

Wave of assassinations in Ukraine targets critics of Kiev regime

By Alex Lantier
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In the lead-up to the May 9 celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany at the end of World War II, there has been an accelerating wave of political assassinations targeting critics of the Western-backed, far-right regime in Kiev.

Yesterday evening, a group calling itself the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA)—the name of a Ukrainian fascist militia that collaborated with Nazi forces in carrying out ethnic genocides of Jews and Poles during World War II—claimed responsibility for the killings. In a statement emailed to opposition legislators and political commentators, it also gave “anti-Ukrainian” persons 72 hours to leave the country or be killed if they stayed behind.

It pledged to carry out the “complete extermination” of enemies of Ukraine and a “merciless insurrectionary struggle against the anti-Ukrainian regime of traitors and Moscow toadies,” according to a report in *Der Spiegel*.

The killing spree began this week with the murder of journalist Sergey Sukhobok. On Wednesday evening, Oleg Kalashnykov was found dead in his home in Kiev. He was a former parliamentarian from the Party of Regions and a close ally of President Viktor Yanukovich, the pro-Russian politician ousted in a NATO-backed, fascist-led putsch in February of 2014 that installed the current regime in Kiev.

According to Interior Ministry advisor Anton Heraschenko, killers were waiting for Kalashnykov outside his residence and shot him when he returned.

Before his death, Kalashnykov indicated that he had received death threats over his call to commemorate May 9. He addressed a letter to his friends warning that “open genocide on dissent, death threats, and constant dirty insults” had become the “norm” since he publicly raised the issue. He reportedly added in the letter that

Ukraine was under Nazi occupation.

On Thursday, pro-Russian journalist Oles Buzyna was shot and killed near his house in Kiev by two unidentified masked gunmen firing from a car. Buzyna had edited the *Segodnya* newspaper, a pro-Russian publication financed by Ukraine’s richest oligarch, Rinat Akhmetov, a multi-billionaire who was also one of the leading sponsors of Yanukovich’s Party of the Regions. Also killed on Thursday was *Neteshinskiy Vestnik* editor Olga Moroz.

The killings were the latest in a spate of deaths of high-profile opponents of the Kiev regime. The victims have largely been political and media associates of the faction of the post-Soviet Ukrainian business oligarchy tied to Akhmetov, Yanukovich and the Kremlin oligarchy in Russia. Other deaths include:

* Aleksey Kolesnik, former chairman of the Kharkov regional government, found hanged on January 29;

* Stanislav Melnik, a Party of Regions member reportedly close to Akhmetov, found shot in the bathroom of his Kiev apartment on February 24;

* Sergey Valter, the mayor of Melitopol, found hanged before his trial on February 25, leaving no suicide note;

* Aleksandr Bordyuga, the deputy chief of Melitopol police, found dead the next day, in his garage;

* Mikhail Chechetov, a former member of the Party of Regions, who jumped from the window of his 17th floor apartment in Kiev on February 28, leaving a suicide note;

* Sergey Melnichuk, a prosecutor who fell from a 9th floor apartment in Odessa on March 14.

Russian and Ukrainian officials have traded accusations of responsibility for the killings. Speaking on a call-in television show, Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed his condolences to the

families of the victims and said of Buzyna's killing, "It is not the first political assassination, we have seen a series of such killings in Ukraine."

Officials in Kiev offered up dubious arguments to blame the killings on Russia. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko called the killings "a deliberate provocation which plays into the hands of our enemies, destabilizing the political situation in Ukraine."

In the meantime, officials and far-right parliamentarians in Kiev have openly endorsed and celebrated the murders. While lawmaker Borys Filatov rejoiced that "one more piece of sh*t" had been eliminated," Irina Farion, a lawmaker of the fascist Svoboda Party, attacked Buzyna as a "degenerate" and hoped that his "death will somehow neutralize the dirt this [expletive] has spilled... Such ones go to history's sewers."

Political responsibility for the killings rests with the imperialist powers that oversaw and backed the Kiev putsch. They have encouraged Kiev to wage a bloody civil war against pro-Russian regions of eastern Ukraine and covered up its reliance on fascistic, anti-Russian forces. In the resulting political atmosphere, opponents of the Kiev states can be murdered without investigation and with political impunity.

What is occurring in Ukraine is a warning to the international working class. With the support of Washington and its European allies, which are moving to train the neo-Nazi militias that make up much of the Ukrainian regime's National Guard, an ultra-right regime has emerged in a major European country.

With Ukraine's economy disintegrating and its population resisting Kiev's attempts to reinstate the draft to wage war against eastern Ukraine, Kiev is seeking to crush domestic dissent and relying ever more directly on the far right. Terrified that mass opposition might coalesce around the May 9 holiday, it has banned public discussion of communism. It also rehabilitated the UPA and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).

This is the culmination of a series of police state measures by the Kiev regime that have enjoyed the full support of its NATO backers. During last year's Ukrainian legislative elections, opposition candidates, including Pyotr Symonenko, the Stalinist Communist Party of Ukraine's (KPU) former presidential

candidate, ~~were~~ attacked by fascist ~~physically~~

Even before the murder of Buzyna, Kiev regime officials and sympathizers were demanding draconian punishments of journalists who oppose the regime. Last month, Ukrainian Minister of Information Policy Yuri Stets demanded that journalists in the breakaway eastern Ukrainian Donbass region serve prison terms of eight to 15 years.

In an account on Facebook of a speech he had given at Harvard University, pro-Kiev regime commentator and political analyst Yuri Romanenko boasted that he had argued for murdering pro-Russian journalists and summarized his arguments.

"The Ukrainian army must selectively and carefully eliminate Russian journalists covering the situation in Donbass. We need to direct Ukrainian army snipers to shoot people wearing PRESS helmets, making them priority targets," Romanenko wrote. "Since the media represent a destructive weapon and allow Russia to operate not only in the war zone but across Ukraine, taking out several dozen journalists in the conflict zone will reduce the quality of the picture presented in the Russian media and, therefore, reduce the effectiveness of their propaganda."

The murder of Kalashnykov, Buzyna and their political associates emerges directly from the foul political atmosphere produced by such ranting. It is an indictment of the NATO powers backing the regime in Ukraine and the illusions peddled by the Western media and corrupt pseudo-left groups that the right-wing protests on the Maidan and the February 2014 putsch were part of a democratic revolution.

While these forces insisted, without any proof, that the murder of Russian opposition politician Boris Nemtsov was a crime carried out by the Russian government, they are maintaining a hypocritical silence as the Kiev regime's internal opponents are gunned down in the streets.

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