

Ukrainian Prime Minister Yatsenyuk resigns amid deepening political crisis

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Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk announced his resignation on Sunday. The Ukrainian Parliament, Verkhovna Rada, will vote to accept his resignation on Tuesday, April 12. He will be replaced as prime minister by the parliament's chairman Volodymyr Groysman, a member of the Petro Poroshenko Bloc.

In a country where major political scandals and crises occur frequently, Yatsenyuk leaves government as one of Ukraine's most hated politicians.

In recent months, numerous opinion polls had estimated Yatsenyuk's approval rating and his People's Front party in the 1 to 8 percent range, making him one of the most unpopular political figures in Europe. According to one poll, nearly 70 percent of respondents favored his resignation.

Yatsenyuk first became prime minister in late February 2014, by vote of the Verkhovna Rada following the US-backed, fascist-led coup that forced former President Viktor Yanukovich to flee the country. The Verkhovna Rada re-appointed him as prime minister in November 2014 following snap parliamentary elections.

As the head of government since the Maidan coup, Yatsenyuk bears certain responsibility for the catastrophic collapse of the Ukrainian economy, the impoverishment of Ukraine's population, and the incitement of a civil war in eastern Ukraine which has likely cost tens of thousands of lives and caused over a million people to flee the country.

Yatsenyuk's government presided over a 6.8 percent GDP fall in 2014 and a 12.0 percent drop in 2015, according to World Bank figures. Real wages fell by 10 percent in 2015.

Yatsenyuk's resignation comes after a period of several months during which he and the Cabinet of

Ministers had been subject to increasingly insistent demands to resign from their rivals in the Ukrainian political establishment as well as behind the scenes pressure from the government's US handlers.

In advance of a no-confidence vote in February, US officials had initially argued that Yatsenyuk should remain in office. However, according to the website Zn.ua, during President Petro Poroshenko's visit to the United States on March 30 and April 1, Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and Vice President Joseph Biden had demanded the formation of a new government and set a deadline of April 12. That such dictates could be made and followed so precisely underscores the complete subservience of Kiev to Washington.

Since the November 2014 parliamentary election, Yatsenyuk's People's Front and the Petro Poroshenko Bloc had been coalition partners in the Verkhovna Rada, along with Fatherland, the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko, and Self Reliance. By February 2016, however, all of the other parties of this erstwhile coalition had turned against People's Front.

Without a parliamentary majority, the government's ability to enact neo-liberal "reforms" demanded by Ukraine's creditors, most prominently the International Monetary Fund, is impaired. Thus, by leaving the coalition, Yatsenyuk's opponents made him a convenient scapegoat for the country's disastrous economic condition while preparing to continue the same political course that caused that condition.

The pressure which caused Yatsenyuk to resign has been of an entirely cynical and hypocritical character. He has been driven out by his former allies, far-right careerists who seek to gain personally from the collapse of popular support for Yatsenyuk. No improvement in any aspect of Ukrainian social life can be expected

from the thugs and charlatans who are currently preparing to gain from his exit.

Official criticism of Yatsenyuk has come from the far right. That is, he is not criticized for perpetrating an aggressive war against the people of eastern Ukraine, for carrying out brutal austerity policies or a sharp drop in trade with Russia that had caused the collapse of the country's economy. Rather, Yatsenyuk's opponents in the Ukrainian political establishment have accused him of failing to carry out "reforms" and abetting government corruption.

The fact that the movement against Yatsenyuk had nothing to do with a fight against corruption was underscored in the initial revelations of the Panama Papers. According to the leaked documents, President Poroshenko himself had created a secret offshore company in the British Virgin Islands for the purpose of tax evasion in August 2014, two months after being inaugurated as president.

In addition to the implementation of disastrous austerity measures and civil war policies and his deeply servile relationship with the United States government, Yatsenyuk will be remembered for his characteristically foul and reactionary public statements.

Particularly notable was his comment to German television network ARD on January 8, 2015, stating, "Russian aggression in Ukraine is an attack on the world order and on order in Europe. We still remember well the Soviet invasion of Ukraine and Germany." German authorities were later compelled to distance themselves from this statement and affirm their acknowledgment of German responsibility for World War II.

In his resignation announcement on Sunday, despite his deep unpopularity, Yatsenyuk indicated his intent to remain active politically: "From this day on, I see my tasks as broader than the powers of head of government: new election laws, constitutional reform, judicial reform, coalition control over the policies of the new government, international support for Ukraine, and membership in the European Union and NATO are part of my program."



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