

# Vitrenko's Progressive Socialists dramatise economic hardship, rights violations in Ukraine

24 August 2016 was the 25th anniversary of Ukraine's independence. There was little to celebrate, with civil war continuing sporadically in the eastern Donbas region, and economic austerity tightening around the population struggling to survive in the debt-ridden country.

It is a fitting moment to remember Ukraine, which has dropped out of the headlines. Just three years ago, all hell was about to break loose there. Dmytro Yarosh, leader of the fascist Right Sector paramilitary organisations who enjoyed the backing of former and future Washington- and London-tied Ukrainian security officials, had already delivered his "the times are approaching" speech, a forecast of the violent takeover Right Sector was about to spearhead.<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister Nikolai Azarov's government was preparing reports for President Victor Yanukovich, arguing that to proceed with an Association Agreement (AA) with the European Union would be a disaster for the Ukrainian economy. Yanukovich's 21 November 2013 announcement of its postponement would soon be the trigger for activation of the plans to which Yarosh had alluded in July 2013, culminating in the February 2014 coup, when elected President Yanukovich fled Kiev for his life.

Several recent investigations provide a sobering antidote

## On the responsibility of the Euromaidan, Banderite<sup>4</sup> regime for the tragedy of Ukraine

The "revolution of dignity", organised by the United States through politicians and oligarchs beholden to the USA, and financed by the USA through non-governmental organisations (NGOs), led to a coup d'état in our country and brought to power pro-Western, pro-NATO, nationalist and neo-Nazi groups.

With promises of mountains of gold in the country's economic development and basic social welfare for the citizens, the Ukrainian regime ratified the Agreement on Association with the EU and launched reforms for the Europeanisation of Ukraine. This was a cover for the real nature of the changes. The Progressive Socialists immediately determined that the heart of the reforms was deindustrialisation of the country, ethnocide and genocide against the population, and the colonisation of Ukraine by Western capital.

In the course of 2014-15, Ukraine lost 20 per cent of its GDP and 25 per cent of its industrial output. These declines are continuing in 2016. The national debt is now US\$65 billion, greater than 80 per cent of GDP. In effect, Ukraine is in a state of technical default.

During this time period 2 million jobs have been lost, the hryvnia has been devalued by more than 70 per cent, and utilities rates have skyrocketed, with natural gas rates rising ten-fold, heating costs 5.5 times over, and electricity rates 2.5 times. The population's income fell by two-thirds. Fifty-nine per cent of the population is now living in poverty. With the latest round of electricity rate hikes on 1 September and heating rate increases on 1 October, as high as 80 per cent of the population will be in poverty.

Despite these wild price and rate increases, wages and pensions were indexed at only 10 per cent. The minimum wage is currently US\$54 per month and the minimum pension is US\$42. The Ukrainian government has raised prices and rates to European levels, for the benefit of foreign and

to the Anglo-American-EU version of those events as a democratic upsurge. One is "The Far Right in Ukraine during the 'Euromaidan' and the War in Donbas" (online at [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu)), a paper by Prof. Ivan Katchanovski of the University of Ottawa, whose meticulous analysis of the unidentified snipers who were instrumental in the Kiev coup is unparalleled. Another Ukrainian-born scholar, Serhiy Kudelia of Baylor University (USA), has taken up the origins of the Donbas fighting—which he finds cannot be attributed to "Russian aggression". Kudelia summarised his research in "The Origins of the Donbas War from Below", an interview published 12 September. ([www.seansrussiablog.org](http://www.seansrussiablog.org)).

Inside Ukraine, Chairman of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine Natalia Vitrenko continues to campaign against the post-coup regime's brutal economic policies, about which she warned for years in advance.<sup>2</sup> Her party this year has been physically attacked by Right Sector toughs<sup>3</sup> and is now facing government attempts to deregister it. Dr Vitrenko's two statements below were adopted unanimously 15 September by the Presidium of the PSPU's Central Committee (translated from Russian; bold emphasis as in the original).

domestic oligarchs, while freezing wages and pensions at levels seen in the world's poorest countries. This is why the mortality rate in Ukraine disgracefully ranks first in Europe and second in the world.

Despite these problems, vital infrastructure is not being financed in our country. The lion's share of the budget in 2016, 113 billion hryvnias, has been spent on waging war. The regime has failed to prepare Ukraine for the winter, thus pre-programming general catastrophe.

Underpinning these policies is a zombifying **media policy**, the so-called "**lustration**" of officials and law enforcement personnel (to intimidate or replace them), **mass repression** of dissidents, the de facto **abolition of the presumption of innocence**, the **elimination of the state's monopoly on the use of force**, and **free rein for neo-Nazi guerrillas** and other groups that have privatised the right to call themselves patriotic and to impose mob law.

The Progressive Socialists believe that continuation of this reform policy will lead only to an ever greater tragedy for our people. This is a pathway to catastrophe and the disintegration of Ukraine. These reforms are against the Constitution. They violate the rights and freedoms of Ukrainian citizens under the Constitution and various Conventions, as well as generally accepted democratic standards.

**We hold President Poroshenko, the Parliament, and the national government fully responsible for the situation in the country.**

2. "Ukrainian Patriots Expose EU Support for Neo-Nazi Coup", *EIR*, 7 Mar. 2014; "Ukrainian Economist Natalia Vitrenko: Finding a Noble Path out of the Crisis", *EIR*, 6 Nov. 2009; Vitrenko, "Let us end this nightmare, and turn to building things", speech to CEC International Conference, March 2015.

3. "Neo-Nazi thugs attack Vitrenko's Kiev demonstration", *AAS*, 23 Mar. 2016.

4. "Banderite" refers to followers of Stepan Bandera (1909-59), leader of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists. The OUN espoused "integral nationalism" based on ethnic purity, following other early 20th-century fascist ideologies. In 1941 Bandera allied with Hitler's Nazis. Later the OUN conducted its own violent ethnic cleansing against Jews and Poles. Bandera and other OUN leaders were patronised by British and American intelligence agencies after the war.

1. Cited in "British Imperial Project in Ukraine: Violent Coup, Fascist Axioms, Neo-Nazis", *EIR*, 16 May 2014.

## The refusal of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine to register changes adopted in the documents of the 30th Congress of the PSPU is a cynical, politically motivated attack against this opposition party

In accordance with Article 15 of the Constitution of Ukraine, *“Public life in Ukraine is based on political, economic and ideological diversity”*, the PSPU from the moment of its founding, under the Constitution, has been situated in the country’s political spectrum as a leftist party with a socialist ideology.

In 1996 our party was registered at the Ministry of Justice, and for the entire 20 years of its activity has functioned as an opposition party, in complete accordance with the Constitution and laws of Ukraine. On the basis of its Program and Charter, the PSPU has not only engaged in public activity, but has taken part in parliamentary, presidential and local elections.

On the basis of its Program, Charter, and resolutions adopted by PSPU Congresses, the Progressive Socialists in 1998 passed the 4 per cent barrier in the parliamentary elections, and the PSPU became one of the few political parties, out of the more than two hundred of them in Ukraine, to enter Parliament. The PSPU participated in the parliamentary elections of 2002, 2006 and 2007.

On the basis of its Program, Charter, and resolutions of its Congresses, the PSPU in 1999 and 2004 nominated its leader, N.M. Vitrenko, as a candidate for the Presidency of the Ukraine. The Central Electoral Commission registered her as a candidate for the Ukrainian Presidency, and she took part in the presidential elections.

In 2006 and 2010 the Progressive Socialists also ran for positions in local self-government bodies. They were registered by the electoral commissions, and many of them were elected to local councils.

During the entire time period in question, no objections to the documents, Program, or Charter, or to the legitimacy of the activity of the party’s governing bodies or of PSPU Congresses were made by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine or the relevant agencies in the regions.

Thus the PSPU provided an opportunity to the citizens of our country, in accordance with Article 36 of the Constitution of Ukraine *“to unite for the purpose of exercising and defending their rights and freedoms, and satisfying their political, economic, social, cultural and other interests ...”*

Repeated checks by the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice found the Program and Charter of the PSPU to be in full compliance with the Law of Ukraine *“On Political Parties”*, in particular with Article 8 of that Law.

With the adoption of the Law of Ukraine *“On the condemnation of communist and national-socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and the prohibition of propaganda of their symbols”*, with the interim provisions of which all parties were required to reconcile their programs and charters, the PSPU was forced to hold an Extraordinary Congress. The 29th (Extraordinary) Congress of the PSPU took place on 8 September 2015 and adopted the required amendments to its party Program and Charter.

The Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, however, refused to record the documents of that Congress. Its *“Legal Opinion”* (signed 11 November 2015 by Director of the Department of State Registration S.V. Benedisyuk) raised several objections.

The Progressive Socialists deemed these objections to be illegitimate. In that connection, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the PSPU issued an open appeal to Minister of Justice of Ukraine P. Petrenko *“On the removal*

*of obstacles to the activity of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine”*, dated 30 January 2016. Nonetheless, we began a dialogue with the Ministry of Justice, clarifying the content of all of its objections and ascertaining its wishes in connection with amendments to the Law of Ukraine *“On Political parties”*, whereupon we fully implemented a report-and-election campaign within the party, culminating on 25 June 2016 in the 30th Congress of the PSPU.

At the Congress we amended the Program and Charter of the PSPU, working in great detail and meticulously, in full accordance with the Law of Ukraine *“On Political Parties”* and with the regulatory documents used by the Ministry of Justice. Within the strict deadline, we submitted all the necessary documents to the Ministry for approval.

We were deeply disturbed by the response received from the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine (dated 30 August 2016, signed by Director of the Department of State Registration and Notary V.M. Haiduk). We were disturbed not only by the refusal of state registration of changes in the PSPU’s information, but also by the content of the objections stated against the submitted documents.

Cynical lies, unfounded objections, and invented shortcomings in our documents cannot be explained merely by lack of professionalism on the part of those doing the check. What we see in this is, first of all, implementation of a political order to fight against a Ukrainian left opposition party; and, secondly, trampling of constitutional rights—both the party members’ right of association, and the PSPU’s right to take part in elections, as well as the rights of voters to express support for our party.

One of the arguments for rejection was that Alexander Alexeyevich Popovich, a member of the CC PSPU, is supposedly simultaneously a member of the United Centre party and a member of the Chyhyrsky District Council of that party in Cherkassy Region. This is an absolute lie. Our party member A.A. Popovich lives in the city of Chernovtsy and has nothing to do with United Centre or Cherkassy. The Ministry of Justice made this finding despite having been provided complete passport data and identification code for A. Popovich.

Of the remaining 13 objections to the PSPU Charter, five of them bear no relationship to the cited points of the Charter. For example, objections are made to Paragraph 4.8.9 of the PSPU Charter, stating that it covers party organisations, whereas Paragraph 4.8.9 of our Charter covers the powers of the Presidium of the CC PSPU.

The remaining eight objections are primitive and illegitimate. For example, Paragraph 1.3 of the PSPU Charter states the full name and the abbreviation of our party’s name, but the Ministry of Justice objects that our Charter lacks a designated name for our party.

We note that the objections stated by the Ministry of Justice in August 2016 are completely different from the objections stated in November 2015, although the amendments to Article 8 of the Law of Ukraine *“On Political Parties”* were adopted before 8 October 2015, i.e., before the Ministry of Justice drafted its objections to the 29th Congress of the PSPU.

**On the basis of what is set forth above, the Presidium of the CC PSPU states that the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine is carrying out political repressions in the country, including by impeding the activity of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine.**