

Media Suppression and Political Repression in post-Maidan Ukraine

A Conversation with Halyna Mokrushina

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“Those two members of the – this paramilitary right wing...they were arrested and then they were released, and we see the intimidation...they appear in court, and they disrupt the work of the judges. Seeing this and how powerful they are, judges might...some of them just prolong these pre-detention terms because they don’t want any trouble. Because they can come to their houses.” – Halyna Mokrushyna (from this week’s interview).

“This level of freedom that is now, including against civil society is unprecedented. Never in the history of Ukraine has not had this level of freedom and against journalists and against civil society,” – Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko. (May 14, 2017)[1]

LISTEN TO THE SHOW

As the award-winning investigative journalist Robert Parry has detailed in his writings over the past three years, there is a persistent narrative in the Western press about the displacement of the former Yanukovich government as a victory of a democratic popular uprising over autocratic rule.[2]

According to the standard Western narrative, a “new era of freedom” had emerged over Ukraine, challenged only by Russia’s ‘illegal interference’ first in Crimea, and then in the south and east regions known as the Donbass.[3]

In spite of the well documented involvement of US politicians and US financial resources (ie. the \$5 billion Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs [Victoria Nuland boasted about](#) ‘investing’ in the country’s ‘democratic’ future), Western media typically blame Russia for destabilizing Ukraine and interfering in its internal affairs.

Apparently, the democratic renaissance ushered in by the Euromaidan has yet to fully flourish. According to [TheDuran](#), in the period between January 29, 2015 and July 20, 2016, 11 politicians and journalists critical of the post-Yanukovich government have been killed under mysterious circumstances. These include journalist Oles Buzyna (discussed on a [previous installment](#) of this program), Russian journalist Pavel Sheremet (perished when the car in which he was traveling exploded) and a number of apparent ‘suicides.’

The chill on dissent can be instigated in more subtle ways. Take the case of high profile journalist [Igor Gukhva](#). On June 22, the editor-in-chief of independent media outlet strana.ua

had his offices searched. He was detained and charged with having attempted to extort money from a politician in the Rada, a charge he denies. His lawyer, and outside observers believe the charges are a pretense for containing an effective critic of the government.

In post-EuroMaidan Ukraine, accusations of being a 'Kremlin stooge' can substitute for reasoned debate in disarming Poproschenko's political opponents. The principle of 'holding the powerful to account' becomes conflated with treason, inviting physical intimidation from thugs subjecting their targets to serious bodily harm and property damage.

(above: surveillance camera footage of an attack on the Vesti newspaper from July, 2014)

The US-based watchdog group Freedom House acknowledges the continuation of 'Violence, threats, intimidation, and harassment against media professionals and organizations,' in Ukraine, however in its most recent report it notes, "Ukraine's media environment has significantly improved since a change in government in 2014, and ongoing reforms continue to strengthen the legislative environment for journalists and outlets." It should be noted however that the major sponsors of Freedom House, including the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Department of State, The Walt Disney Company, Lockheed Martin, and Northrup Grumman, are all aligned with the same foreign policy goals of the same U.S. government conducting a propaganda campaign against Putin's Russia.[4][5]

This week's installment of the Global Research News Hour, the last of the regular 2016-2017 season makes an effort to reveal the suppression of speech, thought and press freedom hidden under the veil of protection from a malevolent internal threat. In a feature interview, our guest Ukrainian-Canadian Halyna Mokrushyna addresses the trumped up charges against journalists Igor Guhza and Ruslan Kostaba, the equation of communist writings with terrorism, the failure of popular political movements, and the isolation she has experienced as a member of the Ukrainian diaspora departing from the standard Ukraine narrative.

Halyna Mokhushyna is a regular contributor to the independent site newcoldwar.org. She is currently enrolled in the PhD program in Sociology at the University of Ottawa and a part-time professor. Her doctoral project deals with the memory of Stalinist purges in Ukraine. She travelled to Lviv, Kyiv, Kharkiv and Donetsk in the summer of 2013 to conduct her field research. She last traveled to the region in April of 2015.

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Notes:

1. <http://hir.harvard.edu/article/?a=14466>
2. <https://consortiumnews.com/2015/01/06/nyt-still-pretends-no-coup-in-ukraine/>
3. <http://hir.harvard.edu/article/?a=14466>
4. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/ukraine>
5. <https://freedomhouse.org/content/our-supporters>

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