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‘Wall of lies built up by West will collapse under its own weight’

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Greg Butterfield speaks
at ‘Stop the War Lies’
action in New York, April
2. SLL photo: Sharon
Black

The following interview with Struggle-La Lucha co-editor Greg Butterfield originally appeared in the Russian-language web publication Ukraina.ru on April 8.

Ukraina: How do people in the United States react to anything related to Russia and to Russians in the U.S.? Are you aware of any cases of discrimination against Russians in the U.S.?

Greg Butterfield: It must be said first of all that the war propaganda against Russia is overwhelming and monolithic in the U.S. mass media, from government officials and all but the most radical public organizations. There is intense censorship on Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms. In this sense, the climate is similar to the months after the Sept. 11, 2001, attack in New York, when any dissenting voices were not permitted.

There have been awful attacks on Russians and Russian-speakers in the past weeks. People have been harassed on the street and threatened for speaking Russian. Russian shops and restaurants have been vandalized and received bomb threats. In one particularly ridiculous case, a college in Florida with a library named for Karl Marx changed its name because of Marx's association with the former Soviet Union!

This is a common occurrence in the U.S. whenever the government decides to demonize another country. For example, when the Trump administration blamed China for COVID-19, Asian people (not just Chinese) were attacked, and this is still going on today.

Of course it is only a small minority of the U.S. population that engages in such antisocial behavior. Most workers are simply overwhelmed by the propaganda barrage and don't have the information or context to stand up against it. That's where the leftist movement has to act, to present true information and organize people to stand up to the official lies.

On April 2 we organized the first anti-U.S., anti-NATO protest held in New York City since the Russian-Donbass joint operation in Ukraine began. Unfortunately, many anti-war and left groups have surrendered to the anti-Russia propaganda or are hiding their heads. But those of us who rallied in the busy Herald Square shopping area found that there was great interest among the people to hear a different point of view on the conflict, and great skepticism about the Biden administration's rationale for antagonizing Russia. To our surprise, there was hardly any hostility at all.

I think this bodes well. The wall of lies built up by the West is going to collapse under its own weight, but we need to push it.

Ukraina: The entire U.S. leadership unanimously claims that "Putin is to blame" for skyrocketing fuel prices. Do people in the U.S. mostly believe this accusation? What do people say about it?

GB: A key component of the Western propaganda war is to make people blame Russia whenever they go to the gas pump or the grocery store and have to pay inflated prices. But most people are not buying this story so far. Inflation was already high in the U.S. before the latest conflict began.

When we talk to workers about the crisis, we always point out that the Big Oil companies and Wall Street banks are the beneficiaries of high fuel prices. They are not under any orders to raise prices to consumers. Also, the government has the power to enforce price controls, but chooses not too.

People understand that the oil companies have been a major force behind all recent U.S. wars around the world, like the devastation of Iraq, so pointing this out is a strong argument.

Ukraina: How do Americans generally feel about sanctions against Russia?

GB: People generally don't understand that sanctions affect common people in Russia and the many, many other countries sanctioned by the U.S. In the media it is only reported that there are consequences for Russian oligarchs, like seizing yachts or vacation homes in the West. In our work we emphasize that sanctions are an act of war, and what the consequences are for working people in the sanctioned countries - on jobs, healthcare, housing and so on.

I've noted a good trend by young people on social media here - many are asking if Russian oligarchs are sanctioned, why shouldn't we sanction U.S. oligarchs like Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk who rip off their workers?

Ukraina: Google removed the website of the Russian Ministry of Defense and other state websites of the Russian government from its search results. How do you think Russia should respond to such "blows" in the information war?

GB: Generally I think it is better for Russia's government to take the high road on this issue, since the flow of factual information is already being so badly inhibited by the West. On the other hand, I completely understand Moscow's decision to designate Facebook/Meta as a terrorist organization after it explicitly allowed Azov Nazi propaganda and calls for killing Russians.

It is not only Russian and other foreign sites that are affected by Google censorship. The publication that I work on, Struggle-La Lucha, has also recently been removed from the Google News aggregator's search results because of our anti-imperialist content.

I think it is urgent for Russia, the Donbass republics, China, Venezuela and other ostracized countries to work to jointly develop new social media platforms and alternatives in conjunction with people's movements here and worldwide.

Ukraina: What can you say about U.S. President Joe Biden's call for regime change

in Russia?

GB: It was outrageous, but not surprising. The tactic of demonizing the leadership of an “enemy” country has been an effective one for the U.S. rulers over many decades. Think of how they demonized Saddam Hussein, Slobodan Milosevic, Mummar Gaddahfi, Bashar Assad and now Vladimir Putin. Each of them has been declared the “new Hitler” by the Western media at one time.

It’s unfortunate and somewhat vexing for us that President Putin continues to court the U.S. far-right by demeaning the Black Lives Matter movement and transgender people when speaking to U.S. media. The ultra-right groups in the U.S. that support this view are akin to the Ukrainian neo-Nazis and in some cases even have direct relations with them, send supporters to fight alongside them! It would be much better for the Russian government to appeal to the multinational working class and people’s movements of the left.

But regardless, for us the issue is not the politics expressed by the leaders of countries under attack from imperialism, but the fact that they are resisting and objectively taking positive action in the global struggle, as Russia is doing today in conjunction with the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics.

Ukraina: How do you assess the prospects for denazification of Ukraine (the struggle against Nazi ideology there)?

GB: So far the progress appears very good on the denazification front. Certainly the liberation of Mariupol is a heavy blow to the Azov Nazis who have been a backbone of Ukraine’s war of terror on Donbass. Strong measures have been taken against the Aidar Battalion, leading figures in the Right Sector and so on.

It’s crucial that the Ukrainian anti-fascist underground is included in the process, along with the DPR and LPR. Ultimately, it will really be up to them to root out the

poisonous elements of Ukrainian society.

I hope that in the short term, this can include liberating the many Ukrainian leftists and others swept up in the latest witch hunt by the Security Service of Ukraine and neo-Nazis. Also important will be helping those Ukrainian activists living in exile for the last eight years to safely return home to continue their work.

Source: [Ukraina.ru](https://ukraina.ru)

