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New York Times promotes war hysteria over Estonia

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2 November 2016

Ever since the 2014 US-orchestrated and fascist-spearheaded coup in Ukraine, the *New York Times* has distinguished itself as the principal anti-Russian propaganda organ of the US government, demonizing Kremlin leader Vladimir Putin for everything from the death toll inflicted in Washington's war for regime change in Syria to the political rise of Donald Trump.

In its November 1 edition, the *Times* continued this anti-Russian campaign with a news feature entitled "Wary of Russia's Ambitions, Estonia Prepares a Nation of Insurgents." The article touts the exploits of a paramilitary formation in the tiny former Soviet Baltic republic, which is now a member of NATO, located barely 85 miles from St. Petersburg.

Under the direction of the newspaper's editorial page editor, James Bennet, who was installed earlier this year, the *Times* has pursued a virulently anti-Russian line that reflects the consensus within the Pentagon and the CIA that Moscow now stands as the foremost obstacle to Washington's drive to assert US global hegemony. Bennet, whose father was a former chief of USAID, an agency that frequently operates as a front for the CIA, and whose brother is the senior US senator from Colorado, is uniquely prepared for the role of war propagandist.

Supplementing the editorial direction of the anti-Russian propaganda campaign are various on-the-ground specialists who churn out so-called “news” articles that reproduce all the worst features of “yellow journalism.”

Among them is Andrew E. Kramer, the *Times* Moscow correspondent. Kramer is responsible for a series of journalistic fabrications, distortions and lies in the service of the campaign to prepare the American public for a military confrontation with Russia. In April of 2014, in the wake of the coup in Kiev, he co-authored a front-page piece purporting to present photographic evidence, provided by the US State Department, that Russian troops were in eastern Ukraine and were leading the pro-Russian separatist rebellion against the right-wing regime in Kiev. It was quickly established that the photos were doctored and the *Times* was forced to retract the piece.

More recently, he penned a piece entitled “More Enemies of the Kremlin End Up Dead: A Pattern That Suggests State Involvement,” which essentially accused Putin of responsibility for a series of political assassinations without providing a shred of evidence to support the allegations.

In his latest article profiling the paramilitaries of the Estonian Defense League, Kramer’s journalistic pursuits dovetail entirely with the operations of US imperialism. It follows on the heels of last week’s announcement in Brussels of NATO’s finalized plans for the deployment of combat brigades in all three Baltic countries: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. These 4,000 troops deployed on Russia’s doorstep are to be backed by a 40,000-strong rapid reaction force as well as a ring of missile defense systems in Eastern Europe designed to facilitate a US nuclear first strike.

Estonia serves as a strategic trip wire for a nuclear Third World War. In September 2014, President Barack Obama made this clear, flying to the Estonian capital of Tallinn to declare that “the defense of Tallinn and Riga and Vilnius is just as important as the defense of Berlin and Paris and London.” He declared Washington’s “eternal” commitment to go to war under the terms of NATO’s Article 5 in defense of this tiny state of 1.3 million people on Russia’s doorstep, promising “American boots on the ground.”

In a rhetorical flight of fancy, Obama extolled Estonian nationalism, declaring, “You never gave up when the Red Army came in from the east or when the Nazis came in from the west.”

In the midst of his breathless recounting of the exploits of the Estonian Defense League as it tramped through the woods outside Tallinn and learned how to manufacture improvised explosive devices (IEDs), Kramer echoes the same historical narrative promoted by Obama, writing that in Estonia “partisans are still glorified for fighting the Nazis and the Soviets in World War II.”

The claim that the so-called partisans equally resisted the Red Army and the Wehrmacht, and that the predecessors of the current Estonian Defense League are “glorified for fighting the Nazis,” is a grotesque historical fabrication. The historical predecessor of today’s Estonian Defense League, the Omakaitse (“home guard”), was formed in 1918 by former Tsarist officers in opposition to the Russian Revolution.

In 1941, the league was resurrected in conjunction with the German Nazi regime's Operation Barbarossa to carry out operations against the retreating Soviet Red Army.

The partisans in Estonia are "glorified" each year on August 28, which marks the anniversary of the day in 1942 when the Nazi Waffen SS began recruiting members of the Estonian Defense League into its ranks. SS veterans have held rallies on that day, supported by fascist and extreme nationalist elements. They have received official greetings from leading state officials.

Approximately 80,000 Estonians joined with Nazis in the Second World War. Another 30,000 joined the ranks of the Red Army, fighting the Nazis as the Estonian Rifle Corps. These later veterans are neither "glorified" nor celebrated.

Elements drawn from the Estonian Defense League into the SS served as guards and even commandants in the network of 22 concentration and labor camps in Estonia. These proved so efficient that at the January 1942 Wannsee Conference, convened by the Nazi leadership to oversee implementation of the so-called "final solution to the Jewish question," Nazi officials boasted that Estonia was already *Judenfrei* (free of Jews).

With the assistance of the Estonian fascists, the Nazis had exterminated virtually every one of the 4,500 Jews who failed to escape Estonia before the German occupation. Some 20,000 more Jews were transported from elsewhere in Europe to Estonia. Able-bodied men were worked to death in shale oil mines, while women, children and the elderly were murdered upon arrival.

Another 15,000 Red Army prisoners of war died in Estonia, many executed and others perishing from brutality and neglect.

What is involved in the whitewashing of this horrific legacy on the part of both Obama and the *New York Times*, who speak a common language crafted to promote the US military buildup against Russia, is the rewriting of the history of the last world war in order to prepare the grounds for the next.