

Kiev deploys fascist militias against Donetsk

By Niles Williamson
12 August 2014

The Ukrainian government is funding and deploying gangs of fascist thugs as the spearhead of its operations in preparation for the large scale massacre of pro-Russia separatists and civilians in the city of Donetsk.

The Kiev government has unleashed these fascist gangs on the Ukrainian population with full support and backing of the US, Germany and other European powers. The neo-Nazi Azov battalion has played a key role in the encirclement of Donetsk and the capture and opening of rebel checkpoints. Last week the battalion was sent ahead of Ukraine's 51st Mechanized Brigade to attack and capture a pro-Russia separatist checkpoint in the western suburb of Marinka.

Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov issued a decree in April allowing for the creation of special units to counter the pro-Russian separatists, providing various fascist paramilitary groups the imprimatur of the state and allowing them to operate with impunity. In addition to the Azov battalion, other far-right militias have been organized to fight the separatists, including the Dnipro, Donbass, and Kharkiv battalions.

The Azov battalion, financed by billionaire oligarch and the appointed Governor of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, Ihor Kolomoyskyi, is commanded by Andriy Biletsky. Biletsky leads the neo-Nazi Social-National Assembly (SNA) and its paramilitary wing, the Patriots of Ukraine.

Biletsky's SNA, whose members make up a significant portion of the Azov battalion, supports Ukraine's re-acquisition of nuclear weapons and the introduction of racial purity laws, and openly boasts on its website about carrying out physical attacks on ethnic and social minorities. In one recent anti-Semitic outburst, Biletsky wrote: "The historic mission of our nation in this critical moment is to lead the White Races of the world in a final crusade for their survival. A crusade against the Semite-led *Untermenschen*."

The Azov battalion flies the neo-Nazi Wolfsangel on its banner, a symbol used by the 2nd SS Panzer Division and other Nazi forces during World War II. Members of the battalion are quite proud of their white supremacist and anti-Semitic ideology. The *Telegraph* quoted a fighter known as "Phantom," who said: "Personally, I'm a Nazi. I don't hate any other nationalities, but I believe each nation should have its own country. We have one idea: to liberate our land from terrorists."

Oleh Lyashko, a member of the Verkhovna Rada and leader of the Radical Party, is a leading member and key patron of the Azov battalion. In a video posted to Youtube, he interrogates Igor Kakidzyanov, the defense minister of the Donetsk People's Republic, who had been captured by the Azov Battalion. Lyashko, who is known for physically assaulting and intimidating his opponents, won 8 percent of the vote in Ukraine's 2014 presidential election.

Kolomoyskyi, Ukraine's second richest man and the cofounder of Privatbank, is known for funding far-right, pro-Western forces in the country. He was the main financier of the UDAR party of boxer and Maidan protest leader Vitali Klitschko. He supported the opposition politician Yulia Tymoshenko and purportedly funded Oleh Tyahnybok, the head of the fascist Svoboda Party. He reportedly provided \$10 million to create the Dnipro Battalion in April.

The Azov battalion has attracted fascist elements from countries outside of Ukraine, including from Sweden, Italy, France, Canada, and Russia. Mikael Skillt, one of the group's most prominent foreign fighters, was a member of the neo-Nazi Svenskarnas party in Sweden.

The mobilization of fascistic filth by the Ukrainian oligarchs in a war against the people of eastern Ukraine constitutes an indictment of all the Western backers of the right-wing Maidan protest movement that led to the

coming to power of the current regime in Kiev.

The WSWS warned from the outset about the danger posed by the involvement of these fascist organizations, in particular Svoboda and Right Sector, in the US- and German-backed coup that took place in February. “The reality is that, for the first time since 1945, an avowedly anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi party controls key levers of state power in a European capital, courtesy of US and European imperialism,” we wrote. “The unelected Ukrainian government, headed by US appointee Arseniy Yatsenyuk, includes no fewer than six ministers from the fascist Svoboda party.”

The WSWS’s warnings have been tragically confirmed by the murderous offensive these far-right forces have now unleashed.

Military operations in east Ukraine which have integrated these fascist elements have resulted in the killing and wounding of thousands and the displacement of hundreds of thousands from their homes. Mass graves containing the bodies of rebel fighters were uncovered in Slavyansk in July, after the city was captured by the Ukrainian armed forces and far-right wing militias.

Mark Galeotti, an expert on Russian and Ukrainian security affairs at New York University, warned of the growing influence of these fascist elements, which are being recruited around the world and trained by the Kiev regime. “The danger is that this is part of the building up of a toxic legacy for when the war ends,” he said. “And what do you do when the war is over and you get veterans of the Azov swaggering down your high street, and in your own lives?”

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