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Ukraine

Ukraine's government shaken by corruption

- IV Online magazine - 2023 - IV577 - February 2023 -

Publication date: Thursday 2 February 2023

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Faced with the savage invasion of Ukraine by Putin, the Ukrainian people have risen up en masse, both armed and unarmed. The Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky has succeeded in embodying this resistance, consolidating great popularity. However, his government remains primarily in the service of the ruling classes, marked by its neoliberal logic and allies. The terrible consequences of the war have made the privileges and rapacious behaviour of members of the ruling classes all the more unbearable.

Before the war, the country was already highly corrupt. It was ranked 122nd out of 180 on the corruption perception index of the NGO Transparency International. While martial law enacted at the beginning of the war stifled the right to strike - without blocking all protest movements - a free press remained, allowing scandals such as rampant corruption to be exposed.

Lavish lifestyles and privileges

For example, in late January the investigative online media *Nashi Groshi* (Our Money) revealed that contracts signed by the defence ministry shamefully overcharged for the purchase of food for the army, leading to the dismissal of a deputy defence minister. In the following days, the deputy minister of infrastructure was dismissed, arrested in the act of taking bribes for the purchase of equipment, including electrical generators. In the wake of this, other senior officials such as the deputy prosecutor general and the governors of the regions of Dnipro, Kherson, Kyiv, Soumy and Zaporijjia, and even the deputy head of the president's office, who is very close to Zelensky, were dismissed for their lavish lifestyles and privileged behaviour - such as holidays in the sun abroad - which were totally out of keeping with the hardships suffered by their compatriots.

These issues are obviously very sensitive both in terms of public opinion and the maintenance of cohesion in the resistance to the Russian invasion, but also from the point of view of the Western allies who are providing massive aid to the Ukrainian state in this war. They promote the interests of capitalists and the private sector against the social rights of the workers and the population, but they know that direct and visible corruption is not acceptable for the credibility of their model.

Solidarity with the social movements

In a very difficult situation, the trade union and social movements were sometimes able to express their anger and their own aspirations. For example, the miners of the Novovolynsk No. 9 mine in the west of the country mobilized in August and succeeded in having the appointment of a new, corrupt director invalidated. An environmental movement is taking action against an oligarch's plans to build a ski resort in protected mountains; students in Lviv and other universities are refusing to allow them to be closed down to be used as refugee centres, seeing the shutdown of higher education as an enemy victory. Unions are also mobilizing for the payment of wage arrears and against the dismissal of workers volunteering for the front. All these social movements need our solidarity as well as our solidarity against Putin's war.

For his part, the Russian head of state has a very special attitude to corruption. When he is not instrumentalizing it, or even inventing it to eliminate opponents, he legalizes it! For example, on 30 December he signed a decree

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exempting all civil servants who served in the war in Ukraine from having to declare their income, and made it legal to receive "gifts" on this occasion. And the Chamber of Deputies is also due to vote on a law exempting all elected officials from providing tax returns. As for freedom of the press, let's not even mention it!

2 February 2023

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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