

Ukraine: Right Sector militias besiege Ukrainian parliament

By Stefan Steinberg
1 April 2014

Hundreds of militia members from the neo-fascist Right Sector organization have besieged the Ukrainian parliament on a daily basis since last Wednesday.

The Right Sector thugs are demanding the resignation of Interior Minister Arsen Avakov. They are dressed in military fatigues, with bulletproof vests and balaclavas, and carrying clubs, hunting knives and hatchets. The organization accuses Avakov of ordering the killing of Right Sector deputy leader Oleksandr Muzychko, nicknamed Sashko Bily. Muzychko was killed by police on March 25 under circumstances that remain unclear.

New evidence has also emerged indicating that Right Sector was behind the dozens of killings that took place in Independence Square on February 20. Photos taken on that date, and released by western journalists, feature the faces of snipers without masks. Confronted with the photos, the prosecutor general of Ukraine identified those shown as citizens of Ukraine but refused to name those involved.

The admission by the prosecutor general refutes claims from leading Ukrainian politicians that Russian forces were behind the sniper attacks.

On Sunday, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov gave an interview on Russian television in which he also declared that he had passed on evidence to western sources that the Right Sector was behind the sniper shootings. Last Thursday Moscow's UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin claimed that the US embassy in Kiev was involved in the killings.

February 20 was the most violent single day during the weeks of protests against the government of Viktor Yanukovich. Starting early in the morning, a number of snipers commenced firing at Ukrainian security forces from buildings in the centre of the city. The snipers then turned their weapons on demonstrators in the

square. In the resulting carnage, a total of 53 people were slain with shots to the head or neck or killed at close quarter. Hundreds were wounded.

The events on that day, accompanied by barrage of propaganda in the Ukrainian and international media asserting that pro-Russian forces supporting Yanukovich lay behind the shootings, played a key role in the radicalization of the protests in Kiev that led to the ousting of Yanukovich one day later.

The fresh evidence also confirms the version of events communicated by the Estonian Foreign Affairs Minister Urmas Paet in a telephone conversation with EU foreign affairs representative Catherine Ashton. In the call, which was leaked on YouTube, Paet declares that a doctor administering victims in the square during the shootings stated that the snipers were shooting at both police and the protesters, and were acting on the orders of the opposition.

The new information adds weight to the theory that the killing of Right Sector activist Oleksandr Muzychko by Ukrainian police in the city of Rivne a week ago was conducted with the approval of the Ukrainian state and aimed at eliminating someone who possessed knowledge of the leading role played by Right Sector in the anti-Yanukovich protests. The killing of Muzychko is also evidently directed at intimidating Right Sector members who have refused to lay down their weapons and integrate themselves into the freshly created Ukrainian National Guard.

Responsibility for the new National Guard rests with the chair of the Ukrainian national security service Andrey Parubiy, who played a leading role in the organization of the Maidan Self-Defense and is a co-founder of Svoboda, a contending fascistic organization in the anti-Yanukovich protests.

One day after the neo-Nazi activists of Right Sector

commenced their protests in front of the Ukrainian parliament, Ashton issued a statement condemning the “pressure by activists of the Right Sector who have surrounded the building of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.”

Ashton went on to condemn the “intimidation” of Right Sector which contravenes all “democratic principles and rule of law.”

Ashton's comments are dripping with hypocrisy. Leaders of the EU, US and Germany were quite prepared to encourage the activities of right-wing and ultra-right-wing thugs and politicians during the protests. At the end of February, Ashton personally met with the leaders of all of the main opposition parties, including the head of the fascist Svoboda party, Oleh Tyahnybok. At a separate meeting, Ashton embraced and kissed oligarch Yulia Tymoschenko, who just a week ago advocated the nuclear liquidation of all of the 8 million Russians living in Ukraine. Following the toppling of Yanukovich almost a quarter of the posts in the new Ukrainian cabinet were awarded to leading figures from Svoboda.

Already at the start of February, US Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland had stated that a new Ukrainian government should consult with the Svoboda leader four times a week. In his most recent comments to the press, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov declared that in his talks with US State Secretary John Kerry, the US also commented positively on Svoboda's alleged shift towards the political middle ground.

The extent of the EU's own readiness to work closely with ultra-right-wing militias in Kiev was confirmed by a report in the *Telegraph* newspaper yesterday. According to a report in the paper, the EU deleted a clause in two recent EU communiqués on Ukraine that called for “the dissolution of paramilitary structures”.

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