

Journalist Masha Gessen takes university audience inside Putin's war on West

Culture

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ITHACA, New York, Nov 23, 2014 (UBO) — In a recent speech, given on the campus of Cornell University at Ithaca in New York state, Russian-American journalist and activist Masha Gessen presented one of the most insightful addresses on the Putin regime you are likely to see anyplace. Gessen said in part in an article by Mark Kasvin for the *Cornell Chronicle*: Describing her experience writing the 2012 book *'The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin,'* Russian-American journalist and LGBTQ activist Masha Gessen recalled feeling optimism while writing the book's epilogue during protests against Russian government corruption. Later, she would write about crackdowns on the protests. In her campus lecture, *'Putin's War Against the West,'* Gessen tied Putin's state sanctioned homophobia to his need to keep control of the nation. [hellip;] According to Gessen, this rejection of homosexuality and Western ideals was easy for the Russian public to accept because up until that point, the Russian government had never directly talked about sex. Putin gained control of the conversation and set Russia's national character to be not a nation-state based on boundaries, but a civilization-state based on traditional ideals and whose enemy was the West. To maintain this identity, Putin needed a war, and the pro-European Union Euromaidan protests that began in November 2013 in Ukraine provided an opportunity. *'Russia doesn't believe in the existence of Ukraine,'* said Gessen. *'It sees Ukraine as a reflection of itself.'* In the eyes of the Kremlin, the EU expanding into Ukraine would expand its *'homosexual lobby,'* a phrase, according to Gessen, that was more shorthand for foreign influence and the primary reason for the recent invasion of Ukraine. Gessen lamented the ease with which Russian media controlled the language surrounding the conflict and said Western media failed to understand and take control of the story. This allowed Russia-backed militants in Eastern Ukraine to be called *'pro-Russia rebels,'* which painted the conflict as humanitarian, and mistakenly attributing the crisis to Ukraine rather than to Putin's need to maintain power. *'The story of Russia's war is not and was never about Ukraine,'* said Gessen. *'It is a story of a civilization war, and Putin must continue it in order to stay in power.'* For complete text about the article, link below: [http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/2 ...ce-inside-putins-war-west](http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/2...ce-inside-putins-war-west) Photo courtesy of Cornell Chronicle