in Ukraine itself, then in nearby countries," he said.

The provision of such weapons to groups like the Right Sector, which has fought alongside Chechen Islamist terrorist groups in Russia, would be a major step towards direct US military operations within Russia itself.