



# U.S. FRIENDS OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE

"CONTINUING THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF AMERICAN-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP"

## BULLETIN

FALL/WINTER 2016/2017

**Jeff Monson:**

### Moscow's American Muscle

How a mixed martial arts champion became a Russian hero.

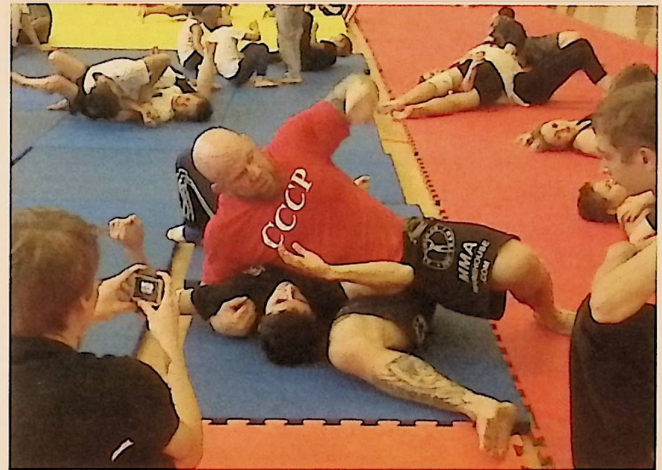
Taken and edited from: <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/jeff-monson-moscows-american-muscle-55633>  
By Matthew Bodner, m.bodner@imedia.ru

Jeff Monson, a 45-year-old American mixed martial arts champion, denies that Russia invaded eastern Ukraine. Buff, bald, and covered in tattoos, he says he knows better: "I was in Luhansk, and I asked people if Russia came to help them. They said yes, but it wasn't an invasion."

A committed communist and strident critic of U.S. foreign-policy, Monson last month became the first American to receive citizenship from the People's Republic of Luhansk (LPR). It was a token of gratitude from the leadership of the state.

Monson makes no secret of his distaste for Washington, and he proudly supports Ukraine's Russian-backed separatist regions, even combining the two passions, when he can. On social media, for instance, you can find photos of his visit to Luhansk, where he's holding a Kalashnikov assault rifle and posing next to graffiti cursing out Obama.

This is all high politics, though, which takes a backseat when Monson describes the suffering he's seen on his two visits to Luhansk. His first trip was in June, when he met Russia's nationalist biker gang, the Night



*Encouraged and enamored with Russian public support, Monson has become a frequent visitor to the country. He is pursuing Russian citizenship. Matt Bodner*

### Celebration of the 99th Anniversary of the October Revolution.

- Cambridge/Boston, MA: Nov. 12, 2016, 3 PM. Center for Marxist Education, 550 Massachusetts Ave., 2nd floor, Cambridge.
- New York, NY: Nov. 19, 2 PM. LGBT Center, 208 W. 13th St., Rm. 310.
- Buffalo, NY: Nov. 19, 2 PM. Buffalo and Erie County Main library, 1 Lafayette Square, West Room. Showing of documentary film: Ukraine: Right Sector.

Events are also being held on Nov. 7 in:

- Los Angeles, CA, 2 PM: Laying flowers at statue of Lenin's head, ACE Museum, 4th St. and La Brea Ave.
- Hilo, Hawaii

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*Continued from page 1*

Wolves, in Rostov-on-Don, near the Russian border with Ukraine. From there, the bikers escorted him across the border to Luhansk.

“Unfortunately, when it comes to politics, it’s the common people who unwittingly suffer,” Monson says. “These people are struggling economically. I went there, I talked to the people, I saw the hospitals and orphanages destroyed. And the kids, man, the kids have been through a war. Their schools have been destroyed. These people have been forgotten, and I want to help them.”

When Monson returned to Luhansk in September, he brought supplies for a local orphanage. With money from the LPR government, he also helped set up something more permanent: the area’s first martial arts school, which he hopes can impart upon local kids a sense of community, self-worth, and discipline — the things all sports offer, he says.

Many in Luhansk, joined by even more people in Russia sympathetic to Luhansk People’s Republic, have celebrated Monson’s humanitarian efforts. The state-run RT news network is giving him a television show.

To the new rulers in Kiev, on the other hand, Monson is viewed widely as a criminal or worse, and his actions have drawn sharp criticism from those who overthrew the legally elected Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich’s regime. It was this counter-revolution, after all, that sparked Moscow’s support for separatists in the country’s eastern regions.

Monson gets letters from people in Ukraine and in the U.S., where he was recently held at the border and questioned about his activities in Luhansk. In the letters, people call him

a terrorist. He is likely to be the subject of further controversy after receiving citizenship from the President of Abkhazia, a breakaway region of Georgia.

No stranger to controversy, Monson says he’s unfazed: “I’m not going to not do something just because of legal consequences. They are calling me a terrorist for opening a school and helping orphanages!”

### Fortunate Son

Monson is used to the spotlight, but not for humanitarianism. One of the world’s most decorated mixed martial arts (MMA) fighters, he made his name in the ring, pure and simple. At age 28, Monson won his first championship in a technique known as grappling — a discipline he excels in to this day.

Time is catching up, however, and Monson’s body is beginning to fail him at 45. Today, he projects an image of both imposing strength and surprising fragility. His movements are lumbering and laborious, and his left leg betrays a significant limp. Unable to fight legally in the United States any longer, Monson has spent much of the past five years fighting in Russia, under a Russian flag.

Beneath the stereotypical facade of a professional MMA fighter, Monson has been described an idealist and a libertarian-communist, meaning that he believes in a socialism in which all men live equally and cordially without government. He plans just two more fights before devoting himself to a life of communist work in Luhansk and in Russia.

“The only way we are going to survive as a species is to share things, stopping production of things we don’t need. Produce for need, instead of capital and wealth,” Monson told *The Moscow Times*.



*Monson is hoping to master Russian so he can eventually become a communist deputy in the State Duma.*

*Anton Novoderzhikin / TASS*





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