



## *U.S. Friends of the Soviet People*

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*SPRING/SUMMER 2018*

*Continuing the work of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship*

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### Celebrations of Victory over Fascism in Europe

*New York Metro branch USFSP*

*will be celebrating the Victory over Fascism  
together with the Astoria friends of the KKE*

*Saturday, May 12, 6PM*

*KEFALOS Society of America*

*20-41 Steinway street*

*not far from Astoria-Ditmars Blvd. on N or W train*

*718 204-8491*

*Light refreshments will be served*

*For other celebrations, please contact the following USFSP branches*

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# The Situation in the Donbass

By Jeff Monson, Mixed Martial Arts fighter and US-Russian dual citizen

In 2014 widespread civil unrest in Ukraine sparked the Euromaidan movement, forcing Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich to flee by helicopter to Russia. Pro-European right wing groups took control of the country, Petro Poroshenko was elected the new President of Ukraine and oligarchs with no political experience were handed regions of the country to govern.

The western media reports and wants us to believe that Russian troops invaded Ukraine and then went to Crimea and annexed the territory for Russia; that the people are trapped between Russian forces on one side and the separatists within Donbass fighting the Ukrainian army. However, the story as reported by the Western media becomes quite clouded. Russia did annex its former province of Crimea. But it was not reported that the Russians gave the people of Crimea the opportunity to decide for themselves if they wanted to rejoin Russia or remain a part of Ukraine. 94% voted to become part of Russia again. The US preaches democracy to the world but ignores it when it doesn't serve its interests.

These events led to US and European economic sanctions against Russia. Despite ceasefire agreements signed during the Minsk Protocols in 2014 and 2015 the conflict itself rages on with mostly civilian casualties accounting for the over 10,000 deaths and 25,000 wounded.



The pro-Russian eastern or Donbass region of Ukraine broke off into two new self-proclaimed countries of Luhansk and Donetsk. Yes, former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich was siphoning money from his impoverished country and had built himself something of a small fortress, complete with a zoo, carnival rides, and lots of cash. The Ukrainian people deserved better than for him to escape with millions, leaving the country in turmoil.

I have had the chance to visit Luhansk and Donetsk four different times starting in 2015. The destruction needs to be seen to be believed. It is something out of a Hollywood movie. Entire communities razed to the ground. The airport is in complete ruins. Hospital decimated. What is especially striking is that it isn't military sites that are necessarily targeted. Schools, medical facilities, daycares, shopping centers are systematically shelled and have been largely destroyed.

Despite western media rhetoric, there are no paramilitary gangs running lawless in Donbass. I visited military headquarters in Luhansk and talked to a captain in charge of training new

volunteers. During our interview we witnessed the Ukrainian army firing mortars indiscriminately into a nearby village. I asked what the response would be and he replied there would be no response because of the Minsk ceasefire agreement.

At the Luhansk/Ukraine border many people were crossing back and forth with boxes of fruit, vegetables and dairy goods to sell. For a small bribe to border patrol, people were allowed to cross to try and earn some money or trade items for food. I talked with a number of OCSE members stationed at the border, UN watch group overseeing compliance with the ceasefire, and they confirmed what the captain had told me — the Luhansk army was not returning fire.

What I learned from visiting Donbass is that almost nothing that I had read about the situation was true. The Russian army was not in Donetsk or Luhansk. The only Russians who had joined the fight were non-military volunteers. The people of Donbass were free and happy not to be part of a Ukraine that embraced European values. But the most important thing I learned from talking with the people of Donbass is that they want peace. It needs to be understood that this war is about brothers fighting brothers. The

people are trying to make sense of a situation where families and communities were divided and torn apart. Just trying to feed themselves and keep safe during this conflict has proved to be a formidable challenge. And the people of Donbass correctly believe the world has forgotten about them. We hear about new sanctions being imposed on Russia and the new cold war between Russia and the US, but there are no reports about the actual people of Donbass trying to survive in this situation. The end will only come by learning the truth about this terrible war. The US continues to escalate the conflict by selling missiles, guns, tanks and other weapons to Ukraine while at the same time fueling animosity and hatred by spreading disinformation and blatant untruths. The US profits from this war economically and through its media it is able to make Russia appear to be the aggressor. Seeing is believing. I have seen the real situation and talked to many people living this nightmare in Donbass. On paper it's just another of the many proxy wars the US engages in. But for the citizens living in Donbass it is about survival and living in a situation every day that no person deserves to experience.



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