**P E O P L E A G A I N S T U S I N G A R T S T O P R O M O T E W A R**

In March 2014 Igor Butman joined a host of other Russian cultural figures in signing an open letter in support of President Putin’s policies on Crimea and Ukraine, effectively advocating the annexation of Crimea by Russia. The letter is available at the website of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation: <http://mkrf.ru/press-center/news/ministerstvo/deyateli-kultury-rossii-v-podderzhku-pozitsii-prezidenta-po-ukraine-i-krymu>. The English translation is available here: <http://russianartists4war.com/letter/>. Mr. Butman’s signature is number 63).

Although he is a naturalized United States citizen, Mr. Butman is also a member of the Supreme Council of the leading Russian party Yedinaya Rossiya (United Russia), notorious for its endorsement of Russia's anti-gay law, the law prohibiting international adoption of Russian children, and other laws contrary to International norms for human rights. The party is also well known for its anti-American rhetoric.

Mr. Butman is an official confident of president Putin. He officially and proudly endorses him as a candidate for presidency of Russian Federation.

Although he is obviously involved in politics, Mr. Butman signed the letter not as a politician, but as a musician. This involvement of artistic intelligentsia in the political actions of the government is clearly intended to whitewash the military invasion of Ukraine in the eyes of Russian society. This type of propaganda campaign via "collective open letters" has a long tradition in Russia and is rooted in the USSR and Stalinism.

**We find this involvement of arts into politics, especially to support war, aggression and a large-scale devastation absolutely unacceptable in the modern civilized world.**

Targeted primarily at a Russian audience, the letter was officially released in Russian only and has never been translated into any other language by Russian officials. (The English translation linked above is by one of our members.) Although he signed the letter willfully and voluntarily, Mr. Butman has no desire to appear to his Western audience as an official supporter of annexation of Crimea and a war promoter. To the contrary, he portrays himself as a messenger of peace through jazz music. As a personal confidante of President Putin, Mr. Butman conveniently draws the line between his political support for the authoritarian regime and playing music that for almost a century has been a symbol of freedom of expression.

Last year the U.S. Department of State warned Mr. Butman that as a U.S. citizen he should not attend a jazz festival in Russian-occupied Crimea (this is in accordance with the US and EU sanctions that prohibit conducting any kind of business activity in the occupied territories). However, hypocritically claiming that jazz is above politics, Mr. Butman went to Crimea, which Russia invaded with his official support and blessing, to play the role of “a messenger of peace”.

Talking to the protesters after one of his performances in New York, in response to a question about the potential necessity for him to adhere to his Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America, Mr. Butman expressed astonishing cynicism, even derision. In fact, the matter of his citizenship has been widely discussed in Russian mass media in recent months, and Mr. Butman has repeatedly and openly admitted that for him, US citizenship is a mere matter of convenience for trouble-free traveling. He said the same to protesters on video.

Our protests, held internationally, are ethical rather than political. They are intended to inform the international community of the hypocrisy, cynicism, and perfidy of the signatories of that despicable letter, which gives sanctimonious approval to actions which have deliberately inflicted thousands of deaths, hundreds of thousands of injuries, and displaced millions of people and violated the human rights of tens of millions.