

Russia's Nazism Narrative Against Lithuania and the Baltic States

The 2017 US Presidential elections were the final wake-up call for the Western Countries to see the full scope of Russian information warfare. For more than a decade Russia was [waging](#) an unceasing and far-ranging information warfare against NATO and the Western countries and they were caught by surprise. The Baltic States, on the other hand, were fighting on the [front](#) of information warfare since gaining their independence in 1990. The scope of different tactics, narratives and methods used against the Baltics is vast, therefore in this article only the most prominent and effective will be addressed. The [Vilnius Institute of Policy Analysis](#) (VIPA) presents you a few examples of the Russian information tactics using the Nazism narrative targeting the Baltic States.

Nazi Narrative

To begin with, even though the below mentioned information warfare methods were used against the Baltics, very similar patterns, adjusted to the attacked country's internal politics can be used against other Western countries as well. Therefore, it is a good idea to learn about these ongoing attacks from the very much active battle grounds in the Baltics.

[According to](#) Jolanta Darczewska, the head of Department for internal security in Eastern Europe at the Centre for Eastern Studies, Russia's military doctrine uses information warfare for two different goals: mobilization of the enemy's internal opposition and mobilization of Russia's own public. Externally, these methods seek management by fear and neutralization of the damage to Russia's image caused by its real military aggression. In the case of domestic use, these operations aim to impose images of the internal and external enemy, to emphasize the stability of the Russian regime and to project the role of the ruling elite.

Out of all different narratives used against the Baltics (the [Baltics](#) are Russo-phobic, Baltic States are dangerously [emigrating](#), Baltic States' economy is [going down](#) the gutter, the Baltic States' inhabitants [are poor](#) and others), the Nazism/Fascism narrative seems to be the most effective. This narrative is primarily used domestically, to create external enemies, to make the distinction between 'us' and 'them' and to portray Russia as a 'besieged fortress'. Due to strong history politics in Russia, the Soviet victory against Nazi Germany is glorified unquestionably, such as during the national celebration of Victory in the Great Patriotic War on May 9th. This narrative binds vast majority of the Russian public and even [measures](#) are taken against criticism towards the Soviet times. VIPA already wrote about the historical WWII reenactments in annual children military camps, yet another grotesque example of these narratives is [Kubinka's Patriot Park](#). Last year, in this Russian 'military Disneyland' near Moscow – a full battle of Berlin reenactment took place, including storming of Reichstag.



Image Sources – [GoogleMaps](#), [khmertalking.com](#), [YouTube](#).

And here is the actual footage of Reichstag's imitation being stormed by reenacting Soviet troops:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bCkr8t1q18>

Video Source – YouTube

We also saw the Nazi narrative widely used as an excuse of invasion to Ukraine. Ukraine was and still is [portrayed](#) to be ruled by a [Fascist junta](#) and the annexation of Crimea was merely saving of Russian speakers from the Nazis.

This narrative conveniently, without clear distinctions mixes the terms of Nationalism/Nazism/Fascism/Radicalism into one and uses it attract attention. The Nazi narrative is extremely effective in Russian society and here is how it works in practice against the Baltic States.

Russian News Reports

Television in Russia remains the champion of information spread, combining both entertainment and information operations. RT alone has [35 million](#) viewers daily world wide with digital platforms in six languages. One popular type of TV shows are the investigation journalism series, where a group of journalists are sent to investigate an event on the ground. Here are a few classic examples of such shows.

TV Zvezda

On March 16, 2017, Russian TV channel published an article followed by a TV [report](#), called 'The Baltics Embraced Nazi March'. March 16 is a debated Remembrance day of the Latvian Legionnaires. The day has been controversial as the Legion was a Nazi unit, but some argue that it was a military unit fighting against the Soviet Union.

https://tvzvezda.ru/news/vstrane_i_mire/content/201703162308-vhf1.htm

The TV anchor presented the march in the center of Riga, mentioning not only Latvians, but also Estonians, Lithuanians and Ukrainians marching. According to the reporter Parliamentarians joined and protesters were taken away by police. Number of people marching was not mentioned. Followed by a visual comparison of historical Nazi soldiers marching and Latvian commemorators.



Image Source – tvzvezda.ru

The TV anchor then proceeds to historical arguments about the Nazi Germany invading Russia and massacring civilians and other war crimes. The story then takes a sudden twist about a Nazi tradition of marching with torches and continues to argue that a similar tradition was brought back in the Baltics.

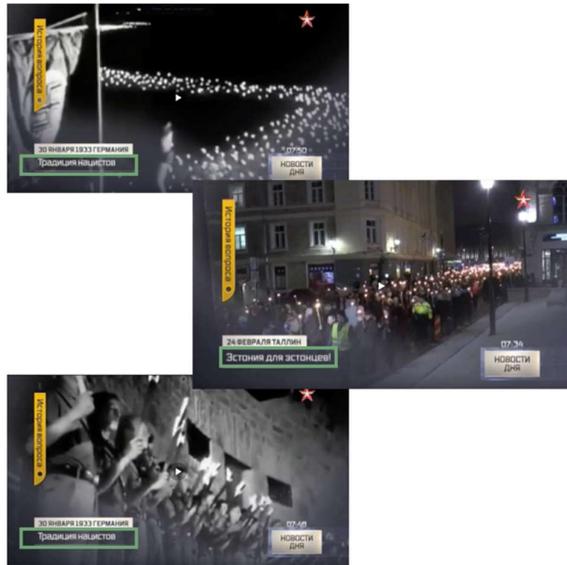


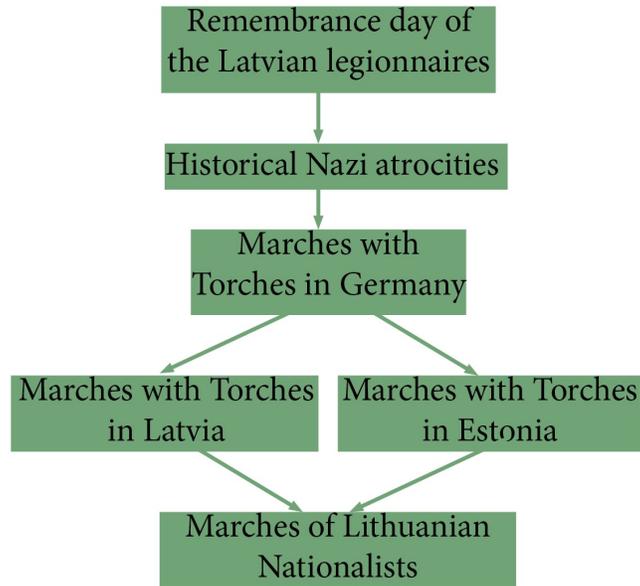
Image Source – tvzvezda.ru

Visual comparisons are shown in the background to compare Nazi Germany and the Baltics.



Image Source – tvzvezda.ru

Here is a visual representation of how the story building takes places:



The story is started with a debated event in Latvia, then a comparison with Nazi Germany is made. Then, Nazi Germany footage of torch marching is taken and visual parallels are made with Estonia and Latvia. Additional march of Lithuanian nationalists is involved into the narrative.

From the moment Nazi Germany footage is shown, the story is told in the light of Nazism. Generalizations are made about all three Baltic countries, even though the disputed event about which the report was made happened in Latvia. The public is left with an impression that Nazism is rising in the Baltics.

RT

Another example of such manipulation was aired by RT on May 24, 2012. The story was called 'Nazi Kindergarten Shame: Baltic divided over dark past' and looked into an instance, when kindergarteners were taught history lessons by reenactors wearing Latvian Legionnaire uniforms.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkH2q-9Cdkk&feature=youtu.be&a=>
Video Source - [YouTube](#)

The story, like the previous one, listed valid concerns about kindergarteners being taught history while given weapon imitations to play in a private kindergarten.



Image Source - [YouTube](#)

The story then takes a wild turn, providing an interview of an anonymous woman who is concerned of her safety, because of Latvian nationalists. Following by a comment of a marginal Latvian anti-fascist group leader, who insists that these instances are common in Latvia.



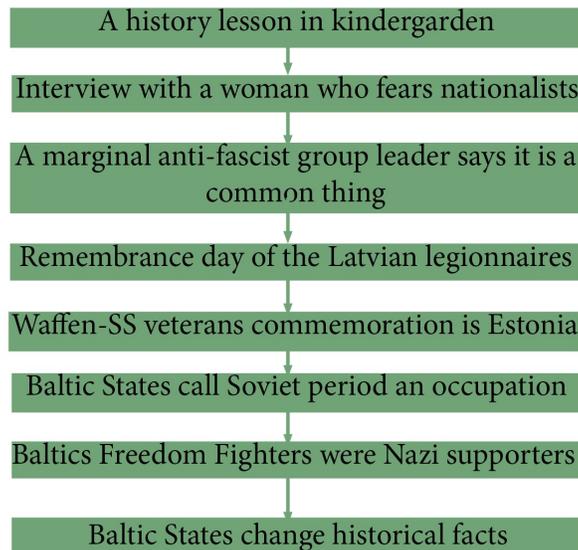
Image Source - [YouTube](#)

The story then revolves about the Latvian March 16 Legionnaire commemoration and the narrator starts making broader conclusions. The narrator makes a point that neo-Nazism is rising in the Baltics and that since gaining independence, the Baltic states became vocally critical of the Soviet period of their history. According to the narrator – those who fought against USSR are called Freedom Fighters in the Baltics, despite the fact that they fought along-side Nazis.



Image Source - [YouTube](#)

The narrator concludes, that in the Baltic school, children are taught false historic facts and that it will breed a future generation of neo-Nazis.



This is another example of a Russian Nazi narrative, when a story starting with a disputed event, spirals out of control to make broad generalizations. A story that started questioning if kindergarteners should be exposed to weapons and the story of Latvian legionnaires was used to portray all the Baltic states as rewriting history and breeding a new generations of neo-Nazis.

Channel 1

Lastly a good example of the Nazi narrative building was published as a reaction to the NATO Forest Brothers video clip. Russian Channel 1 posted a video on July 12, 2017 on their news programme, expressing outrage about the NATO's Forest Brothers video. Differently, from the other examples, this story rolls around only the Forest Brothers' video to conclude hasty generalizations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MdzzeN0iSY>
Video [Source](#) – 1TV

The narrator introduced that Forest Brothers – the Nazism supporters were portrayed as heroes in the NATO video. She stressed that Forest Brothers killed thousands of people in the Baltics, which was not mentioned in the NATO video.



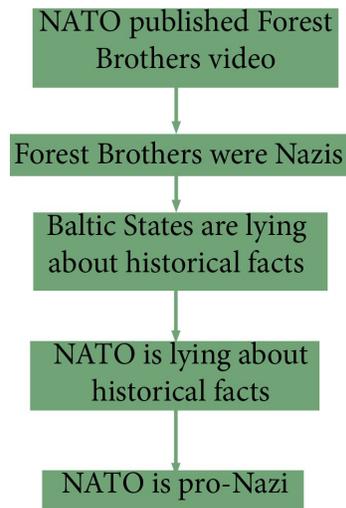
Image Source – [1TV](#)

Starting with excerpts from the NATO video, which is called a historical reconstruction, the video footage soon changes to WWII images of Nazi Germany attack on USSR. Again, a visual parallel is used to portray Forest Brothers as Nazis. Followed by a statement that the Baltic States are re-writing history.



Image Source – [1TV](#)

The narrator then argues that NATO is supporting this falsification of history and implies that NATO is pro-Nazi as well.



Conclusions

This information war never sleeps or stops. A masterful twisting of the narrative, followed by supporting audio and visual material leaves the public in awe and with a certain message, that has nothing to do with the truth. Above mentioned examples are taken from TV shows, but the same methods are used in social media, articles, radio shows and newspapers.

These messages are not only targeted for domestic audience, but also for foreign countries as well. RT is operating in 6 different languages and the list of such messaging examples is endless. These messages are usually conveyed masterfully and if the viewer is not questioning what he is seeing, a certain truth is planted in his mind. Information warfare in all of its many chameleon-like manifestations may well have become Moscow's most powerful weapon yet.