

Russia Is Following in Nazi Germany's Footsteps

By [Andrei Malgin](#)

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I have always been puzzled by the question of how the great, highly cultured German people were transformed into a murderous horde of millions in only a few years. In hindsight, Hitler does not seem extraordinarily charismatic, and the ideas he articulated strike the modern listener as insane. So what exactly occurred in Germany that made the entire population, with rare exceptions, support fascism? And how did that metamorphosis happen so quickly?

What is most disturbing is that in today's Russia, fascist Germany no longer seems so distant or unique.

Recently, I found the following comments posted on my blog: "It is terrible. I even quarreled with my own mother over the situation in Ukraine."

"My colleagues at work have turned into zombies right before my eyes. They will not listen to anything, they only repeat the Russian state media's official line — that we need to save the Russians in Crimea from fascism."

"I cannot speak to my wife about politics. She has suddenly become a big fan of President Vladimir Putin and sees U.S. secret agents everywhere. I think she even suspects me of being an agent."

These are but a few examples of the posts appearing on my website. Russian society has been split, dividing friends and families, leaving no home untouched.

Putin's propaganda, which previously seemed so laughable, has suddenly hit the mark. In a few short days, the messages beamed through state-controlled television have effectively brainwashed the masses.

What do Russians want with Crimea? Sure, it used to be a favorite vacation spot in Soviet times, but nobody goes there now that it is cheaper and more convenient to vacation in Turkey or Egypt.

Why should Russia annex Crimea? Russians do not need visas to visit Ukraine, anyway. Just take a train or get in your car and drive there, as Russians have always done.

It is pointless to appeal to reason. Whenever you try to discuss the complicated issues surrounding Crimea, the Russian answer is always "It's ours!" They can offer no other explanation or rationale.

And if you say that the 3 million residents of Crimea live in poverty, that even by Russian standards the infrastructure there is in a state of decline, that Ukraine barely manages to keep the region afloat with government subsidies, and that now that entire economic burden will be transferred to Russia's budget, they only answer you with vacant stares and unconcern. They know only one thing: We need to save Crimea — immediately.

And if you ask them, "From what does Crimea need saving?" they will tell you, "From the followers of Bandera." They are referring to Stepan Bandera who fought the Red Army after the Soviet Union annexed western Ukraine. And when Bandera fought against the invading Germans, the Nazis sent him to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. But where are these so-called "Banderas" in Crimea now? Can anybody point to a single one? Not even Russia's state-controlled television has yet to show a single follower of Bandera roaming the streets of Crimea in search of Russians to terrorize or kill. Nonetheless, Putin's propaganda insists that Russia must save the Crimea from the imminent threat posed by "Banderas" or other anti-Russian extremists.

To the question of who is persecuting Russians in Crimea and how they are doing it, you will hear only one stock answer in response. "They are forbidden to speak Russian."

However, the people of Crimea speak Russian just as openly and freely as anyone in Russia. In fact, there is only a single Ukrainian-language grade school on the entire peninsula. All the rest are Russian. Not only is there no ban on speaking Russian in Crimea, but no such ban ever existed and none is planned. And yet the people of Russia are convinced that somebody has prohibited the citizens of Crimea from speaking Russian.

Propaganda is a powerful tool, and it is most powerful when it propagates absolute lies — not half-truths, innuendo or silence, but pure fiction. When all the state-controlled television,

radio and print media bombard Russians with the same lies around the clock, the large majority of people turn into mindless zombies over a span of just two or three days.

This same propaganda has even turned Putin into a zombie. Putin has fallen victim to his own lies. He has come to believe whatever fictions his own spin doctors concoct. Conversely, every one of those millions of brainwashed Russian zombies has a little Putin inside their head — a little national leader with the same hang-ups, fears, suppressed desires and prejudices. The result is that Russians are in complete unity with their ruler. It is time to face the facts: as scary as it sounds, this is the truth.

At the same time, we can draw hope from the fact that the gap between Putin's propaganda and objective reality will eventually grow so wide as to cause this artificial construct to collapse under its own weight. Any nation that has fundamentally lost its way and engages in self-destructive behavior is ultimately headed for disaster. The main concern is that Russia does not drag other nations down along with it into the abyss.

Sometimes, one must pass through a major disaster to finally see the light and answer the questions of: "Who am I really?" and "Why am I here?" The Germans paid a high price for that lesson. Now it is the Russians' turn.

Andrei Malgin is a journalist, literary critic and blogger.

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