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In the Propaganda War

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IN THE PROPAGANDA WAR

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On September 25, 2022, I was standing at the window in my room on the 5th floor of the Park Inn hotel in Donetsk. I watched as an artillery shell hit an apartment building. 800 meters away from me, part of the facade came crashing down. At about the same time, I got a text message from *T-Online*. The editor, Lars Wienand, wanted to know if I was an election observer at the referenda in the Russian-occupied territories. I was on one of several research trips to Ukraine and Russia. I clarified that I belonged to a journalist group. Apparently, he only asked pro forma. Because my denial did not interest him at all.

What came next is a moral picture of self-proclaimed quality journalism and foremost academic culture. I therefore must tell you about myself. But, in fact, this is really all about you. About your freedom of opinion and information, about your freedom of research and teaching. It's about Article 5 of the German Basic Law. It is about how, in the service of propaganda, desk jockeys try to censor public opinion, to politically cleanse academic life and to destroy livelihoods; and in this way make an example, to force anticipatory obedience by creating fear—in you.

While my associate and I were trying to escape militias, snipers, artillery shells and mines in the Donbass, desk-jockey editors in Germany were launching a journalistic attack. I was made into an election observer at Putin's sham referendums, an apologist for the Kremlin, a journalist on a political errand. As a result, the Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel and the Hochschule für Medien, Kommunikation und Wirtschaft (HMKW) in Berlin cancelled my lectureships. They fell for a hoax that has been fabricated in such a way that someone has to fall for it. Such denunciation campaigns, for which *T-Online* is well-known, only work when others join in. No one checked. This points to the kowtowing of academic elites to propaganda.

Here are the facts:

In Luhansk and Donetsk, I attended two press conferences at the request of the local authorities. I also did this during research in the Kosovo War in 1999 and in Afghanistan in 2002—both wars of aggression, by the way, that were also illegal under international law. There were no mandates from the UN Security Council.

Nevertheless, I accompanied German soldiers on their missions, took part in military briefings and press conferences, spoke there myself, explained my research assignment and reported on my experiences. This is nothing unusual, if only because all those involved need to exchange information, for example, about where mines had not yet been cleared or where dispersed free fighters were on the move. Anyone who, like me, has been in a minefield (near Orahovac) or under fire (near Prizren) knows the importance of such coordination. Thus, I was "embedded" in the KFOR. No one would have thought of accusing me of this or even of claiming that I could not report independently, that I would even spread KFOR propaganda or justify a war of aggression in violation of international law.

My stay in Donetsk demonstrated yet again how dangerous such research is: our hotel was [shelled with heavy artillery](#) from Marinka, while a 155-millimeter shell [just missed the Park Inn](#) and my room on the 5th floor. Our local associate and driver Yevgeny was killed six weeks later by HIMARS rocket fire.

Exchanging information, including that concerning the mood of the population, is virtually a matter of survival in a war zone. That's why I also talked to Russians. As a journalist, I am constantly talking to people who have different origins or different opinions. That is the core of my work. It's not about having something in common with them, but that's how information is researched. Moreover, no one would have thought of accusing Peter Scholl-Latour, for example,

who was the first to film from the Viet Cong side, in the 1973 Vietnam War, of spreading communist propaganda. Reporter Martha Gellhorn [survived eight wars](#) (Spain 1937; Finland 1939; China 1941; Italian front 1943; Normandy invasion 1944; Vietnam War 1966; Six Day War 1967; civil war in El Salvador from 1980). She was also "embedded" in the U.S. Armed Forces (at the rank of captain) during World War II. No one ever thought of accusing her of one-sided reporting.

Reporting from a war and crisis zone is absolutely impossible without contact with the people involved—even if they have blood on their hands.

One more thing: This war in Ukraine will end at the negotiating table—or we'll all be blown up. One can get used to the idea of negotiating with Russians. I have been talking to people from Russia for 25 years. Among them are government employees as well as opposition members. I have friends on both sides of the front, in Russia and in Ukraine. For more than 20 years, I have been bringing back films from Russia that critically examine grievances in Putin's state. The Swiss [Infosperber](#) and the Canadian [The Postil Magazine](#) have taken the trouble to link these contributions so that everyone can see them. My research in Russia has brought me two unpleasant encounters with the FSB domestic intelligence service. Once we narrowly escaped arrest. There are witnesses to these events.

It is quite brazen when desk jockeys in universities or editors of online media, who have no idea about the conditions in war and crisis zones and have hardly attracted attention with their own independent research results, accuse me, who has stuck my neck out for independent reporting, of propaganda. They should first of all listen carefully so that their own heads are not crammed with propaganda.

At the beginning of the press conference, I made it clear that I was not speaking as an election observer, but as a journalist doing research for a book project. This was correctly translated into Russian by Sergey Filbert. We were both properly accredited. The planning of the trip had begun in the spring of 2022, when there was no talk of referenda. The date was communicated to us only three days before, in Moscow. The research trip was paid for by ourselves; we did not receive any offers of bribes. We were able to move completely independently in the war zone. The local military authorities did not impose any conditions.

During the press conference, I explained that this referendum did not meet the requirements for a free and secret-ballot election. However, I also explained that the results reflect the mood of the population. After all, the Donbass has been shelled by the Ukrainian army since 2014, and there have been more than 14,000 deaths, according to UN figures. For this reason, the population came into opposition to the government in Kiev. All this was too much for the journalistic satraps of the power elites: the truth about the Donbass must not reach German living rooms—that would undermine the propaganda narratives.

T-Online portrayed me as an election observer, although I clearly stated that I was not an election observer. The portal insinuated that I was indifferent to Putin's war of aggression. I took legal action against this. Russian media may have called me an election observer, but it would have been *T-Online's* job to check the factuality of this. Media is a filter pretending to be a clear window. In journalism, it's not enough to sit at a desk and stare at a computer. Because on the Internet, you can only find what someone else has uploaded—according to their own selection and their own interests. Anyone who knows that is looking for a reference source in the real world.

It would have been easy to find out. A call to the Civil Chamber of the Russian Federation, which is competent according to the Constitution, would have sufficed; [the contact details](#) can be found on their website. Something like, "Could you send me a list of your election observers?" Don't worry. German is a very popular foreign language in Russia; English can also help in a pinch. Presumably, the Civil Chamber media center would have referred to its website. There you will find a press release dated September 29, 2022, about a hearing before the Civil Chamber in Moscow with all election observers. I was not a participant in the hearing, nor am I named [in the press release](#). Time needed for such? Maybe 15 minutes. Those who are afraid to talk to Russians could have entered my name into a search engine. They would have come across [my website](#), or the portal [Vimeo](#). My reports from Russia can be viewed on these sites. The effort involved? Perhaps 10 minutes. But *T-Online* forged ahead without any such source in the real world and thus violated its duty of care. The principle of craftsmanship: *Audiatur et altera pars*—which is why I researched on both sides of the front—was also put aside. The number of clicks is more important than clean craftsmanship. All this shows that it was obviously not about research, but about denunciation. Because such denunciation campaigns generate clicks and increase advertising revenues.

This made it all the more urgent for *T-Online* to call the universities mentioned. Helge Buttgerit's [account](#) probably hits the nail on the head: "The *T-Online* journalist learned of Mr. Baab's presence on site, researched his background and made a press inquiry to the Berlin University of Media, Communication and Business (HMKW). "Do you know what your lecturer is doing there? At the mock referendums? He's legitimizing them! Do you think that's good?" That's how it might have been. It doesn't matter how exactly, because according to its own statement, the university was on the phone with the delinquent, who was made one by his mere presence in the wrong place at the wrong time. And then a statement was hastily published on the homepage. The gist: We condemn and distance ourselves (HMKW, 26.9.22). Meanwhile, the article appeared on the net. Author Wienand could now add the accomplishment of his mission right away; online many things can be changed and enhanced quickly."

The call from HMKW was indeed not long in coming. We were on the edge of the gray zone and had just escaped direct fire. The line was full of static. All I heard was, "We will sharply separate ourselves from you... What you are seeing on the ground is bogus objectivity!" That the shells that just flew around our heads were only fired for appearances—I would not have thought of that. Someone who at best has newspaper knowledge wants to know the truth in the war zone by remote diagnosis from a distance of 2,100 kilometers. That would be a challenge even for experts on Eastern Europe. But the chancellor of HMKW, Roland Freytag, is not an expert on Eastern Europe; his area is psychology. In his field, such a thing is called "projection."

In the HMKW press release, I was accused of having legitimized the "sham referenda" and of having made myself the fig leaf of the aggressors. It was incompatible with the basic principles of HMKW to employ me further. But if research on the ground legitimizes the local rulers, then the press is no longer allowed to check the propaganda of the warring parties against reality and is limited to spreading their propaganda lies. For only on the spot is something possible that cannot be done at the desk—and nor in editorial offices or academies—a reality check.

So, what Freytag says and does, how the CAU behaves, is an attack on press freedom and an attempt at indirect censorship. Quite apart from the fact that journalists would then also no longer be allowed to report on abuses or violations of the law in Russia, as I have done. This means that these universities support the disinformation of a war party and thus become a war party themselves. They are thus violating Article 5 of the German Basic Law and the freedom of

opinion, research and teaching enshrined in the Basic Law.

HMKW Chancellor Roland Freytag was an obedient [GDR](#) citizen, a fellow traveler of the [SED](#) system. Then came the time of change, and he changed roles. Now he strongly advocated democracy and invoked the new freedoms. That's how he got to the top as a turncoat. He was one of the speakers at the big demonstration on Berlin's Alexanderplatz on [November 4, 1989](#), which heralded the beginning of the end of the SED state.

A turncoat from the GDR like Roland Freytag wanted to explain to me (who has demonstrably been resistant in different systems), and from a distance—the reality that I was currently researching on the ground. This behavior belongs in the textbook of anticipatory obedience. For here we are dealing not only with an uninformed know-it-all, but with the primacy of propaganda, albeit Western propaganda. Professor Freytag obviously learned a lot in the SED state—above all, to swim with the tide. The attitude is: If the prevailing opinion does not fit reality—all the worse for reality.

Kiel University also immediately terminated my teaching contract. In contrast to HMKW, however, the teaching contract had already been written out. This made it possible to take legal action. The notice was given in an expedited procedure, because there was imminent danger. Therefore, the hearing required by administrative law was waived. Christian Albrechts University saw its reputation at risk because I assumed the role of an election observer in the Donbass, or at least gave that impression. Again, no proper examination of the false allegation. The dean of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Professor Christian Martin, wrote, according to the administrative file before the court, "I also don't know what there is great to look at in Donbass." That is the rejection of any form of science. Because its findings are measured against reality. Again, it was obviously not about proper examination, but about protecting oneself in panic from supposedly bad press, and hastily submitting to the prevailing climate of opinion. This shows that it was not about knowledge, but about commitment—commitment to a war party, Ukraine and NATO. This has nothing to do with science.

When it comes to the reputation of Kiel University, it is worth taking a look at the past. For the heroism of the faculty in defending democracy and peace was kept within narrow limits from the beginning of the 20th century. Before and during the First World War, hurrah-patriotism and anti-democratic-monarchist sentiments prevailed. The "meaning of sacrificial death for the fatherland" was [explained to the youth](#). During the [Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch](#) in 1920, armed Freikorps were formed at Kiel University, who wanted to crush the Weimar Republic and engaged in firefights with the [defenders of democracy](#) in Muhliusstrasse and Bergstrasse. When the National Socialist era dawned in 1933, professors and students at Kiel University did not want to stand on the sidelines. They went into battle against the intrusion of "Western liberalist and democratic ideas," in order to create a "new unity out of blood;" and on May 3, 1933, [they confessed](#) to the Kiel student body: "The study of history takes its innermost justification only from its service to the present"—the National Socialist one, of course. [From 1933 on](#), liberal, social democratic or Jewish scholars were expelled—at least 38 out of 222, according to other accounts even half. (See the work of [Ralph Uhlig](#) and Hans Christian Petersen, "Expertisen für die Praxis. Das Kieler Institut für Weltwirtschaft 1933 bis 1945," in [Christoph Cornelissen](#)).

Joachim Krause, a political scientist from Kiel, who has since retired, [justified the war](#) of aggression waged by a U.S.-led coalition against Iraq in 2003, which violated international law, saying that it was a matter of "protecting the system of collective security against a state that... quite deliberately sets out to undermine this system... in order to gain leeway from it for the

renewed production of weapons of mass destruction..." Except that these weapons of mass destruction have never been found and corresponding claims have turned out to be lies. I am not aware that he was deprived of his professorship for this. Here one sees how CAU measures with a double standard. Kiel University may have many reasons to worry about its reputation; I am probably the least of them. [Roberto de LaPuente writes](#): "If journalist Patrik Baab had spoken of Germans' 'escalation phobia,' he might still be doing his teaching job at Kiel University today. However, he was doing journalism: That is the worst reproach one can face today." This is how journalism becomes an offense. The freedom of research and teaching is replaced by political correctness. In this way, CAU itself takes sides in the propaganda war.

It becomes completely dubious when the university involves uninvolved parties. It refused to rent a room in the guest house to my American friend Professor Robert E. Harkavy, unlike in previous years, and justified this by saying that my lawsuit against CAU was not helpful in the matter.

What does Robert Harkavy, a scientist who has been associated with this university since 1982, have to do with my lawsuit? The foreign press spoke of a return of National Socialist "[Sippenhaft](#)." Such things endanger the reputation of CAU, not my research in the Donbass.

Harald Welzer and Richard David Precht [speak](#) of the "ethics of mind surplus": "And the morality presented with power and vehemence springs by no means from the firm stance one supposedly takes, but one moralizes opportunism." It is a matter of swimming along in the current of prevailing opinion. Pierre Bourdieu [has described](#) the habitus behind this as "respectful conformism." Respect, of course, for the supposedly powerful. When it comes to appropriate campaign journalism, *T-Online* has the knack for provoking hasty reactions by way of fear of bad press. That is one side. The other side is the complete absence of clean craftsmanship and moral courage on the part of those called upon. The alacrity with which they make themselves accomplices in the campaign is actually laughable. One believes oneself safe in the protection of the power elites. This is the opportunism of intellectuals.

This cancel culture has nothing to do with a democratic public sphere. After all, democracy means allowing even those positions to have their say in the arena of the public sphere that one does not like. But in the meantime, many academics and journalists are carriers and promoters of identity-politics thinking. It aims at putting specific social groups in the center and enforcing a higher recognition of such groups. Cultural, ethnic, social, or sexual characteristics are used. This politicization of identity is directed against the universalism of the Enlightenment. It is thus a central discourse characteristic of the Counter-Enlightenment. The assumption that different cultures can arrive at knowledge through different paths and claim special rights for themselves is [historically seen](#) as a precursor to racial thinking and national superiority. In this perspective, freedom no longer means being argumentatively convincing in the arena of debate, but rather professing one's allegiance to a group, demonstrating a certain attitude. All those who do not submit to the collective process thus lose their claim to validity. Thus, identity politics approaches are directly connectable to fascist figures of thought. The historian [Götz Aly](#): "National Socialism was also an identitarian movement!"

When press organs present denunciation campaigns instead of facts; when leading university members launch an attack on the freedom of the press and thus on the freedom of opinion and information; when professors smash the freedom of research and teaching without necessity —rights with constitutional rank, mind you—then one can confidently speak of anti-democratic thinking. It does not spread in circles of the intellectually disadvantaged. Rather, intellectuals—or

what is left of them, academics—make themselves the drivers of anti-democratic thinking.

T-Online is stepping out of the role of reporter, just as those responsible at CAU have stepped out of the role of academic discourse participant. They have become political-ideological actors in the process of opinion control and mind control, and thus self-appointed censors with the goal of narrowing the public debate space to the state-desired area, indeed to the soup plate horizon of their own huckster's soul.

“Major press outlets also bear responsibility. Rather than seeking to contextualize events properly for their readers, the media have trumpeted the government’s preferred narrative. Whatever its motivations, the mainstream media have implemented, and continue to implement, a regime of propaganda that misinforms the public and can only be perceived by Russia as an affront to the national character of its people. Online providers of information are doing much the same. In fact, as the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and First Amendment lawyer Glenn Greenwald has shown, massive censorship of dissenting views is now occurring at many levels of society in both the United States and Europa. Although it is difficult to look at the horrific images coming out of Ukraine without revulsion and anger, succumbing to blind emotion and embracing the dominant Western narrative is a dangerous error. It empowers the worst forces in Washington, including the nexus of bureaucratic power and commercial interest... This narrative also enables the most Russophobic and militaristic of European leaders, as well as those with the least guts to stand up to misguided American policies. The narrative clouds the minds of American and European citizens, leading to jingoism and war-mongering” ([Benjamin Abelow](#)).

From Anne Morelli one can read how this war hysteria is promoted by propaganda—also, and especially, [by the propaganda](#) used by NATO:

1. The Kremlin is to blame for everything. After all, it has invaded a weaker neighboring country. We don't really want war.
2. It is an "unprovoked" war of aggression. The enemy is solely responsible for this war.
3. Putin is a fascist, a butcher. The enemy has the face of the devil—or at least of a villain.
4. In Ukraine, what is being fought for is "western values" or "freedom." The real interests are disguised with honorable, higher goals.
5. The enemy intentionally commits heinous war crimes—as in Bucha. When our people make mistakes, it's stupid.
6. We have hardly any losses, but the enemy has enormous losses. We hear this on both sides now, the actual numbers are secret.
7. We fight for a good cause—the enemy must learn to lose; we are morally in the right after all.
8. Even poets and thinkers support our cause.
9. The enemy uses internationally outlawed weapons, uranium munitions, poison gas, biological weapons, cluster bombs.
10. Whoever questions our propaganda is a Putin-stooge, a lumpen-pacifist, a submission-pacifist, a right-wing cross-front agitator, the Fifth Column of Moscow.

I got dragged into this propaganda narrative. Because one thing must not happen under any circumstances—that the truth about this war become known. Therefore, the reporter on the ground must be made out to be a fig leaf of the aggressors and supporter of a war of aggression. The goal then becomes to undermine his credibility through denunciation and political purges. For under no circumstances should one's own outrages, one's own shared responsibility, one's own interests and the suffering of others be allowed to reach German living

rooms. This would enable people to do what propaganda undermines—the reality check. Instead of war fever, there would then be disillusionment. Propaganda works particularly well when people themselves have no knowledge.

Part of the propaganda narrative is to omit essential historical facts in connection with this war, or at least to push them into the background. Here, without claiming to be exhaustive, are the most important:

1. NATO's eastward expansion to Russia's borders despite promises to the contrary;
2. The Maidan Coup and the masterminds around Victoria Nuland responsible for it;
3. Then-Vice President Joe Biden's bragging about how he used financial blackmail to force the Ukrainian government to fire a prosecutor who was investigating a corruption scandal involving an energy company with the then Vice-President's son, Hunter Biden on its board;
4. Ukraine's biological weapons production facilities;
5. The neo-Nazi Azov Battalion and similar organizations;
6. President Zelensky's self-enrichment and secret foreign assets;
7. Human rights abuses in Ukraine;
8. Zelensky's laws restricting freedom of expression and banning political parties;
9. Reprisals against the Russian Orthodox Church;
10. [Endemic corruption in Ukraine](#).
11. The blocking of a peace agreement all ready for signature, negotiated between the warring parties in Istanbul in March—for which there are at least six sources, two of which were involved in the negotiation process.

In light of this, Noam Chomsky laments the collapse of the democratic debating space: "Perhaps parts of the intellectual class are so deeply immersed in the propaganda system that they cannot even perceive the absurdity of what they are saying. Either way, it's a drastic reminder that the arena of rational discourse is collapsing precisely where there should be hope that it will be defended." In academic circles, that is.

Denunciation cascades, triggered by academic and media networks, in league with influencers on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc., have one goal in the end: to shatter the economic livelihood of the targeted individuals. So, this is not about democratic discussion, but the opposite: preventing democratic discourse about structural violence. The critics of NATO propaganda are to be deprived of their livelihood. This is not about individual cases. Rather, an example is to be made. The goal is to force anticipatory obedience by generating fear. This is essentially initiated by states or supranational organizations such as the EU, but also by state-sponsored institutions. But the drivers are the eco-libertarian and militaristic-conservative academic milieus.

The overarching characteristic of all these cases is that university decision-makers believe themselves to be under the protection of the executive branch and therefore act with the arrogance of borrowed power. The result is a conglomeration of academic soul-sellers who are either beholden to transatlantic organizations or U.S. foundations, or who spread their narratives in anticipatory obedience. The actors themselves, according to Upton Sinclair, do not notice: "It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends upon his not understanding it."

It is no coincidence that at least at one university, it was precisely those who consider themselves committed to transatlantic networks, such as the German Marshall Fund, who actively pursued my expulsion. This shows where the real masterminds of censorship and denunciation sit. By this, it is by no means meant that the operators receive instructions from Langley. Rather, the alacrity of their actions proves that they see themselves in a kind of debt to be discharged. After all, it's all about invitations to conferences, scholarships, research trips and the approval of research projects. David Michaels, former director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, calls such scientists "science-for-sale specialists"—scientists who can be bought for money. This does not necessarily mean direct payments. They believe that it is better for one's career to act as a legitimacy canvasser for American interests.

The entanglements of Kiel professor Werner Kaltefleiter in intelligence machinations of the BND and CIA during the Cold War have been elaborated by Katja Backhaus. According to press reports, CAU received 2.7 million euros from the German Ministry of Defense and NATO between 2005 and 2012, most of which went to Professor Joachim Krause's Kiel Institute for Security Policy (ISPK). These funds went primarily to a counterinsurgency project in Afghanistan. The project partner at the time was Victoria Nuland's Center for a New American Security, which has set itself the task of protecting American interests and is partly paid for by the arms company Northrop Grumman. Krause also belongs to the Integrity Initiative, a program of the British Institute for Statecraft, which is close to NATO and British intelligence services. Officially, it is supposed to expose Russian disinformation, but it is actually about NATO propaganda. The Integrity Initiative's German Cluster in 2019 included political scientist Hannes Adomeit, now deceased, his friend Joachim Krause, former MI6 agent Harold Elletson, and Marie-Luise Beck of the Center for Liberal Modernity. Critics call Krause a "NATO janitor." No wonder he accuses the German people of an "escalation phobia" in the Ukraine war. Of course, my research does not fit into such war propaganda, so it must be sanctioned.

T-Online yet again. The portal also acted as a denunciation portal against Professor Ulrike Guérot and Professor Gabriele Krone-Schmalz and put together press campaigns aimed at triggering a political purge and destroying the economic livelihood of these two targeted professors. Then I found out that the State Protection Department in the Federal Ministry of the Interior also keeps a file on me—as an alleged election observer. This kind of thing usually happens on orders from above. So, one may ask whether the office of the Minister of the Interior itself orchestrates such denunciation campaigns. And secret services do what they are there for: Chinese whispers. Here, one has to ask whether journalists also cooperate with intelligence services and do the dirty work for the BND, for example, as the federal government openly stated in its answer to a parliamentary question in the German Bundestag. The same applies to university employees.

In this way, a censorship and denunciation cartel is being created as if by magic, which is supported by US foundations and NATO apron organizations. The Pentagon alone employs 27,000 PR specialists with an annual budget of five billion dollars, whose goal is to influence the media with targeted messages, with experts for interviews or footage for television. During NATO's war against Serbia in 1999—it's not only the Russians who wage wars of aggression in violation of international law—31 PR agencies ensured that public opinion was brought into line: the Serbs were portrayed as the bad guys, the Muslim Bosnians as their victims. As a result of such manipulation, virtually no one understands what was actually going on in Yugoslavia.

None of this works with coercion; it works only with consent. This active participation shows the susceptibility of the academic elites to anti-democratic thinking. When anti-democratic thinking is

then combined with racial thinking, we are on the threshold of fascist figures of thought. Political scientist Florence Gaub on April 12, 2022, on the talk show, [Markus Lanz](#): "We must not forget, even if Russians look European, that they are not Europeans—right now in the cultural sense—who have a different approach to violence, who have a different approach to death." Such phrases open the door to racism. Ukrainian author Serhij Zhadan calls Russians a "horde," "animals," "filth": "Burn in hell, you pigs." This is the language of fascism. For this, Zhadan [received the Peace Prize](#) of the German Book Trade.

Conformism becomes a weapon: As in the case of Ulrike Guérot, who was dismissed from the University of Bonn, and Gabriele Krone-Schmalz, who is subject to massive attacks, the aim is censorship and acts of political cleansing that are unworthy of a democracy. In the process, the campaigns also aim to destroy the livelihoods of the targeted individuals. This alone documents their anti-democratic character. The smashing of democracy is preceded by the smashing of the democratic public sphere. The media and universities play a decisive role in this transformation, because they make themselves the bearers of counter-enlightenment and influence the transformation of democratic consciousness. *T-Online* and many other media, as well as the University of Kiel and HMKW in Berlin, have made themselves the warring party in the propaganda battle without need. This has consequences that extend beyond their direct sphere of influence. They are contributing to the poisoning of the social climate and are thus sawing away at the foundations of democracy.

Scolding colleagues is not usually my style, but it is appropriate here. I summarize: 1. Very bad craftsmanship: no verification by second source in the real world. 2. Political denunciation because of economic calculation. 3. Obliviousness to history and ignorance, both of one's own and of Ukraine's history. 4. Opportunism: succumbing to propaganda unchecked. 5. Anticipatory obedience: making oneself a tool of propaganda. 6. Anti-democratic thinking and acting. The result is a sum of dangerous stupidity that is capable of dragging this country into the abyss once again.

Some people speak here of the intellectuals' refusal to work. But that is not the case. It is a matter of business. Those who work with their heads, sell their heads to the highest bidder. They are paid for their ideas, with which they [organize the cultural hegemony](#) of the power elites and their rule.

We are sitting in the bus from the Chonhar border crossing to Simferopol, the capital of Crimea. Only now does the tension fall away. I lean my head against the window and nodded off. In dream images, the fear that I had locked away at the bottom of my soul in the war zone catch up to me. Shelling, mines, arrests swirl in tangled scraps and perform a witches' sabbath in my half-sleep. Only gradually do I realize that another St. Vitus dance awaits me on my return: that of journalistic contract writers, "a well-organized gang of literary rustlers," as [Heinrich Heine put it](#), "who go about their business in the Bohemian forests of our daily press." [A sentence](#) by Zygmunt Bauman comes to my mind: "Not wanting to see, not wanting to look, and thus suppressing the possibilities of another coexistence with less suffering, is part of suffering and contributes to its perpetuation." Another hour to Simferopol. As the bus rocks, I ponder the misery of intellectuals.

Patrik Baab

Featured: *Join the Navy*. Poster by Richard Fayerweather Babcock (1887-1954), published in 1917.

