

‘Solidarity with Donbass has to be built into all our work’

written by Greg Butterfield
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Victory Day parade in Donetsk, capital of the Donetsk People's Republic, May 9.
Photo: DNR Live

Presentation at the online International Anti-Fascist Forum hosted by the Communist Party of the Donetsk People's Republic on May 8, 2021. The annual event included participants from the Donetsk People's Republic, Russia, Belarus, Lithuania, Italy, Spain, Croatia, Serbia, the Philippines, Britain and the U.S.

Comrades, it's an honor to be with you this weekend, when workers around the world celebrate the Soviet Union's great victory over fascism in 1945.

I want to speak about the information war surrounding Donbass. In all the Western countries, especially in the United States, there is a nearly complete blockade of truthful information about the war in Donbass.

Most of the time, the capitalist media ignore Donbass completely. When they do talk about it — as they have recently — they turn the situation completely upside down. The aggressors, Ukraine and the United States, are portrayed as innocent victims. The targeted countries, the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics and Russia, are portrayed as the aggressors.

We have had a clear demonstration of how it works this week. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Kiev May 6 and laid flowers at a memorial to Ukrainian troops who, he falsely claimed, were killed fighting Russia to defend Ukrainian democracy.

Blinken and the media made no mention that just a week before, neo-Nazis marched openly in the streets of Kiev to honor the World War II SS Galicia Division, or that those same groups are armed by NATO countries to commit war crimes daily against civilians in Donbass.

Nor did Blinken mention the 7th anniversary of the slaughter of more than 40 anti-

fascists in Odessa, which has gone unpunished, or how the Western powers dismissed the testimony of Odessa survivors at a special U.N. hearing May 5.

The U.S. ruling class has worked methodically for the last three decades to encircle and eventually dismember Russia through the expansion of NATO. This plan has continued under both Democratic and Republican regimes in Washington, though each has its own approach.

Donald Trump used a carrot-and-stick method. He legalized direct sales of offensive weapons to Ukraine and ended U.S. participation in nuclear arms agreements with Russia, while also trying to coax Moscow away from its alliances with Iran, Syria and Venezuela. His approach failed to achieve the desired results, and Joe Biden has returned to the hardline militarist policy of his predecessors.

As the global capitalist crisis deepens, the U.S. becomes ever more prone to lash out. The more sober Ukrainian generals and politicians might realize they cannot win a war. But they are not the ones who will ultimately decide. They are merely tools. Washington will not hesitate to sacrifice the lives of Ukrainian troops or people in Donbass to advance its interests.

As anti-imperialists, anti-fascists and revolutionary opponents of war, we have to have a long-term vision, just as our enemies do. That means solidarity with the people of Donbass has to be built into all of our work among the people in our countries, as we work toward our ultimate goal of socialist revolution to overthrow imperialism.

On April 10 in New York, we organized a protest after the Ukrainian drone killing of 5-year-old Vladik Shikhov in Donetsk. It was a small gathering. But it caught the imagination of groups in many countries. The following weekend, protests were held in several European cities, and a statement we initiated was signed and translated by groups in many countries. This shows the possibility for joint work across borders

to expand our reach and influence.

The increased media attention to the situation in Donbass, although mostly negative, also provides us with new opportunities to present an alternative message. Last weekend we held a memorial for the victims of Odessa. New people joined us, and we had good conversations with several people who had questions about the situation in Ukraine, Russia and Donbass.

There is little consciousness about the struggle in Donbass, and many misconceptions about it, among leftists in the U.S. and other Western countries. One idea we are considering to address this problem is to hold educational events that bring together different solidarity movements that aren't well known. We could begin by sharing information and building solidarity among these movements. If those of us who champion the struggle in Donbass, Haiti and Korea, for example, can build solidarity and joint work, then perhaps we can all expand the scope of our outreach.

I know that everyone who is participating today feels the Donbass struggle deeply in their bones. We have kept the anti-fascist banner flying through difficult times, often in isolation, inspired by the resistance of the people in Donetsk and Lugansk. Now let's look toward building outward, toward new alliances at home and abroad, to strengthen our solidarity with the people of Donbass and the workers of the world.

We thank the Communist Party of the Donetsk People's Republic for hosting this event, and its publication, Vperyod (Forward), for providing honest information about the situation in Donbass that we can share with workers here.

