



Letter from Moscow

Everyone has relatives and friends - Ukrainians in Russia and Russians in Ukraine.

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You won't find a Russian who doesn't have relatives, friends or acquaintances in Ukraine. That is what makes the conflict so cruel for both peoples. What about Ukrainian-Russian ties on a personal level these days? I asked around in my circle of acquaintances. They are people from the Russian middle class who live in Moscow, Tula, Krasnodar and in Siberia. Most of them are family men between 35 and fifty.

They talk to friends in Ukraine every day. I am told that these are conversations of speechlessness, without hatred, but also without understanding for the leadership of both countries. They agree that the so-called Euromaidan in 2014 was an

American coup. A stable, not necessarily beloved government had been replaced by two rulers, first Petro Poroshenko, then Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The easiest way to find proof of American perpetration is on YouTube by typing in "Victoria Nuland phone call". The video shows how the American diplomat - together with the American ambassador at the time - sealed Ukraine's fate. Poroshenko and Zelenskyy were not representing the interests of the country. Rather, they had deliberately driven their people into war. President Putin does not have to face this outrageous accusation.

Nevertheless, Putin also has to put up with criticism - but in a different way than people in the West probably believe. My conversation partners think Putin should have intervened in Ukraine as early as 2014. When asked how that could have been done, they remain silent.

All my Russian counterparts say that an American Nato satellite on their western border is "unacceptable". This word has a different, i.e. more absolute meaning in Russian than in German or English. Apparently it is unknown in the West. In any case, neither Europe nor the Americans have taken the Russian government's position seriously, my acquaintances complain.

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The Russian government gets better marks. It has exhausted its diplomatic options, even after the USA and Ukraine signed the "US-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership" in Washington on 10 November 2021.

This agreement finds virtually no mention in the Western press. Its goal is the "full integration" of Ukraine into the "European and Euro-Atlantic institutions", i.e. accession to the EU and NATO. This is not a conspiracy theory of the Russian government, but can be read in the preamble of the treaty text.

What should we make of the sanctions? My conversation partners believe that, on the one hand, the measures have no influence on the formation of opinion and strategy of the Russian government, but that, on the other hand, they will severely affect 150 million Russians who have not been involved in the government's decisions.

Interestingly, most of them think that the consequences of these sanctions are worse for Europe. An economic fiasco is to be expected there. There is no gloating about this, probably because the Russians do not know or allow Europhobia.

When our Federal Councillor said that Switzerland would remain a neutral country despite the imposition of sanctions, I elicited a laugh from one of my dialogue partners only once during the entire sad conversation, albeit a bitter one.

Two statements proved that the Russians never lose their sense of humour even in difficult times: the withdrawal of Mc Donald's and Coca Cola was American direct aid to promote Russian public health.

And in music circles, regarding the decision of the Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra to stop playing pieces by the Russian composer Tchaikovsky, the bon mot circulates: "Where is Cardiff - do they have an orchestra?"

ARTICLE TAGS:

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