

# “Take the Toys Away From the Boys”

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

*“Take the toys away from the boys.”*

*These words still resonate with me. They were written large on a poster a woman was carrying on the famous New York one million peace march of 1982. My 13-year-old daughter Muriel and I were among the marchers. And I have been on so many peace marches since then- and the alarm rings as high as ever again...*

War feels very personal to me. I was born in Former Yugoslavia in 1938 and still feel in my very bones the crashing of bombs into our Belgrade apartment building in 1941: Is it a wonder that when NATO bombed Belgrade in 1999, I felt like I was bombing myself? I am a hyphenated American who has struggled to remain a member of the world community.

Another identity I represent is being a woman, and therefore a feminist. However, the recent article by [Nour Jaghama and Grace Siegelman in Global Research](#) about the horrors in Gaza causes me to re-examine my automatic identification of “woman” and “feminist.” I am a “woman” - and having given birth to two children, is that why I resonate so profoundly to the authors’ statement of “at its heart a commitment to family and community care”?

On the other hand, I am a “feminist” because I did experience some discrimination in my life and career. Still, despite recurring setbacks, women have gained leadership positions in civil and political affairs. Some names illustrate this: **Maggie Thatcher** was British Prime Minister; **Madeleine Albright and Hillary Clinton** headed the US State Department - and Hillary Clinton came close to winning the US presidency while **Kamala Harris** is currently our Vice President and possibly next president; **Angela Merkel** was Chancellor of Germany; **Ursula von der Leyen** is the president of the European Commission; **Christine Lagarde** is president of the European Central Bank; **Janet Yellen** is US Secretary of the Treasury; **Annalena Baerbock** is Federal Minister for Foreign affairs in Germany; **Marie Yovanovitch** was ambassador to Ukraine; **Sanna Marin** was until recently the president of Finland while **Elina Valtonen** is Finland’s foreign minister.

But if we can acknowledge these achievements as “feminist,” how “liberating” were they for “women” in the rest of the world? Have the wars of Korea, Congo, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Ethiopia - and the succession of “interventions” in the Caribbean and Central and South America - not been consistently presented as “wars of liberation”? Again, as the authors put it, this “rescue narrative” is a mask for militarism, imperialism and neo-colonialism. Michel Chossudovsky’s article on Afghanistan clearly [illustrates the “before” and “after” condition for Afghani women](#).

It so happens that my dad was born in Russia, and my mom in Ukraine - and my professional life was focused on the language and history of the region. Thus, I would like to echo the outcry of Nour Jaghama and Grace Siegelman about Palestine by an outcry about

Ukraine.

I almost feel compelled to apologize for insisting on a bit of history: to the readers of Global Research because most of them likely know it – and to everyone else because they likely don't want to know it.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Ukraine was just another state of the Soviet Union, the way Texas is a state of the United States. And like Ukraine, Texas did have historical identity issues: initially part of Mexico, and even briefly independent, it was also at odds with the North during the Civil War. Ukraine, however, has a longer and more complicated history as a battleground between contending powers. Over the centuries it suffered multiple invasions from conquerors from the East, and then its territory was divided between Catholic Poland and Orthodox Russia. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, like elsewhere in Europe, Ukraine developed a nationalist movement, which during World War II opted for an alliance with Nazi Germany to achieve its goals – among them the extermination of Poles, Jews, and Communists.

But the Soviet Union prevailed against the Germans, and Ukrainian nationalists became exiles in the US and Canada, where they proved useful to the Cold War. Underground rebellions on Ukrainian territory were supported by the CIA until, finally, the disintegration of the Soviet Union was instrumental in creating an independent Ukrainian state in 1991.



But how “independent” is Ukraine? There was the Orange Revolution of 2003: President Yushchenko’s wife was a Ukrainian-American who had worked for the State Department. There was the urgent invitation, in 2008, for Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO. And Victoria Nuland’s poisoned cookies on the square of Maidan in 2014 were yet another gift of American democracy.

**But why were the “liberators” of Ukraine wearing swastikas on their uniforms?** Why did they demolish World War II memorials to erect a statue to their Nazi hero **Stepan Bandera**? Why did they ban the use of the Russian language? Why did they burn an Orthodox church in Lvov/Lviv on Easter Sunday in 2023?

Is it surprising that a large swath of the population resisted these changes? There were agreements negotiated by **Angela Merkel, Francois Hollande, and Vladimir Putin** in 2015 in the Belarus capital of Minsk to accommodate their demands. **But the Donbass region was mercilessly shelled since 2014, resulting in the death of 14,000 people. This escalated the conflict into a civil war.**

But as noted earlier, the Ukrainian civil war had been triggered by geopolitical interests all along. When the final takeover by the government of Kiev of the Donbass region – prepared all along by NATO training, intelligence, and arms supplies – was about to begin in 2022, Russian troops initiated the “Special Operation” in Ukraine.

But what the Russians call a “Special Operation” to rescue the people of Donbass has been defined by Western leaders as the brutal invasion of a sovereign country. But why is the United States so interested in supporting the “independence” and now the terribly costly war – costly to the Ukrainians in blood and to the Americans in treasure? Does it have something to do with the fact that Ukraine happens to be, geographically, a key territory in the Belt and Road Project announced by China? A project intent on creating a massive land venue for international commerce to compete with commerce dominated by the United States?



Is this why the name of **Vladimir Putin**, who has been responsible for the Russian pushback against American plans, soon joined the gallery of earlier villains like Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran, Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia, Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Muammar Qadhafi of Libya, Bashar al-Assad of Syria... and then there is Xi Jinping of China... Does this mean that old-fashioned colonial power struggles over resources and cheap labor is reasserting itself after the “pause” of the Cold War?

The Soviet Union, having suffered, unlike the United States, the devastation of its territory and the loss of 27 million people during World War II, turned out to be easy enough to pull apart. And for some years while undergoing neoliberal shock therapy, the Russian Federation was “but a gas station with nukes.” But it pulled itself together, and Ukraine, the perennial borderland, finds itself stuck in a proxy war between two nuke superpowered contestants.

So here we are, back in the 80s, but where is the one-million New York peace march? Instead, my peacenik friends are waving the Ukrainian flag while my feminist friends talk about the prospect, at long last, of a woman becoming president... Americans never suffered war on their soil. We have 800+ bases around the world, where we train proxy fighters to die for us. We are good at the long-distance magic of bombs and rockets and drones – and why not, nukes. We set the world on fire, but the stench of burning bodies – because they are not OUR children – does not phase us. Instead, we chew our popcorn watching the staged performance of our elections as another familiar football or wrestling match.

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**Galina De Roeck** was born in Bihac, Bosnia, of Russian émigré parents and grew up in Belgrade, Germany, Morocco and Australia. She received her PhD in Comparative Literature at City University of New York. She taught at a number of institutions of higher learning and published in the field literary criticism. Dr. De Roeck has lectured on international affairs in the U.S. and participated in peace delegations to Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Middle-East. Her memoir, *The Door in the Nightmare: from the Russian Revolution to Pax Americana* will be published by PRAV Publishing in May of 2021.

She is a regular contributor to Global Research.

Featured image: Army Lt. Gen. Antonio Aguto Jr., head of the First U.S. Army headquarters at Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois, visits the 77th Sustainment Brigade, during an exercise at Fort McCoy, Wis., on Aug. 10, 2022. Aguto is regarded as a top candidate to lead a new Army headquarters in Germany that will coordinate security assistance for Ukraine. (Alex J. Elliot/U.S. Army)

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