

VALUES ARE PRECARIOUS

Yes, we were all mistaken. That «it» would happen again. In Europe. With such brutality. So senseless, devious, cruel. I myself must confess that I was quite specifically wrong in my prediction of a very limited campaign at most. The balance of power was clearly against such an extensive war of aggression by the Russians; the arduous course of events indirectly proves me right. But what good is that?

Clearly, among Putin's admirers there are some nasty characters. But is it justifiable to forego the achievements of the Enlightenment, such as the guarantee of property rights, the right to be heard, or independent judges, for their sake?

We were also mistaken about something else: the resolve of the Ukrainians. It has turned the citizens of this hitherto marginally perceived European nation into admirable heroes. Despite the fact that their relative success makes the European security situation more precarious in the short term, not less. But suddenly it was clear to us all: this is a fight for freedom and the right to self-determination. Not only for the Ukrainians, but for all of us children of the Enlightenment. These are our values that have been so brutally attacked.

However, in that case we should live out these values without ifs, ands or buts. Certainly, we do many things right. We offer shelter to the refugee women and children from the East without too much fuss. Because they were displaced through no fault of their own and because they want eventually to go home again. And we support the Ukrainian resistance to the extent possible.

At the same time, however, boundaries are being overstepped to an alarming degree in cases

where it would not be necessary. Instead of Germany decreeing the only effective sanction – stopping natural gas and oil deliveries from and payments to Russia as quickly as possible, accepting the cost of considerable problems – Russians' foreign exchange reserves have been frozen. The last time this happened, it was done to Afghan reserves to exclude the Taliban from the international banking system. In the past, such a step would have been absolutely taboo, and this gave grounds for confidence in the international financial system and the US dollar as the world's trading currency. This amounts to well-intentioned piracy that could quickly become counterproductive, especially if it became commonplace for all sorts of things and, ultimately, for trifles.

So the knives are out for the «oligarchs». Clearly, among Putin's admirers there are some nasty characters. But is it justifiable to forego the achievements of the Enlightenment, such as the guarantee of property rights, the right to be heard, or independent judges, for their sake? Are we not then betraying precisely the values we accuse the Russian potentate of disregarding?

«Necessity knows no law» has been pronounced rather glibly since the «necessity» of the Covid pandemic, and the sensationalist media naturally enjoys every hunt for the guilty, but unfortunately also for the innocent. This cannot go on.

Let us shed our illusions: what is considered today to be the all so evil «oligarchs», could tomorrow suddenly be the rich or the Swiss or old white men.

The struggle for freedom in Eastern Europe is very important and admirable. The struggle for freedom and fundamental values in the West has yet to begin. It would be terrible to find that we were mistaken about ourselves.

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