The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

In East Ukraine Town, Residents Sharply Divided Over Pro-Russian Movement

By Oleg Sukhov

April 15, 2014



Deep divisions were visible in the Donetsk region regarding whether to support the seizure of administrative buildings by the pro-Russian movement and whether to vote to join Russia. While some people said that most of their acquaintances were in favor of joining Russia, others said exactly the opposite.

Two women quarreled over the issue in a cafe in the town of Krasnoarmeisk, outside the regional capital Donetsk. One of them ridiculed the idea that relying on Russian help was a way out, saying that people should rely on themselves.

"You should think with your own head," she said. "If you do not respect yourself, no one will respect you."

She also criticized what she perceived as the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"They have come to kill us," she said. "We are being torn apart, our home is being destroyed. But we must stand united as a single fist."

Vladimir Romanov, 49, a lawyer in Krasnoarmeisk, also described the ongoing uprising in the region as a Russian military intervention and said that federalization was a way for the Kremlin to split Ukraine.

"Putin is losing control over Ukraine and is seeking to keep it," he said.

Romanov dismissed talk of discrimination against Russian speakers as spurious, saying he had never experienced any problems with using the language.

Alexei Vartsaba, a 45-year-old lawyer in Krasnoarmeisk, echoed this sentiment, saying that Russia was a "dead end" and a "natural enemy" of Ukraine.

Viktoria, a 30-year-old opera singer in Krasnoarmeisk, disagreed, saying she was in favor of joining Russia but was against a war or violent uprisings.

"I need to feed my child, and everything must be calm in the country for that," she said.

She said the Donetsk region was opting for an alliance with Russia because of close economic ties and because locals had many relatives across the border.

Viktoria also praised President Vladimir Putin.

"Putin deserves respect because he holds Russia with an iron fist," she said.

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Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/04/15/in-east-ukraine-town-residents-sharply-divided-over-pro-russian-movement-a33999