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Mariupol & Donetsk: a tale of two cities

By Greg Butterfield

In December 2014, a young Russian communist named Andrey Sokolov was visiting the newly formed Donetsk People's Republic. He went to meet a friend who'd been driven into exile from Ukraine after the U.S.-backed far-right coup d'état in Kiev earlier that year.

Sokolov took a wrong turn and wound up at a checkpoint controlled by the Ukrainian Armed Forces. He was arrested and "disappeared" for nearly two years in the occupied city of Mariupol.

Sokolov was held for a long time in a bare cell in a secret prison. He was denied contact with the outside world, given little food, was tortured, and witnessed Ukrainian militants using cutouts of leaders from the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics for target practice.

Eventually supporters were able to track Sokolov down with help from locals. As reports seeped out about his case, and those of others "disappeared" by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, Sokolov was offered a plea deal, which he accepted, and a court ordered him released with time served.

Upon his release, though, he was kidnapped by goons in plainclothes and held captive in another location.

Ukraine's government eventually felt obliged to allow a visit to Mariupol by human-rights investigators from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Sokolov's captors debated what to do with him. He was probably closer to death at that moment than he had ever been during his ordeal.



People in Donetsk bring flowers to the site where 20 people were killed by a Ukrainian missile attack.

Eventually the order came down from above. There was too much attention to Sokolov's case to dispose of him permanently. Instead he was put in a taxi headed to the Russian border and given bus fare to Moscow. That was in the autumn of 2016 – almost two years after his fatal wrong turn.

Mariupol and the Big Lie

Mariupol has been in the news a lot recently. It's been a major hotspot in the joint military operation by the Donbass People's Republics and Russia to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine.

The U.S. and other Western media mostly ignored Mariupol for the eight years it was under fascist occupation. They couldn't have cared less for the workers and political activists like Sokolov who had to live under the thumb of the Azov Battalion and Ukrainian security forces.

Now that the Azov nazis are being routed by the Donetsk People's Militia and Russian Armed Forces, newspapers, TV networks and social media are full of stories claiming "Russian war crimes" in Mariupol.

First there was a story about Russia attacking a maternity hospital. But as Russia's First Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyansky said at a

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PHOTOS: DONETSK NEWS AGENCY

The Emergency Campaign to STOP THE WAR LIES

By Solidarity with Donbass & Antifascists in Ukraine

The Emergency Campaign to Stop the War Lies is a grassroots effort to stop the lies and tell the truth about the U.S./NATO war on Russia and Donbass. It will kick off on March 20, the anniversary of the Iraq War, and culminate on the weekend of April 2 to 4, the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination.

March 20 to 27 Local outreach to communities, students and workers, including protests and picket lines, distributions of flyers and posters, street corner speak-outs, tabling in busy areas and banner drops.

March 27 "Expose the Lies" National Webinar featuring Alexey Albu from Borotba in Luhansk, Katya A. from Aurora Women's group in Donetsk, and Kristina Melnikova, a journalist who has covered Ukraine's war on Donbass for several years. Hear directly from the independent Donbass republics under fire from Ukraine and NATO.

Weekend of Sat., April 2 to Mon., April 4 – National protests on the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King, who stood against war and racism.

Join us in demanding:

- No U.S./NATO war on Russia and Donbass!
- Jobs, education, housing, and healthcare, not war!
- Disband NATO, AFRICOM & AUKUS!
- Close Guantanamo and all U.S. military bases – bring the troops home!
- Feed the people, not the Pentagon! No to U.S. sanctions!

Initiated by Solidarity with Donbass & Antifascists in Ukraine and Socialist Unity Party / Partido de Socialismo Unido

Partial list of endorsers: John Parker, Socialist Unity Party candidate for U.S. Senate in California; Youth Against War & Racism; Mujeres En Lucha / Women in Struggle; Struggle-La Lucha newspaper; Communist Workers League; Workers Voice Socialist Movement; LA Black and Brown Unity – Los Angeles; Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice – Los Angeles; Peoples Power Assembly – Baltimore; Odessa Solidarity Campaign; Unemployed Workers Union; Anti-War West Sydney; Rhode Island Against White Nationalism – Providence.

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- Get our children to school on time!
- Fund the movement for racial justice and equality, not the police!
- Fund, fund, fund the police - really Biden?
- Texas: Hands off trans youth!
- Gay communist on Russia, fascism and USSR's legacy
- Food, gas, rents soaring - never mind, Congress hikes U.S./NATO war dollars
- Their oligarchs and ours
- Ukrainian authorities unleash witch hunt
- 'We must remain on the correct side of history'
- Call for solidarity with Ukrainian leftists under repression
- Ukrainians granted Temporary Protected Status by the U.S., the country that displaced them
- How socialist Cuba helped Ukrainian children
- Who's the war criminal?
- Stop NATO! No war on Russia and Donbass
- The U.S. government lied about Iraq - it's lying about Russia & Ukraine
- El gobierno de EUA mintió sobre Irak y miente sobre Rusia y Ucrania
- Puerto Rico: Éxitos, en las calles
- ¿Nueva era en Puerto Rico? De miseria y lucha



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