

5 Fragen – 5 Antworten

allmende: *In Ihrem aktuellen Sachbuch Vermessung des Krieges (2022) erzählen Sie von den Einzelschicksalen der Menschen, die zum Teil Nächte in U-Bahn-Schächten verbringen mussten, da es dort für sie sicherer ist als in der eigenen Wohnung. Welche Erlebnisse haben Sie selbst gemacht?*

Andrej Kurkow: I experienced the most dramatic events at the very beginning of the war. I still remember the shock of the first day of the war on February 24th. It was then that my wife and I and our friend, the English writer and journalist Lily Hyde, went to check the nearest bomb shelters. On the second day of the war, we were leaving Kyiv in a western direction and stood for hours in a traffic jam of thousands and thousands of cars with license plates from all the eastern and southeastern regions. At that time, on the right side of the highway, ten kilometers from the traffic jam, there was an endless battle for the town of Gostomel, where a huge Russian force landed. Suddenly, shots sounded from the left, and only after a while we realized that it was our artillery firing. That is, the shells flew towards Gostomel above the road, above us. Ten days later, when I first left the warring Ukraine for Europe to hold fundraising events, I had to stand at night in a huge queue of cars with refugees in front of the

Uzhgorod checkpoint. There was a Gazelle truck in front of my car. It was minus 5-7 outside. The driver of the Gazelle now and then opened the door of the van and a child's cry could be heard from there. It turned out that he took out 15 children of different ages from Borodyanka, town near





Kyiv which had already been captured by Russian troops. The cargo van had no windows, and it was cold and stuffy. The driver opened the doors to let in fresh air. But along with the air, the cold got there and the children already wrapped in blankets and clothes became even colder. In those days, refugees stood in line at the border for up to 5 days.

allmende: *Sie haben an anderer Stelle erzählt, dass in den besetzten Städten die freie Meinungsäußerung eingeschränkt ist und Personen, die sich gegen die Regierung stellen, vorgeladen werden und zum Teil nicht mehr zurückkehren. Welche Erfahrungen haben Sie als ukrainischer Autor, der sich bereits offen gegen diesen Krieg und Putin geäußert hat, gemacht?*

Andrej Kurkow: A month ago, sometimes it was possible to get through to friends and colleagues who were under occupation. And they talked about what was happening in Melitopol, Kherson, Nova Kakhovka. But then the Russian occupation authorities completely cut off Ukrainian mobile communications and the Internet. And since then, I could not get through to anyone else in the occupied South of Ukraine. On the first day of the war, a friend called me and advised me to urgently leave Kyiv. He made it clear that if Kyiv was captured by Russian troops, I would be in danger. In fact, I think the same danger has threatened and threatens all patriotic Ukrainian writers and intellectuals. According to recent reports, it turned out that the Ukrainian photographer and journalist Max Levin was purposely captured, tortured and shot.

The same thing happened in Mariupol with the Lithuanian documentary filmmaker who made the film “Mariupolis” – he was also captured by the Russian military and soon shot. My family and I first moved to Lviv, then to Transcarpathia, where the danger was and is much less than in other regions.

allmende: *Inwiefern sorgt der Krieg für ein größeres Einigungsgefühl unter den Menschen in der Ukraine?*

Andrej Kurkow: I think it would not be a big exaggeration to say that it was Putin’s anti-Ukrainian policy that became the main factor in the consolidation of Ukrainian society. It all started in 2004, with the Orange Revolution, when Russia tried to bring Viktor Yanukovych to power in Ukraine. It

continued, of course, with the Euromaidan of 2013–2014. And now a new phase of Russian aggression has finally rallied the Ukrainians and even out of seemingly politically indifferent citizens made desperate fighters for the independence of Ukraine. After all, it was the very existence of the state of Ukraine that was called into question by Vladimir Putin. Ukrainians are very freedom-loving people. Now that it has become clear that Ukrainians can only be free in a free Ukraine, the Ukrainian political nation has finally taken shape.

allmende: *Was könnte der Westen an seiner Perspektive auf die Ukraine ändern?*

Andrej Kurkow: I think that since 2004 the West has already begun to understand the difference between Ukraine and Rus-



sia. The fact that Ukraine received the status of an EU candidate shows that the West's opinion about Ukraine has changed, and Ukraine itself has shown itself on the other side, with a more positive one. The determination to stand up for its European future and the vehement unwillingness to return to the new "Soviet Union" is what defines today's Ukraine best.

allmende: *Verändert sich die Funktion von Literatur in Krisenzeiten und wie sehen Sie die Zukunft der Ukraine?*

Andrej Kurkow: Ukrainian writers at one point became journalists and essayists. First

of all, they write documentary witness-accounts of Russian war crimes. These testimonies are written in different genres, but primarily in the form of essays, articles, diaries. This will continue until the end of the war. After that, there will come a moment for artistic reflection on what happened. Ukraine will stand, it will protect its future. I have no doubt about it. There is still a lot to build and a lot to change. And, most importantly, we have to show new Ukraine to the European Union, Ukraine without corruption and with responsible politicians.



ANDREJ KURKOW, geboren 1961 in St. Petersburg, lebte seit seiner Kindheit in Kiew, wo er Fremdsprachen studierte. Er gehört zu den renommiertesten ukrainischen Schriftstellern. Nach seinen Drehbüchern wurden bisher 17 Filme gedreht. Neben vielen Erzählungen hat er Kinderbücher und Romane veröffentlicht, darunter die Romane *Picknick auf dem Eis* (2000), *Herbstfeuer* (2009) und *Graue Bienen* (2018). Im Oktober erscheint sein Sachbuch *Die Vermessung des Krieges* (2022), in dem er über die täglichen Schicksale der Menschen in der Ukraine berichtet. Er wurde vielfach ausgezeichnet, unter anderem 2001 mit dem Preis „Mann des Jahres“ der Ukraine. 2014 wurde er vom damaligen französischen Präsidenten François Hollande zum „Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur“ ernannt und 2021 ehrte ihn die Stadt St. Diego in Kalifornien mit einem Fulbright Visiting Scholar-Stipendium.