

Ukraine and Russia without the lens of Facebook & corporate media

written by John Parker

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John Parker at the Kremlin in Moscow placing flowers at a monument to those who died in the fire at the

House of Trade Unions
in Odessa, Ukraine.

What do the New York Times, Kiev Independent, Euromaidan Press, Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, TikTok here in the U.S. have in common?

They are all funded by or staffed by Western and U.S. intelligence members pushing the U.S. narrative about the war in Ukraine. This is why Struggle-La-Lucha.org organized a fact-finding mission to Ukraine and Russia to report on the suppressed information that challenges the narrative of NATO and its member states, led by the U.S. This is the second part of my report. (Part 1: [Fact-finding trip to Donbass: A front-line shelter in Rubizhne](#))

The social media outlets are an open door to organizations like NATO, military suppliers, and the Atlantic Council, with executives making decisions about what content is allowed to circulate widely on social media and what content is encouraged to support U.S. foreign policy goals. Some of these same organizations sold us the misinformation about weapons of mass destruction regarding Iraq — like the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, funded by the U.S. government and its defense industry contractors. They partner with Twitter and others to allegedly stop misinformation and provide “alternate” information that counters or eliminates views that don’t agree with the Pentagon’s narrative on Russia, China, or Ukraine.

In John Pilger’s 2016 documentary, “The Coming War on China,” he says: “ASPI has played a leading role — some would say, the leading role — in driving Australia’s mendacious and self-destructive and often absurd China-bashing campaign. The current Coalition government, perhaps the most right-wing and incompetent in Australia’s recent history, has relied upon the ASPI to disseminate Washington’s desperate strategic policies, into which much of the Australian political class, along with its intelligence and military structures, has been integrated.”

Russian stereotypes return

Thanks to the actual “big brother” watch dogs, Russian stereotypes that are as sophisticated as the 1960s cartoon characters Boris and Natasha are showing their ugly heads again. However, this time — in addition to pushing war and anti-communism despite the fall of the Soviet Union — the media is elevating fascism along with apologies for fascist organizations.

And, of course, Hollywood must get involved to help the lies go down smoothly with Hollywood movies like “Old Man” with Jeff Bridges or “Stranger Things” (third and fourth seasons), reinforcing those messages as we relax in front of the tube.

In fact, in a video interview, novelist Stephen King thought he was talking to Ukraine’s Volodymyr Zelensky, praising Stepan Bandera. Bandera, a Ukrainian fascist and war criminal, was the head of efforts to assist Nazi Germany in their genocide in Ukraine, killing tens of thousands of Polish and Jewish people. King also said during the video meeting that he would even consider screening a fake film passed off as authentic, praising the neo-Nazi Azov Batallion and vilifying Russians.

All this to make those who used to know better forget that the people of the Soviet Union and Russia were responsible for defeating one of the greatest threats to humanity — fascism — during World War II, losing 27 million of their people doing so.

Celebrating May 1 and May 9

I got reminded of the pride felt by the Russian people in defending humanity from fascism while making my way to the Lenin monument at October Square in Moscow on May 1 of this year. This was one of the many celebrations of International Workers Day leading up to the “Great Patriotic War” celebrations on May 9. Many shops along the way had posters proudly displaying the hammer-and-sickle flag of

the Soviet Union to show that pride.

In addition to the activities by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the second largest Party in Parliament, other celebrations were being held by the Union of Communists — which my organization, the Socialist Unity Party, has worked with in the past — which I also attended.

One of the Brazilian participants who is now in Moscow studying Russian said: "I am here because I think it is very important, the fight of workers in all the world who are working in difficulty in all countries. Many are without jobs or have low salaries and in my country, people are living in the roads. So, this is a very important moment to gather together to say we need a just world, we need better social conditions all over the world. There are people here who are communists and remember their conditions were better under the Soviet Union so it is important to celebrate here with Lenin."

At home with organizer Olga

An organizer for the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Olga, made her way to this celebration after participating in her organization's parade earlier. She explained why May 1 is so important: "It's a great day, the first of May. We remember that this was founded by Chicago workers who were the first to come on the street to fight for their rights in 1886. In this time people in many countries celebrate, including Russia too, because we know it should be free education, free medical care and we still have lots of problems that must be decided together." Olga mentioned that the policies of the Soviet Union regarding free medicine continued in Russia after its fall and it helped the Russian people, including her mother, handle the COVID crisis better.

In Moscow, I was accompanied by Leonid Ilderkin, from the Union of Political Refugees and Political Prisoners of Ukraine. He is one of the many individuals forced

to flee Ukraine due to the political persecution of communists or members of many labor or workers organizations. Leonid and members of the socialist organization Borotba helped us organize this trip and provided translation for me.

After the powerful speeches, we were invited to join Olga and her family for dinner to discuss the movement in the U.S. and my questions about Russia today. The type of hospitality we experienced reminded me of being down South in the U.S., and not fitting the stereotype of the cold Russians at all.

After leaving her family's home and enjoying a great meal, we came away with a better understanding of the connections that people here have with people living in Ukraine. They are in solidarity with their friends and family, who are now targeted by the allies of U.S. imperialism. When discussing Ukraine with Olga's mom, she cried, telling me about her friend who was caught in the violence by fascist forces there.

We are now being told that the Russian people are also bloodthirsty and are purposely targeting civilians and committing unspeakable war crimes in Ukraine. In part one of these articles, I mentioned the National Endowment for Democracy-sponsored Kiev Independent, published in Ukraine. That media's reliance on unsubstantiated reports and videos given them by one of the fascist regiments, the Azov Batallion, is then passed on to Western media without any verification of its content.

Euromaidan Press — U.S. sponsored media

Another media source out of Ukraine also funded by Western intelligence sources — the Euromaidan Press — does a thorough job of keeping the U.S.-sponsored narrative alive.

For example, their accounts of what went on immediately after the Russian

intervention on February 23 and the current situation in areas of Ukraine that I visited were completely different from my experience.

During the first month after the Russian intervention in Ukraine, the Euromaidan Press reported “evidence” and videos indicating that the main targets of the Russian military were civilians.

However, in an exposé published by Newsweek, “[Putin’s Holding Back](#),” analysts and advisers working for the Pentagon became unlikely whistleblowers. Covering most of the same period Euromaidan Press was referring to — the first 24 days after the Russian intervention on February 23 — Newsweek quotes U.S. military officers and analysts, all were surprised at how little civilian loss there was on the part of the Russian military. One of the quotes from an adviser who is also a U.S. Air Force officer makes clear their message and intentions: “I’m frustrated by the current narrative — that Russia is intentionally targeting civilians, that it is demolishing cities, and that Putin doesn’t care. Such a distorted view stands in the way of finding an end before true disaster or the war spreads to the rest of Europe.”

About two months before I arrived there, Euromaidan Press wrote about a village in the Lugansk region of Ukraine called Rubizhne. See what essential detail is twisted in this report. The article “[How the Russian Invasion Destroyed My World](#),” by Orysia Hrudka, shares an account of someone who was in touch with relatives and friends in Rubizhne about two weeks after the Russian intervention in Ukraine:

“Since 8 March I have been unable to contact my close ones in Rubizhne. ... My grandmother, together with many other people from Rubizhne in Luhansk Oblast, was brought to the town nearby. The town was not yet ready to place the refugees in one of the buildings. Food and mattresses were just being brought there. ...

“On 11 March, at 10:56 pm, I learned that my friend’s husband’s parents had been shot at a checkpoint on the way from Rubizhne to Kreminna. Her husband’s parents

were kind people and were bringing food from the village to Rubizhne because the city was cut off from food supplies. The mother died immediately, and the father was able to call his son and say his last words. The son talked with his father until his father's heart stopped. We still can't find the bodies of our friends' parents. ...

"On 25 March, my friend's mother was killed in the Russian shelling. She came to bring the water to the South district in Rubizhne. Her body is still there."

What I saw in Rubizhne

This is a heart-wrenching account of brutality and neglect, the lack of water and food, danger in leaving and coming to Rubizhne at that time. It generally corresponds with what I heard from the people of Lugansk at the shelter where there were 350 people who had escaped as their homes were bombed by tanks. They were left with nothing and totally dependent on the humanitarian aid of food and water to survive and the protection of the military to stay alive. However, they all said it was the **Ukrainian military** — not the Russian military — that shot into their homes with guns and tanks; that abandoned them with no food, water, or transportation. In fact, the residents of the shelter in Rubizhne I spoke to said if not for the protection of the Russian soldiers they would not have survived. See [Part 1](#) for the full interviews of Rubizhne residents forced to flee their homes.

"Ukrainian soldiers did not help at all," said a teary-eyed Larisa, who was in charge of the shelter and reflected on the hardship for the children there. "That is unacceptable. No one from the Ukrainian side asked us or visited us. I had supported Ukraine, but after I saw how they left these people I no longer supported them."

The thunder heard around us while we were there was a constant reminder of how the area was still very dangerous. That thunder was not from lightning. It was the sound of exploding artillery shells that, like lightning, hit a nearby apartment

building while we were there. And, to be clear, that artillery was fired from Ukrainian military positions.

When I arrived in Rubizhne on May 6, the area was under the control of the Russian military and the Lugansk Peoples Militia, which brought in humanitarian aid. In my short time in Lugansk, from the border to the shelter, I witnessed many trucks bringing water, grains, diapers, milk, etc. My clumsy attempt at helping to bring the supplies in, ending in an almost dropped box, confirmed these items were diapers and foodstuffs.



With fellow fact-finding participants, Alexey Albu, John Parker, and Evgeniy Miroshnichenko at a restaurant dedicated to honoring the memory of the Soviet Union in the city of Lugansk.

How residents got aid

The Euromaidan Press account also left the impression that the Russian forces were

targeting civilians at checkpoints and on the dangerous roads they controlled. However, this area only came under Russian control a little over three weeks prior to our visit on May 6. According to Alexey Alba, an organizer with Borotba who accompanied me in Lugansk: “The roads here, although dangerous now, were even more dangerous during Ukrainian control, so leaving was not a safe option then. It became more possible after the area came under Russian control.”

Larisa added: “We tell people it is not safe, but if they want to leave here, of course, they can. No one will stop them.”

Alexey, once a resident of Odessa who moved with his family to Lugansk, was an elected member of the Odessa Regional Council and a former member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine. Alexey barely escaped with his life in the violence of fascists after the 2014 coup, a coup financed by the U.S.

Instead of discouraging and shooting at civilians trying to bring food to Rubizhne, as the journalist from Euromaidan Press implied of the Russian soldiers, Alexey explained a different reality: “Because of the war, getting assistance to the shelter was difficult. The trade unions in charge of delivering food in Lugansk were unable to due to the area becoming a war zone. So, they had to hand over that task to the military.”

Despite the danger and the fact that the Ukrainian military still controlled the area, Alexey continued, “the Russian and Lugansk soldiers, at great risk to their own lives, were determined to get aid to the residents of the shelter even before the area was liberated.”

Why such a different view from Euromaidan Press, a view contradicted by U.S. military sources covered in Newsweek and my own live interviews and experience there?

Funded by U.S. National Endowment for Democracy

Euromaidan Press is an NGO partly funded by the National Democratic Institute, one of the four core institutes of the National Endowment for Democracy. Euromaidan Press is also partly funded by the British Embassy in Kiev. And Euromaidan Press is partly funded by the International Renaissance Foundation subsidized by the Soros' Open Society Foundation, which funds regime change efforts and was heavily involved in funding the anti-Russian opposition in Ukraine.

Alya Shandra, the editor-in-chief at Euromaidan Press, and Christine Chraibi, an editor, both state in their profiles their wish for European integration, especially, said Chraibi, in terms of NATO membership.

Orysia Hrudka, the writer of this particular piece in Euromaidan Press, is also employed at the Agents of Change School, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) — a U.S. government agency— and the U.S. Embassy Democracy Fund, which, according to their website, “supports unique and promising projects that promote the capacity building and self-sufficiency of NGOs in Ukraine.”

Since the first U.S.-sponsored coup in 2004, those NGOs were how the U.S. government poured billions of dollars into regime-change efforts, culminating in the second undemocratic 2014 coup in Ukraine.

Euromaidan Press also ran stories pushing the allegations of rape by Russian soldiers, “confirmed” by former Ukrainian Ombudsman Lyudmyla Denisova who said that 25 teenage girls were kept in a basement in Bucha and gang-raped; nine of them are now pregnant. After evidence showed those claims were false, the accusations called into question the legitimacy of other Ukrainian government claims. The Ukrainian Parliament promptly fired Ombudsman Denisova with the advice: “Check the facts before publication” and “disclose only information for which

there is sufficient evidence."

The neo-Nazi Azov Battalion

Another staff person at Euromaidan Press is Bohdan Ben. According to his description on the site, Ben is a researcher in the field of social and ethical philosophy and the field of local governance. He was among the winners of the program "Youth Will Change Ukraine" organized by the Bohdan Hawrylyshyn Foundation.

On November 4, 2019, Ben did a piece countering the letter circulated by 40 U.S. House members asking that the Azov Battalion be put on the terrorist list. In it, he characterizes the Azov Battalion as a mixture of various ideologies leaning towards far-right politics but stresses that they cannot be considered a neo-Nazi organization since they are an official part of the Ukrainian military.

However, his admissions in the article remarkably defeat his premises and lousy logic. In denying that the Azov Battalion has aided and abetted terrorists around the world he says, reflecting on the letter: "That the Azov Battalion 'openly welcomes neo-Nazis into its ranks' is true in some cases. Indeed, several radically far-right individuals were fighting or training in this detachment ... several commanders of the Battalion previously belonged to right-wing Ukrainian NGOs or political parties. Naturally, volunteers with nationalist political backgrounds preferred serving in Azov rather than other detachments, to have like-minded people around. This is entirely within the legal framework."

It should be noted that the "legal framework" has been radically changing since 2014 to favor fascist organizations and ban and criminalize their greatest opposition — the communist parties.

He also states that the political entity most affiliated with the Azov Battalion, the

National Corps, is a separate organization and cannot be assumed to represent the views of the Azov organization when they promote Nazism and terrorism. When he then mentions that the Corps is led by Andriy Biletskyi, who he admits is “a far-right nationalist who espoused white supremacist views.” He also forgets to say that Biletskyi founded the Azov militia group in 2014. Ben also quotes Biletskyi in 2010 saying the Ukrainian nation’s mission was to “lead the white race of the world in a final crusade … against Semite-led Untermenschen.” Untermenschen is an unscientific term used by Nazi Germany, implying an ethnic designation. They are supposedly inferior people who fall into a category of basically anyone not “accepted” by the German Nazis.

Ben also admits:

“Azov Battalion and the National Corps Political Party indeed had contacts with persons who called for violence or committed crimes … Olena Semeniaka, for example, acknowledged contacts with the American Rise Above Movement (RAM) and said that RAM members came to Ukraine to ‘learn how to create youth forces in the ways Azov has’… However, there is little evidence of any calls for terrorism or violence by members of the Battalion.”

Azov and ‘Unite the Right’ riot in Charlottesville

After this meeting with RAM that Ben was referring to, three RAM members participated in and helped organize the August 11, 2017, Unite the Right riot of neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, North Carolina, where Heather Heyer was killed by a white supremacist driving into the counter-protest she participated in. Those three were arrested in Virginia for inciting and organizing violence there, and sentenced to a little over two years in prison.

It’s especially clear how far from the truth Euromaidan Press is willing to go in allegiance to the Azov Battalion when comparing what Ben is saying to the 2019

report by TIME.com - which is no friend of Russia or the Donbass republics and is a supporter of the Ukrainian military. That report — “[Like, Share, Recruit: How a White-Supremacist Militia Uses Facebook to Radicalize and Train New Members](#)” — contradicts Ben’s assertion that the Corps is not related to nor speaks for Azov.

TIME reporters Simon Shuster and Billy Perrigo expose that the National Corps, instead of being separate from Azov, is an integral part of an Azov recruitment center in Kyiv. They write: “The main recruitment center for Azov, known as the Cossack House, stands in the center of Kyiv, a four-story brick building **on loan from Ukraine’s Defense Ministry** [my emphasis -JP]. In the courtyard is a cinema and a boxing club. The top floor hosts a lecture hall and a library, full of books by authors who supported German fascism, like Ezra Pound and Martin Heidegger ... On the ground floor is a shop called Militant Zone, which **sells clothes and key chains with stylized swastikas and other neo-Nazi merchandise.** [my emphasis -JP]

The reporters interviewed the person Ben mentioned, Olena Semeniaka, who has almost achieved celebrity status in the white supremacist world:

“It could be described as a small state within a state,” says Olena Semenyaka, the head of international outreach for the Azov movement. On a tour of the Cossack House in 2019, she told TIME that Azov’s mission was to form a coalition of far-right groups across the Western world, with the ultimate aim of taking power throughout Europe.

Semenyaka is speaking for the Azov organization. However, Ben said the National Corps she represents is separate. The TIME reporters also agree with Semenyaka regarding the direction of Azov. They write:

“Outside Ukraine, Azov occupies a central role in a network of extremist groups stretching from California across Europe to New Zealand, according to law

enforcement officials on three continents. And it acts as a magnet for young men eager for combat experience. Ali Soufan, a security consultant and former FBI agent who has studied Azov, estimates that more than 17,000 foreign fighters have come to Ukraine over the past six years from 50 countries.”

Brenton Tarrant, who killed 51 Muslims in March 2019 as they worshiped in a Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque wrote in his manifesto that he visited Ukraine. He also wore the emblem of the Battalion when he did the killing and featured the Azov emblem in his manifesto. By the way, the recent killing in Buffalo, New York, of 10 Black people in a supermarket was done by an 18-year-old white supremacist who said he was influenced by Tarrant — and the beat goes on.

The Facebook algorithm driving white supremacists

TIME explains how Azov grew such a wide and influential global presence — in a word, Facebook and other social media. However, it was Facebook’s algorithm driving white supremacists and disaffected youth toward them that allowed Azov exponential visibility growth.

In a simple experiment done while writing this article, I was able to get to an Azov Battalion recruiting video simply by searching the word “Azov,” on Facebook, which led me in about two clicks to the recruitment video on Youtube with the Azov logo, the Sonnenrad. You can find my search here: [My Search for Azov](#).

Why have social media outlets in the U.S., that were quick to act when it was revealed that ISIS was successfully recruiting members through Facebook and Youtube and other social media, refused to act on white supremacist terrorism and recruitment?

Perhaps a former leader of the Atlantic Council, the NATO entity which regulates Facebook, can answer that.

Alina Polyakova, at the time working as Director of Research for Europe and Eurasia at the Atlantic Council, where she developed and led the institute's work on disinformation and Russia, is quoted in an article [in Jacobin](#) on Stepan Bandera saying:

"The Russian government and its proxies in eastern Ukraine have consistently branded Kyiv's government a fascist junta and accused it of having Nazi sympathizers. Moscow's propaganda is outrageous and wrong." Given Ukraine's deepening economic woes, she continued, "should Ukraine watchers be concerned about the potential growth of extreme right-wing parties?" Her answer: "Absolutely not."

Regarding the U.S. proxy war against Russia, the sole purpose of U.S. and Western European-sponsored media outlets like Euromaidan Press and Kiev Independent is to be a disseminator of Nazi propaganda about the war and handle international public relations for fascist organizations in Ukraine.

Their coverage of events around the same time I was in Lugansk as compared to what I saw and heard from residents there exposes the lies of their sponsors and puppet masters, especially those in the U.S.

2014 massacre at Odessa House of Trade Unions

What is scarcely covered, however, are horrors like that which occurred in the city of Odessa in Ukraine on May 2, 2014, at the House of Trade Unions, witnessed by those I interviewed here in Moscow at a memorial outside of the Kremlin. "Today is the second of May," said a journalist covering the event. "Eight years ago my city of Odessa was full of beauty on the seashore, for artists, writers, musicians. We had the best architects who built the opera theater house. But those Ukrainian Nazis burned the Odessan people alive and shot them. They say there were 48 who died but that number is not correct since there were many more victims reported in the morgue.

They burned alive people who were hiding, and those who escaped the building were beaten with sticks and iron pipes and shot at. None of the perpetrators were punished. Innocent people died for their right to speak their language by a Nazi regime. This was repeated in Mariupol on May 9, 2014, with killings in that Russian-speaking area. I was there in Mariupol as a journalist also. It's been eight years, and nobody cared, and they continue to kill us using weapons originating in the USA and European Union. And any honest journalists reporting on this are being hidden there in Ukraine."

He then introduced me to Vasily, who had been trapped inside the House of Trade Unions. He took many photos of the situation then — from the beginning of the incident until about 8:30 p.m. when people began to jump out of the windows of the burning building. "By 7 p.m. it started, before that, there was a fight outside ... I have many photos and showed these to many journalists from the West but they did nothing with them," he said.

I asked him what he thought about Zelensky appointing a governor of Odessa a few months ago who is affiliated with fascist organizations. "Zelensky is not only a comedian, he is also a clown. He is not an independent person, he works for Biden. What is there to think about a person who goes to Great Britain and first meets with the chief of MI6, his other boss? Our great regret is that there was a president Yushchenko in 2004 who also pushed to power oligarchs, and he began inviting Nazis and gave the highest honor to Bandera."

Another commemorator who had just finished placing roses at the monument, then making the sign of the cross on his chest, showed me his cell phone with texts he had just received from someone also trying to commemorate the day, but unable to. His friend texting him at that moment was in Odessa, but a curfew was established to discourage such activity. This curfew was being enforced with bullets from the Ukrainian police, his friend who was witnessing the violence there told him. "One

woman was injured and the police were ordered to shoot, with no warning, anyone holding public commemorations outside,” he read from his phone.

Here in Moscow, where that terror did not exist we visited another commemoration in another part of the city with mainly youth carrying signs with the words “Odessa May 2, 2014.” At the front of the thousands who were lined up to pay tribute by placing roses where the pictures of the dead victims were, another witness of the Odessa tragedy was playing Rachmaninoff’s Prelude in C Sharp Minor on a piano moved right there on the sidewalk. The intense piece she chose was fitting because in 1898, one of the many titles of that piece introduced to the west by a London publisher was called “The Burning of Moscow.”

Commemorations on May 9 for the victory over Nazi Germany are also outlawed in Ukraine. But, like the May 2 commemorations, here in Russia, celebrating the defeat of the Nazis is welcomed.

Coming in part 3: Two cities in Ukraine, two ideologies, two experiences of war.



<https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/2022/08/02/ukraine-and-russia-without-the-lens-of-facebook-corporate-media/>