

Why are Nazi and Confederate flags on display in Kiev?

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When Kiev's City Hall was seized with guns and Molotov cocktails, one of the first acts of the Euromaidan street fighters was to unfurl a number of flags and insignia.

Prominent among the flags were swastikas, Iron Crosses, Nazi SS lightning bolts, the Celtic cross used by the Ku Klux Klan, and the Confederate "stars and bars" flag of slaveholders in the United States. (tinyurl.com/ltfu4vq)

This is no accident. The flag of the U.S. Southern slaveholders and the Klan cross are symbols understood around the world. They stand for racism, reaction, lynchings and mass terror, for keeping oppressive institutions intact and for beating down people of color and all those who struggle for a better world.

Racists from across Europe have traveled to Kiev. Wearing these symbols on their helmets and jackets, these thugs roamed Kiev and defaced the homes of Jews. They destroyed memorials to those who fought the Nazi invasion and occupation of the Ukraine in World War II. Offices of the Communist Party of the Ukraine were ransacked and destroyed, revolutionary books publicly burned in bonfires. Twenty-five statues of Lenin have been destroyed, requiring heavy equipment. (tinyurl.com/lfs734u) Amidst this offense of fascist vandalism, progressive people have mobilized to protect progressive centers, monuments and government buildings.

Symbols send a message. They are shorthand to millions of people for the aspirations and goals of social and political movements.

Naming a street, boulevard, school or holiday for the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Rosa Parks is recognition of the historic Civil Rights movement and Black liberation movement in the U.S. It resonates with all who stand against racism and oppression.

Certain symbols of revolution, resistance and liberation, such as the red flag, the red and black flag, the red star and the rainbow flag, are recognized around the world. The struggle to remove racist names of sports teams is well understood, as is the struggle to remove memorials to racists, slave owners and Confederates throughout the U.S. South.

Victoria Nuland, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian Affairs, publicly bragged that Washington has committed more than \$5 billion to these "democratic forces" in the Ukraine. (tinyurl.com/q577smd)

Nuland, Sen. John McCain and other U.S. and German politicians have publicly embraced known fascist thugs. Open U.S. support for the Ukrainian Fatherland Party, the Svoboda party and Right Sector is hardly a mistake. It is sign of how the U.S. and European Union plan to impose austerity, cutbacks and rule by Western banks.

The display of hated racist and fascist symbols should serve as a dire warning of what is at stake in the Ukraine today for all progressive people fighting for change, liberation and human solidarity. All capitalism can offer in its state of decay is more poverty, repression, fascism and war

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