

Political Repression Mounts in Run-up to Ukrainian Presidential Vote

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As the unelected Western-backed regime in Kiev prepares to hold presidential elections on May 25, right-wing and fascistic forces are attacking and murdering members of opposition parties. This underscores the entirely fraudulent character of the elections arranged by the imperialist powers in an attempt to give the government in Kiev a veneer of democratic legitimacy.

Information about the repression and murder of political opponents of the regime in Kiev is freely available, yet it is systematically covered up and ignored by the media, desperate to give the government set up by the US and European powers the fig leaf of democratic legitimacy.

The fascist militias who led the February 22 putsch are focusing their attacks on parties they see as left-wing. One group that has been targeted is the “Borotba” (“Struggle”) group, which has focused its agitation against fascistic forces in Ukraine. The group published a statement on its website drawing attention to the murder and intimidation of its members.

Andrew Brazhevsky, a member of Borotba was murdered during the May 2 massacre in Odessa. Since the Odessa massacre, according to the statement, the Kiev regime has seized the group’s office in Kharkov, threatened to arrest its Odessa mayoral candidate Alexey Albu, and searched the Kiev residence of Borotba member Andrew Manchuk.

“The central headquarters of Borotba calls on all activists and sympathizers to go underground if it is possible and not to appear at your residence, change your phone numbers, and take other precautions. All regional offices of Borotba must discuss methods of secret work,” the statement read.

The Kiev regime is also attacking members of the Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU), including the 32 KPU legislators in the national parliament. The KPU was refounded after the Stalinist bureaucracy restored capitalism in the USSR; it allied with pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. It won 13.2 percent of the vote in the 2012 legislative elections, three percent more than the fascist Svoboda party that now plays a key role in the Kiev regime.

On May 6, the legislature expelled the KPU legislative group from parliament in a closed-door parliamentary hearing. Legislator Oleksandr Bryhynets of the ruling Fatherland Party denounced the KPU for allegedly supporting pro-Russian forces that are now protesting the Kiev regime in eastern Ukraine, criticizing “separatist statements made by [KPU leader Peter] Symonenko.”

On May 16, Symonenko announced during a debate on public television that he was withdrawing his presidential candidacy to protest threats against his party since the Kiev putsch. He also criticized the crackdown on pro-Russian protesters in eastern Ukraine.

According to reports in international media, Symonenko was subsequently attacked by fascist gangs.

On Monday, the Kiev regime's acting president, Oleksandr Turchynov, again asked the Justice Ministry to evaluate evidence of "illegal activities" by the KPU and consider banning it. Turchynov said the KPU has backed pro-Russian fighters in eastern Ukraine, acting "to the detriment" of Ukraine's interests.

The repression of opposition parties in Ukraine is utterly reactionary. The WSWS has extensively documented elsewhere its political differences with Stalinist forces like the KPU. As for Borotba, it has worked with the Left Front in Russia, which includes liberal and pseudo-left groups like the Russian Socialist Movement, the Russian affiliate of the pseudo-left *International Viewpoint* magazine.

Despite these political differences, the WSWS condemns the fascist acts of murder, assault, and political intimidation perpetrated against them by the Western puppet regime in Kiev.

It is particularly significant that *International Viewpoint* (published by the United Secretariat and affiliated with the French New Anti-capitalist Party) continues its policy of glorifying the Maidan protests that led to the Kiev putsch, however, even as the fascists attack Borotba.

The NPA recently posted a piece by Zakhar Popovych on its English-language web site *International Viewpoint*, excusing the Kiev government's role in the Odessa massacre and claiming that "pro-Russian activists provoked violence" that day.

Popovych explicitly promoted the Kiev regime as democratic: "We cannot consider it a military junta. Not yet. Unfortunately, the junta is not in Kiev, but in Slavyansk [a center of pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine]. In Kiev, you can easily have demonstrations with red flags and distribute leaflets of any kind."

As the experience of Borotba and the KPU show, Popovych's statement on *International Viewpoint* is a blatant falsification, designed to cover for the right-wing regime in Kiev.

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