

Statement on Ukraine

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1. The political crisis in Ukraine began in November 2013 when the President Yanukovich decided, under strong Russian pressure, not to sign the free trade association with the EU. The Party of Regions had been running an official campaign in favour of such an agreement for some months. It occurred in the context of a deep social and debt crisis that put the country under pressure from the IMF. The way the decision was taken, by the personal power of the president, increased popular fear that a new integration of Ukraine within a great Russian regional project was being decided and could increase the repressive oligarchic and presidential trend of the regime evident since 2010.

Therefore, within the crisis there were not two clear-cut camps or programmes opposing each other but rather splits and hesitations within the oligarchs and elites, even within the Party of Regions itself. And – despite cultural, social and political differences between historical regions of the country – the emergence of the masses as an independent factor expressing “indignation” and distrust in political parties – whether expressed through direct involvement in the Maidan movement (more in the West and centre) or through passivity (dominating in the Eastern Russian-speaking part of the country).

A week of bloody violence imposed the protesters’ view for the immediate departure of the president Yanukovich. He has not been overthrown by a “coup d’Etat”: his growing unpopularity became absolute rejection after the horror of some 80 deaths, victims of his snipers shooting demonstrators with real bullets. After months of hesitation of the president between repression and dialogue, this led to his profound isolation within his own camp – the Parliament voted for him to be dismissed while a part of the police and probably the army declared in Kiev, as in other regions, that they were “on the side of the people”, and his flight to Russia was stopped in Donetsk, in the very heart of his bastion.

2. This movement from the beginning presented a combination of revolutionary (democratic, anti-elitist, self-organized) and reactionary elements – the overall outcome was and remains a question of political and social struggle. Those features are also deeply rooted in the current character of the present post-soviet Ukrainian society (atomized, without any class identity, with degradation of education and hegemony of reactionary nationalist ideas in society, combined with a legitimate commitment to national independence and the dramatic legacy of Stalinism).

We support the popular discontent and aspiration to live freely and decently, in a democratic state and to get rid of an oligarchic and criminal regime, expressed in the so-called Euro Maidan movement and throughout the country – while we are convinced that the EU is unable to satisfy such aspirations, and we say so.

We support the right of the Ukrainian people as a whole to decide and control international agreements signed – or broken – on its behalf, be it with Russia or with the EU, with full

transparency about their political and socio-economic effects.

We denounce all the institutions, international or national political forces, whatever their labels, which limit the full and free determination of these choices by the population, either by economic and financial diktats, by draconian laws and security forces, or by physical aggression that prevents full and pluralist expression of choices and disagreements. From that point of view we denounce equally the far right currents and the security forces, which often share the same reactionary, anti-semitic and violently exclusive nationalist ideology.

While the main organized political forces are, for now, from the right and the far right, we support the social and political forces which are trying to build a left opposition within that movement. In so doing, they have refused to stay outside the movement and to identify the whole movement with its far-right component. Such an autonomous orientation has meant a difficult confrontation with fascist groups and a focus against 25 years of privatisations suppressing social rights whatever political party was in power since independence.

3. Since the end of the Yanukovich regime, the mass movement itself has no progressive programme on democratic, national and social issues and lacks a workers' movement (independent trade union and political force implanted among the workers) - while being full of hopes for real democratic political and social changes. Whatever the result of the next elections, popular disillusionment will follow. And whatever the agreements with the EU, the new ruling parties will continue social attacks with possible internal confrontation leading to the disintegration of the country. The alternative left has to respond to these popular hopes and illusions through its own proposals on social, linguistic, democratic issues against parties of the right of different kinds.

We hope that the Ukrainian population will find its own forms of self-organized expression of its concrete demands and distrust of the dominant parties, in all the regions of the country.

IC of the FI, February 25, 2014
