

Letter to Herr Wolf of 06 December 2023

Dear Mr. Wolf,

Dr. Diem's Russian colleague is me. My name is Alexander Sharikov, PhD, Professor at the Institute of Media in the National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, author of more than 100 publications on the problems of media sociology and media education.

I will explain my position, which you have indicated that "**von nazis regiert**". Perhaps this is not an accurate translation of the thought – my English is far to be perfect, sorry. A more accurate translation should be "Ukraine is ruled by nationalists." But nationalism in the Ukrainian case is quite close to Nazism in the classical sense. I will give just a few arguments.

Judging by the tone of your statement, I violated the taboo of political correctness in relation to Ukraine, which now dominates the Western information field, as well as among politicians and the expert community. But then I will make a couple of judgments on this matter:

- In 2010, President of Ukraine Yushchenko awarded Stepan Bandera the title of Hero of Ukraine. The President and the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine welcome the celebration of the birthday of Stepan Bandera, erect monuments to him throughout the country, organizations are named after him. However, Stepan Bandera is known as a person who actively collaborated with the Nazis in the SS-Galizien division (https://yandex.ru/images/search?text=Степан%20Андреевич%20Бандера%20в%20немецкой%20форме&source=related-duck&lr=213&from=tabbar&pos=0&rpt=simage&img_url=http%3A%2F%2Fostsachsen-tv.com%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2022%2F04%2Fbandera2.jpg ; see also <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/24/01/2020/5e2a45ca9a794749f033da62>). On his hands are the blood of thousands of Ukrainians, Poles, Jews and the monstrous Volyn massacre. Is this normal for a so-called democratic state? Is it normal that this state supports those who implemented the Nazi ideology about the destruction of "lower-class people" while serving in Nazi units? Even Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki, who generally supports Ukraine, protested against Ukraine praising this criminal (<https://niezalezna.pl/470193-morawiecki-rozmawial-z-premierem-ukrainy-stanowczy-sprzeciw-dla-gloryfikowania-bandery>).
- The Western press tried to present as heroes the combatants from the Azov Battalion, who did not hide their commitment to Nazi ideology and emphasized it with Nazi symbols (<https://www.ostsachsen-tv.com/azow-die-ideologie-der-ss/>). Isn't this another confirmation that Ukrainian nationalism, which is of a state nature, supports Nazism? But there are also sensible voices in the world who ask the question: why support neo-Nazis in Ukraine? (https://www.rebelnews.com/ezra_levant_show_march_10_2022).

Deeply respected Mr. Wolf, you reproache me with the thesis "**die eu hätte imperialistisch osteuropa erobert**". If he is referring to my scenario No. 1 of the end of the war in Ukraine, then I will start with the fact that this is a hypothetical result that may or may not be realized. Of course, the legitimate division of Ukraine into five parts is a long procedure that should be preceded by a broad international discussion, including with the participation, in addition to Russia, of such entities as the EU, the United Nations, the United States, as well as the mentioned neighbors of the current Ukraine – Poland, Hungary and Romania. However, Ukraine in the new version may

agree to such a section. I did not describe in detail all the possible mechanisms. My logic is simple. This is just one of the likely scenarios that may suit everyone at some point. You call the scenario itself "**jenseitigen**". But I wouldn't rule him out. He is the softest of all.

Were you confused by what I wrote about hundreds of thousands of foreign mercenaries fighting on the side of Ukraine. I used a rhetorical style, referring to the entire period of hostilities since 2014, and took into account both those who fought, then left, who died, who is fighting now, and who will come in the foreseeable future. Let me remind you that in 2014, militants from Georgia, from Arab and other countries, as well as strange people from all over the world – various kinds of adventurers provided significant support for military operations. In 2016, President of Ukraine Poroshenko issued a decree according to which foreigners could enlist in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The so-called "Foreign Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine" was created. The servicemen of this legion were issued citizenship of Ukraine in a simplified manner (<https://ria.ru/20221124/naemniki-1833971635.html>). According to the former head of the LNR Marat Bashirov, as of November 2022, the number of mercenaries of foreign origin was about 200 thousand (<https://www.politnavigator.net/ehks-glava-lnr-naschital-200-tysyach-najomnikov-v-ryadakh-vsuo.html>), including "Ukrainian legionnaires" who do not know a word in the Ukrainian language. This is a total rough estimate, summed up for the entire period from 2014 to 2022.

Now about your remark about "**das transkript einer beliebigen spätabend-diskussion im russischen staatsfernsehen**". In my previous letters, I never referred to Russian sources, so that no one would try to accuse me of propaganda from the Russian side. Exclusively Western sources were used. Only now I have made an exception, using the materials of the Russian media about phenomena and facts that the Western press ignores or does not write about the real scale of what is happening. And if my opinion does not coincide with the Western mainstream, it does not mean that I am playing a propaganda role in this discussion. I was invited by my old friend Peter Diem, whom I respect infinitely, and therefore I agreed. He wanted to hear some alternative unofficial point of view from the Russian side. I said what I think. But apparently, the discussion is over. I draw the following conclusions:

1. Western politicians, journalists and experts are not ready to talk to Russia on equal terms. They want a "complete victory" over Russia and are ready to supply a huge amount of weapons and finances to Ukraine, invite mercenaries there. In fact, this is a painfully familiar arrogance, unwillingness to listen to another opinion and take into account the interest of opponents.
2. The attempt to strangle Russia economically failed, which causes extreme irritation, first of all, in Washington, London and Brussels. "Unknown terrorists" attacked the Northern Streams and the Crimean Bridge did not help either. They only angered the "Russian bear". In fact, we are talking about the fact that America no longer has competitors in the energy markets of Europe. Well, gentlemen, buy oil and gas from the USA at prices many times higher than Russian ones. Russia has already found other partners.
3. Western countries have created an artificial information bubble, expelling from the information space everything that does not fit into the ideology of transatlantism. Therefore, you have drawn a distorted picture. You are talking about Russian propaganda, and I will say that Western propaganda is more massive and more sophisticated.
4. Western politicians, journalists and experts do not want to understand that it is not the "evil" Putin, but the dominant mood of Russian society now.

And I recommend you, dear Mr. Wolf, as a journalist, to go to the Donbass, to its eastern part, i.e. to the side that has now joined Russia, and honestly talk to ordinary people who have been shelled by Ukrainian nationalists for eight years, then go to Mariupol and see how representatives of all regions of Russia are rebuilding the city after military destruction. But it is unlikely that you will go there, and if you do, then with an editorial task – to write only bad things about Russia.

But if you went there, you could see that there are many families where the brother is fighting against the brother, and the son against the father. And they do not want to admit in the West that a civil war has been unleashed in Ukraine. And the Americans unleashed it with the hands of Ukrainian nationalists in order to rule the world undividedly, eliminate competitors in the markets and impose on their "allies" (in fact, vassals) the idea of a threat from Russia in order to give their military-industrial complex a good profit.

Do you know how Russia, among other things, differs from Ukraine? This question was well answered by Nadezhda Savchenko, a former Ukrainian servicewoman who was captured and then released. She wrote: "It is humiliating for Ukrainians to realize that they were used. That's why they're angry. And Ukrainians are also infuriated that Russians do not hate them" (<https://riafan.ru/22034890-eks-deputat-radi-savchenko-ukraintsam-unizitel-no-soznavat-cto-ih-ispol-zovali>).

Russians do not hate Ukrainians, just as they do not hate those who denigrate Russia in the media, in the political arena and in the expert community. Why? Because anger is a trait of the weak, and Russia is a big strong country, a world power that cannot afford it.

With best wishes,

Prof. A. Sharikov, PhD.