

'Imperialists use same tactics' in Ukraine, Venezuela

written by Greg Butterfield

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Mass march in Odessa on April 10, 2014. In front with megaphone is Borotba

coordinator Alexey Albu; directly behind him, right, are Andrei Brazhevsky (holding banner) and Vlad Wojciechowski (in grey sweater). Photo: Borotba

In February 2014, a U.S.-backed coup overthrew the elected government of Ukraine and installed a far-right regime representing Western imperialist interests, local oligarchs and neo-Nazis. The new government launched a war against the rebellious Donbass mining region, which has cost at least 13,000 lives so far.

Struggle-La Lucha spoke with Alexey Albu, a former deputy of the Odessa Regional Council and a leader of the revolutionary Marxist organization [Borotba \(Struggle\)](#), which is outlawed in today's Ukraine. Albu survived the fascist massacre at the Odessa House of Trade Unions on May 2, 2014, and was forced to leave Ukraine. From outside the areas controlled by the current government in Kiev, he has been working for the country's liberation since then.

Struggle-La Lucha: There's been enormous repression inside Ukraine against opponents of the regime. Even journalists and activists who sided with Euromaidan in 2014 have been targeted in some cases. How many political prisoners does Kiev currently hold and what is their situation? What is the status of the underground resistance inside Ukraine today?

Alexey Albu: Unfortunately, we do not have objective figures on how many oppositionists are in prison today. But in 2015 their number was about 1,500, of whom about 700 were members of the Donbass militia. That is, in fact, about 700 were prisoners of war, and 800 were political prisoners.

But today the numbers are much less. Some make a deal with the prosecutors and get out. Some are released because the government cannot prove their guilt, because there is not even circumstantial evidence. Some are exchanged [for captured Ukrainian troops in the Donbass republics]. So today, unfortunately, we do not have an objective picture.

We try to help communist political prisoners, as well as other anti-fascists, whom we know. We collect money, transfer it to human rights organizations and groups that buy nonprohibited necessities and send them to the prisoners.

The armed resistance that our comrades from the Ukrainian Red Army (URA) began and that was picked up by other autonomous groups was a fiasco. All the attacks against the Nazis, the offices of ultraright volunteers and their sponsors did not inflict serious harm.

Our comrades from the URA have concluded that such attacks must be supported by political work. For example, if we manage to create an alternative authority, we must be able to protect it. But no matter how much we attack the buildings of the junta, nothing will change until we can offer society an alternative. For this reason, our comrades from the URA militant groups decided to suspend such activities.

It is also worth noting that it is very costly, and the results were negative: not only was there insufficient strength to overthrow the regime, but comrades were imprisoned. It's good that we managed to pull out our heroes, like [Vlad Wojciechowski](#) and others whose names I cannot mention right now. But some of our comrades are still in prison.

SLL: NATO military forces and Western intelligence agencies have been active in training and advising the Ukrainian military, including neo-Nazi battalions, in the war against the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR). Do you see NATO offering membership to Ukraine?

AA: This option is being worked on by the top leadership of NATO. But there are some reasons why, in my opinion, this will not happen in the near future.

I will try to explain how we see it from afar: Every month, the capitalist crisis that began in 2008 increasingly exacerbates the contradictions between the imperialist

center and the various subsystems or secondary economic blocs — European, Russian, pan-Arab, Chinese, Indian — and also the so-called “economic periphery.”

It's obvious to everyone that the conflict in Ukraine is the result of an economic “attack” against the Russian economic bloc, of which Ukraine has been a part for centuries. Historically, it was one state and economic strings stretched from Ukrainian turbine factories to Russian aircraft factories, from Russian ammonia producers to Ukrainian fertilizer plants, and so on.

That is, the rupture of all economic relations with Ukraine is a serious blow to the economy of Russia, and therefore to the economies of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and other countries which are closely connected, with a single center located in Moscow.

So, returning to the question of Ukraine joining NATO: The imperialists' main goal at the beginning of the civil war in Ukraine was successfully fulfilled: the economic ties were broken. Nazis blocked the railways, blocked checkpoints on the border with Russia, blew up power lines and so on.

If we consider a potential military conflict between Russia and its allies and the NATO bloc, then of course, NATO needs Ukraine. But why start a new military conflict if you can just incite Ukraine against Russia? If you can just provoke that conflict and supply Ukraine with weapons?

I understand perfectly well that Vladimir Putin is a bourgeois politician, but fortunately, he has enough wisdom not to succumb to all the provocations that the Ukrainian side is trying to organize.

SLL: In the past year there were some big personnel changes in the leadership of the Donbass republics. The Minsk negotiations have been stalled for a long time. There have been big buildups of armaments by Ukraine in the war zone, but so far

no new military offensive. How do you view the situation inside the republics today? What is the situation of the workers and of the left movement?



Alexey Albu, Greg Butterfield and Aytac Ünsal at the International Antifascist Conference in Krasnodon, Lugansk People's Republic, May 2016. Today, Ünsal is a political prisoner of the NATO Erdogan regime in Turkey.

AA: New DPR and LPR heads Denis Pushilin and Leonid Pasechnik are people from the same cohort as former leaders Igor Plotnitsky and Alexander Zakharchenko. Therefore, nothing has changed.

Regarding the Minsk negotiations, yes, many items in the accords were not implemented. Ukraine hasn't released the political prisoners, hasn't implemented the constitutional reforms, and so on. But they are partially implemented: after all, the parties do not go on the offensive, do not use heavy artillery, do not occupy

inhabited settlements controlled by their opponents.

The result of the Minsk agreements is a decrease in the amount of blood spilled. And this is definitely good. The armed forces of the people's republics have become more serious and organized. But of course, people are tired of being stuck between Ukraine and Russia. People want the conflict to end as soon as possible.

The situation inside the republics is quite difficult. But in some ways, it is much better than in Ukraine. Utilities, housing, food and clothing are cheaper than in Ukraine. However, due to the economic blockade, many enterprises have been shut down, and it is quite difficult to find a decent job. Many people have to live on savings, and many serve in the military. Therefore, the position of the workers is quite difficult. But these are objective reasons related to the war.

Speaking of the left movement, it's worth noting that those left-wing groups that existed in 2014-2015 have almost ceased to exist. Political life is crushed by the burden of war. Public initiatives do not have the support of the young republics, since the new governments are afraid of the emergence of opposition groups within the DPR and LPR.

However, speaking for Borotba, I can say that in four years we have not encountered any obstacles to our activities. We freely hold our meetings, lay flowers at the monument to Lenin, hold commemorative actions dedicated to the massacre of the Odessa anti-fascists on May 2 and other events.

SLL: What similarities do you see between what happened in Ukraine five years ago and the current situation in Venezuela and other Latin American countries targeted by the U.S.?

AA: Analyzing the situation in Venezuela, we see that the same funders that worked in Ukraine paid for the buildup of the crisis: Freedom House, USAID [the U.S.

Agency for International Development], the International Republican Institute, the National Endowment for Democracy and others.

We see that the imperialists use the same tactics: they create organizations to influence the electoral process, the same as in Ukraine. In Ukraine, it was the Committee of Voters of Ukraine, and in Venezuela it's Foro Penal Venezolano. For riots in the streets and attacks on "undesirables," mobile fighting units are created, consisting of so-called civil society activists. In Ukraine, this was the right-wing organization AutoMaidan, in Venezuela the Guarimberos. And so on. ...

Of course, there are differences due to local specifics. In Ukraine, the right-liberal opposition in 2013 was united, and in Venezuela, the opposition is strongly split. In Ukraine, there was no real strong national leader — President Viktor Yanukovych turned out to be a wet rag. In Venezuela, there is a strong leader — Nicolás Maduro.

Therefore, there is a chance that the imperialist forces will break their fangs.

SLL: Activity by neo-Nazi groups in Europe and the U.S. has surged in the years since the Ukrainian coup. How do you view the relationship between what happened in Ukraine and the spread of neo-fascist movements in the West?

AA: The right-wing international has long been a fait accompli. The far right coordinates very well on matters of anti-communism and other political issues.

Today, the ultraright in Ukraine is very deeply integrated into the official security agencies: the police, the Security Services of Ukraine (SBU), the army, the prosecutor's office. Bandit formations control the illegal arms trade. Moreover, neo-Nazi groups control part of the border between Ukraine and the European Union in the Carpathians.

Therefore, there is a very serious threat, which I always tell our European friends about, that in the event of social upheaval, the neo-Nazis of Ukraine can very quickly

arm their associates from Europe with the help of smuggling. It's really dangerous.

SLL: What are the prospects for an anti-fascist revival in Ukraine and the former Soviet countries?

AA: The prospects are excellent. The main thing is to bring our ideas to the masses and to organize well.

SLL: How can working people and the left in the U.S. aid the struggle of people in Ukraine and Donbass?

AA: We are very grateful to you for your help in our struggle. For us, the dissemination of information about the crimes of the neo-Nazis and about our struggle to an English-speaking audience is invaluable.

Your translations have managed to open the eyes of thousands of people in the U.S. and in Europe. We remember well how you greeted [Ukrainian President Petro] Poroshenko with the flags of Borotba in the U.S., and how you assisted the relatives of our comrade Andrey Brazhevsky who was killed on May 2. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again, all of you!

In conclusion, I want to say that the world and all of us are on the verge of tremendous changes, and it is very important that we have the opportunity to influence them.

I want to wish you success in your struggle. The stronger you are, the stronger we will be. And vice versa: the stronger we are, the stronger you will be.

Long live proletarian solidarity! Long live a new world without exploitation! Forward to socialism!

Part 1: [5 years after Ukraine coup, 'Building communist organization is first priority'](#)

