



The Soviet Takeover of Latvia: How Riga's Russian-language newspapers chronicled Latvia's occupation and Sovietization in 1940

Craig Cox

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In March 2014, the world watched Russia move with quickness and determination to assert its sovereignty over Crimea.

Among the tactics Russia used in Crimea were the skillful use of propaganda, deployment of highly trained covert special operations forces, leveraging local grievances of Crimea's Russian speakers and holding a snap election to achieve the desired outcome. Observers have characterized this technique as "hybrid warfare."

Similar methods were used by the Soviet Union in 1940 to absorb the independent Baltic republic of Latvia. By the time the Red Army marched into Riga in June 1940, the Latvian government and population had been cowed into submission and the Soviet occupation took place with little violence or bloodshed. This report documents the systematic process of Latvia's rapid Sovietization in 1940 by using news stories from Riga's Russian-language newspapers.

For many decades in the 20th century, the Soviet Union and Soviet-allied groups used remarkably similar tactics to achieve desired geopolitical outcomes in Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. Now, renewed attention is focusing on the situation in eastern Ukraine as well as Latvia and its neighbors in Estonia and Lithuania.

This report (together with its translations from original Russian-language source materials) was written as a graduate school term paper in 1988 and adapted for Kindle in April 2014.

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