

# Political Repression and Resistance in ‘Democratic Europe’

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Global Research, April 09, 2015  
[New Eastern Outlook](#)

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

*For all its rhetoric about “liberal democracy” and “freedom,” Europe has quietly become a hotbed of political repression. While some groups are allowed to express themselves openly – from fascists that praise Nazi collaborators of the World War II period, to feminist and gay rights groups – there is one particular brand of free speech that is simply not allowed: anti-war protest.*

Masking the repression of anti-war, anti-NATO, and anti-imperialist groups behind defamatory rhetoric and demonization, the mass media in Europe attempts to portray such activists as little more than “pro-Kremlin” puppets whose strings are secretly being pulled by the wicked villains of Moscow. Rather than engaging with the critical issues raised by such groups, the political and media establishment instead targets them for repression.

Police and state repression, often of a violent nature, has been carried out under the auspices of “fighting terrorists” in Ukraine all throughout the conflict that erupted in early 2014. So too has such repression reared its ugly head in Lithuania in recent months, as anti-imperialist leftist organizers have been singled out for political persecution by the vehemently Russophobic, Euro-sycophant government. Additionally, Estonia has continued its systematic oppression of its Russian-speaking population which has been forced to exist as second class citizens, with dubious legal protections to say the least.

But these forces of repression have been unable to stem the growing tide of anti-war, anti-NATO sentiment throughout Eastern Europe, as protests against the US-NATO agenda in Ukraine and beyond gather steam. From moderate Czech Republic to belligerent Poland, countless citizens are beginning to organize themselves into true anti-imperialist movements demanding peace in Europe, and rejecting the insanity of aggression directed at Russia.

## **Domestic Repression in the New Europe**

The US-backed coup in Ukraine, and the subsequent civil war it touched off, has rocked Europe, polarizing various political factions, drawing stark dividing lines in a number of countries. In Ukraine, there is a mountain of evidence documenting continued political persecution of anything that can be branded as “pro-Russian” or “anti-Ukrainian”. While these terms are utterly devoid of any real meaning or substance, they serve as political scarlet letters meant to justify any sort of vile repression of forces deemed to be a threat to the US puppet government in Kiev.

The infamous May 2 [massacre](#) of leftist activists at the Trade Unions House in Odessa – the single most heinous act of repression since the war began – marked a major turning point in

the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. That shocking display of barbarism by the fascist thugs of Right Sector and their soccer hooligan co-conspirators, coupled with the impunity provided them by the police and the Ukrainian government, served as a message to the world, and especially to other peace activists and assorted leftists, that the so called “New Ukraine” was neither democratic nor respectful of the rule of law. Naturally, the western media [whitewashed the massacre](#), conveniently referring to it as “clashes” in an attempt to both obscure the fact that the fascists presented to western audiences as “nationalists” and “patriots” were little more than Nazi thugs, and to present the illusion of equivalence between the two sides. This was no clash, it was a one-sided slaughter.

Activists from the leftist organization Borotba (Struggle) have been systematically persecuted in Ukraine. Svetlana Licht, an organizer and activist with Borotba [explained](#):

In late April, the police attempted an illegal search of the Kharkov Borotba headquarters. Before that, there was a wave of arrests of those who took part in the second capture of the Kharkov Regional State Administration building — more than 100 people were arrested. Because of the repression, activities of Kharkovites began to fall sharply. Then came the May 2 Odessa... Fewer people came out onto the streets. On May 8 — just before Victory Day [anniversary of the Soviet victory over German fascism in World War II] — the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) illegally seized our headquarters, destroyed everything and took all the newspapers, leaflets, flags, sound-amplifying equipment and generator.

Such repression goes hand in hand with the attacks upon the Communist Party and its grassroots organizers all throughout Ukraine, as the pro-fascist government and police systematically [attacked](#), and ultimately [dissolved](#) the entire Party which had been traditionally one of the most popular parties in the country. So Ukraine has, for all intents and purposes, entirely purged any significant political opposition to the Kiev government’s vicious war against Donetsk and Lugansk. Moreover, the fascists and their state-sanctioned collaborators have effectively intimidated and otherwise discouraged anti-war, anti-fascist activists all throughout Ukraine.

This same trend has now shown itself in Lithuania. In recent weeks, the government of the Social Democratic Party led by PM Algirdas Butkevičius, has engaged in a heavy-handed crackdown against a number of anti-war activists and groups that have been organizing against the US-EU-NATO drive for confrontation with Russia. [According](#) to Kristoferis Voiška, one of the organizers of the movement:

If anyone in Lithuania does not support the general line...that Russia is to be blamed for all our problems, that we are supposed to prepare for war, then you are immediately labeled a so-called “Russian agent”...In reality, being patriots of Lithuania, we believe that any war between Russia and the West would be, firstly, potentially suicidal because of nuclear conflict, secondly...it would destroy the middle and eastern European region, and thirdly...the only ones who would benefit would be the big businesses of the military-industrial complex.

Voiška explains the political climate in Lithuania, which should be seen as a parallel to that of the other Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia, not to mention Poland. The Russophobic hysteria, fed by US-NATO propaganda, has reached a fever pitch in recent months as the

anti-war movement has gained momentum. Voiška explains that:

In Lithuania we see the slow but quite active development of an anti-war, anti-imperialist movement of...different groups speaking about the social and economic problems of our country, who are opposing the diktats coming from Washington and from Brussels...we support the neutrality of our country, non-intervention, secession from NATO and from the EU...for this we are labeled "Russian agents"...the political regime here [are resorting to] more extreme methods to suppress any kind of dissent or alternative opinion.

Indeed, Voiška's claim is [supported](#) by the recent arrests of a number of prominent anti-war, anti-imperialist organizers from the National Workers movement and the political party the Socialist People's Front; the activists' homes were searched, with books, computers, video equipment, phones, and other items confiscated. The allegations made by the authorities include the spurious charge of participation in a "conspiracy to create anti-constitutional groups" in order to "illegally change the established constitutional order in favor of Russia," which the authorities allege is financing these movements.

What is self-evident is the fact that, just as with Borotba in Ukraine, these courageous anti-imperialist activists are being intimidated, and having their human and political rights violated in a witch-hunt designed to suppress any dissent against the belligerent posture of the government vis-à-vis Russia. Is this the "Democratic Europe" whose praises were sung at Maidan and in the halls of power in Brussels, Berlin, and Washington?

Additionally, one must consider the continued oppression of the ethnic Russian population of neighboring Estonia. These Russian speakers, who were left out in the cold with the collapse of the Soviet Union and establishment of the modern Estonia, have been systematically marginalized by the Estonian government. While forsaking the heroism of the Red Army which liberated Estonia (and the rest of Europe) from the specter of Nazism, the government has equally shirked its responsibility to provide for its Russian-speaking minority.

In the city of Narva along the Russian border, the discriminatory practices of the Estonian government are quite apparent. Even the vehemently anti-Russian Globe and Mail [reported](#):

Here in Estonia, as well as neighbouring Latvia, which has a similarly sized Russian-speaking population, ethnic Russians are convinced (with some justification)...that they are discriminated against in their countries. They vote en masse for pro-Russian political parties... When the USSR fell, residents of Narva continued to define themselves as Russians. The textile industry collapsed, leading to nostalgia for the "good old days" of the Soviet Union... Estonia's Russians say it's their own government, rather than the one in Moscow, that's causing the friction in society. Oleg Belov... has lived in Estonia all his life, but still carries only a grey 'Alien's Passport.'... 'It's an occupier's passport. That's how they see us, as occupiers,' he says bitterly.

While the assorted fascist groups that glorify Nazi collaboration, and look with scorn and utter contempt on all things Russian and Soviet, are given a free pass in "Democratic Europe," groups such as Estonia's Russian speakers remain utterly marginalized, victims of systematic and institutional repression. Such is the case throughout the former Soviet bloc, whether in Donetsk and Lugansk, or in Transnistria, or in Narva. And who will protect these groups? Who will speak for them when no one in the European establishment wants to view

them as anything other than “Russian agents?”

## **The Rising Tide of Resistance**

Despite attempts to suppress all forms of dissent against the Washington-London-Brussels consensus, there is an unmistakable spirit of protest emerging in various corners of Europe.

In late March 2015, hundreds of protesters [assembled](#) in the center of Prague to demonstrate their disgust with, and resistance to, a US military parade through the streets of the Czech capital. With signs that read ‘Tanks? No Thanks!’ and ‘Stop US Army,’ the demonstrators unequivocally made their opposition to US-NATO militarism abundantly clear. The assembled activists denounced ‘[Operation Dragoon Ride](#),’ a US army convoy that was greeted with boos and jeers in a number of stops throughout Eastern Europe. While the Czech Republic has figured centrally in Washington’s designs with regard to the so called missile shield for Europe, as well as part of NATO’s grand strategy on the continent, it seems that a significant segment of the population has had enough.

So too is this the case in what is undoubtedly the most vehemently anti-Russian country in Europe: Poland. While Warsaw continues to agitate for further belligerence toward Russia, thousands of Polish citizens are standing up to demand an end to the madness. A major demonstration against Poland’s participation in the training and arming of Ukrainian Nazi fighters is scheduled for April 10, with at least 5,000 demonstrators expected. As protest organizer Mlodzi Malopolscy Patrioci [stated](#), *“This protest wants to show our opinion about our relationship with Ukraine, real relationship, not the relationship like the Polish government is feeling...We still remember about the Volyn in 1943 and what Ukrainian ‘soldiers’ did to our people. We don’t want conflicts with Russia.”*

At the national level, there is also a growing sentiment that the bellicose policies and rhetoric must stop. In Hungary, the right wing government of PM Viktor Orban has resisted pressure from European allies to cut ties with Moscow, and instead has chosen to further expand the mutually beneficial relations that his country enjoys with Russia, especially in the arena of [energy imports](#). In Greece, the left wing SYRIZA government has taken a much more positive view of its relations with Russia than the European establishment would like, going so far as to [reject the sanctions](#) imposed by the West, though the tone of their statements indicated an attempt to soften the language of the rejection.

Taken in total, it is clear that Europe is far from unified over the anti-Russian policy pursued by the US-EU-NATO establishment. Moreover, thousands upon thousands of Europeans have begun to make their dissatisfaction known, clearly rejecting the drive to war being promoted from the halls of power in the West. They talk of regaining their sovereignty, standing up to the US-EU-NATO imperial system, and protecting the rights of marginalized Russian speakers. Whether in Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland, or the Czech Republic, the sentiment is the same: We don’t want NATO’s war!

But those interested in peace must do more than reject war. We must demand an end to the repression of our brothers and sisters in Ukraine and Lithuania. We must unite and, if necessary, peacefully bring down those quisling governments marching their people to the brink of war. We must, like our grandparents before us, destroy the fascist menace, and all those who seek to use it for their own advantage.

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