

Latvia - Quo Vadis?

Derogation of Human Rights and Freedom of Speech

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*The situation with **human rights and the freedom of speech** in the Baltic states worsens day by day. The persecution of the opposition began long before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, though. During the pandemic people had been arrested for "the distribution of gossip". However, since the events of February 24 2022, the situation has worsened dramatically. In Latvia over 20 people have been arrested and over two hundred people have been fined and interrogated for expressing their views. The similar situation is noticeable in other Baltic States.*

After more than 30 years of brainwashing by the ruling class it is clear now that the majority of the population, especially youth, is politically unmotivated. Around 15% of the population do not have the right to vote – they hold an "Alien Passport" because they do not have any ancestors that lived in Latvia before 1940. Media freedom is non-existent and government propaganda is everywhere. Therefore the result of the last election is again a victory of pro-US forces.

The attack on working class rights is still ongoing. Recently, the government has decreased the period and the amount of unemployment benefits. Trade unions are very weak to the extent of non-existent. Their leaders are making dirty deals with the government behind the backs of teachers, medical personnel, policemen, etc. The only real activities by trade unions are the distribution of travel and recreation vouchers and the organisation of festive events.

Failing to address social and economic problems of yet another capitalist crisis, the so-called leaders are proposing the only playing card – nationalism, which has led to extreme russophobia. Despite around 40% of the Russian-speaking population, after years of bans and restrictions in public use, there is now a plan to ban it from school programmes altogether.

The communist symbols are banned. There is a law "banning the glorification of communist

past” and “denying the Soviet occupation”. Several people are being tried for this.

Latvia now spends more percentage of GDP to help the Ukrainian military than any other country in the world. At the same time, there is a deterioration of health and education systems. The ongoing privatisation and liberalisation lead to more payable services and rising prices for the basic needs. More and more people cannot afford different kinds of necessary medical treatment. Others have to wait for months or even years to be treated. The lack of medical staff, teachers, firemen, etc is becoming alarming. The population is experiencing deteriorating living conditions. The demographic situation is the worst in 100 years.

The Latvian government has started the massive demolition of monuments related to WW2. **The biggest memorial to the fighters against nazism in the Baltic States was demolished, despite the fact that polls have shown a negative attitude towards the demolition.** Furthermore, the monument was described by the national architect society as “of historical and cultural importance”. Some of the demolished monuments were actually erected to the people killed by Nazis and to the local partisans. They have even demolished the cemetery of soldiers – just scraped by an excavator. The Day of Victory over Nazism is now officially a Commemoration to the victims of the Genocide against Ukrainian people while the government officials commemorate the war victims at the memorial to Waffen SS legionnaires.

The corrupt government sells national sovereignty in order to serve foreign interests, forcing the country to join the conflicting imperialistic camp and making its own populations hostage to a potential military conflict. In order to protect this policy from protests of workers and the public in general, they enforce control mechanisms and restrictions of freedom of speech and expression without any hesitation.

The detainment of people without proper trial and medical help, and with no lawyer provided must be stopped immediately.

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