

French media documents war crimes by NATO-backed Ukrainian neo-Nazi militias

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Devastating eyewitness reports are revealing the broad scope of war crimes by Ukrainian neo-Nazi militias armed by NATO against Russia. They expose the criminal character of the US-NATO war on Russia and the pro-war propaganda of the entire French political establishment.

These revelations come from reports on France's Sud Radio by Adrien Bocquet, a handicapped former French soldier who traveled to Ukraine during the war as a medic, and from *Le Monde*. This newspaper's analysis of a video, which was widely seen on social media but initially dismissed by the media as Russian propaganda, supports Bocquet's eyewitness statements.

Le Monde is politically close to President Emmanuel Macron and, like the rest of the official press, has supported NATO against Russia in Ukraine. Yet, on May 16, it confirmed the authenticity of a video published on social media showing Ukrainian militiamen firing rifles into the knees of Russian prisoners of war who were tied up and defenseless. This took place on March 25 in the village of Mala Rohan, near Kharkov.

According to *Le Monde*, this video was made while a unit of the Ukrainian army and three far-right nationalist militias—the Azov Battalion, Fraikor and the Slobojanshchyna Battalion—took Mala Rohan from Russian troops.

Andri Ianholenko, the leader of the Slobojanshchyna Battalion, is visible and identifiable on the video. On other videos *Le Monde* found on Ianholenko's social media accounts, he publishes the traditional slogan of the Ukrainian fascists, "Glory to Ukraine," and poses with the three Russian prisoners of war shot in the March 25 video.

Le Monde thus reluctantly admitted the authenticity of a video previously dismissed by French and NATO media as "Russian propaganda." It treats the Slobojanshchyna fascists quite mildly, euphemistically describing the war crime documented on the video as "probable abuse committed by Ukrainian volunteers against Russian prisoners of war." But what the video shows is a war crime by Ukrainian neo-fascism against defenseless prisoners.

Le Monde, which has been in contact with the Ukrainian far-right volunteers since April about this video, only published its analysis after Bocquet spoke to André Bercoff's show on Sud Radio on May 10. *Le Monde*, like the rest of the mainstream French media, has to date been deafeningly silent on Bocquet's claims. But it is evident that its authentication of this video retroactively lends credibility to Bocquet's interview on Sud Radio.

Bocquet, a former soldier who was made paraplegic after an accident when he was 21 but subsequently partially healed thanks to implants on his spinal cord, briefly went to Ukraine to treat wounded Ukrainian fighters. Assigned to the Azov Battalion in Kiev and then Lviv, he returned to France to give a shattering report on this battalion and the broader Ukrainian war. He told Sud Radio:

I saw many war crimes. The only war crimes I saw during the days I was there were perpetrated by Ukrainian forces, and not by Russian forces. This does not mean that there were no Russian war crimes, but there are also war crimes on the Ukrainian side, yet no one talks about them. When I returned to France, I was really shocked. ... Between what I saw and heard on TV news reports and what I saw on the ground, it was night and day.

About the Azov Battalion, whose flag bears the *Wolfsangel* symbol of the Nazi SS division Das Reich that committed crimes against humanity in Ukraine and France during World War II, Bocquet said: "They are 20,000 men spread here, there and everywhere with their super neo-Nazi logo across Ukraine, but it doesn't seem to bother anyone. And they are getting weapons from Europe." He added:

You know what they talked about, in front of me because I understand a bit of Ukrainian and Russian,

and many of them spoke English? They would crack up saying that if they ran across Jews or black people, that they would cut them up. That is what they talked about, and it really gave them a good laugh.

Bocquet stated that the March 25 torturing of Russian troops by the head of the Slobojanshchyna Battalion is in fact a regular practice of Ukrainian far-right militias against Russian prisoners. He said:

I saw captured Russian soldiers who had already been really roughed up and who were tied up. We were in a sort of hangar, and the captured Russian soldiers were arriving in little vans in groups of three or four. Each time they made the soldiers get out of the vans, the Azov fighters would ask: “Who are the officers, who are the officers?”

Each soldier who got out of the van got a bullet to the knee from an assault rifle, whereas they were defenseless and tied up. I have videos showing this. Otherwise, I would not allow myself to make such allegations, showing Russian soldiers getting bullets in the knee. ... And the ones who unfortunately decided to say, “I am an officer,” they got a bullet to the head.

Bocquet, who was with the Azov Battalion during the massacre in Bucha, denounced the cynical media propaganda that attributes the deaths only to Russian forces. He told of a confrontation he had with US journalists in Bucha whose reporting was falsifying events he was seeing. Bocquet said:

These Americans were shooting videos and saying, these are Russian bombardments and it's landing in a park and it's unacceptable. I went to see them, and I asked, why are you saying that? And they said, oh, don't worry, it makes good images. Do you know what these bombings really were? In fact, there was a Russian target and a team of Azov fighters I was with who were inputting settings on a little mortar to fire off bombs. And they put in the wrong range. ... So these bombs, instead of landing 100 meters further off on the Russian equipment, landed in a little park. And they were passing this off as Russian shells.

French media have since then neither commented upon nor sought to invalidate Bocquet's widely seen report. It underscores, however, the lack of any critical reporting on the war in Ukraine in the official media in France or other NATO countries and their downplaying of the role of Ukrainian neo-Nazism in the war.

These revelations vindicate the warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* on the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the close ties between NATO and the far-right Ukrainian regime ever since the NATO-backed putsch in Kiev in 2014. Not only Washington but also Paris and the other major European imperialist powers, who are pouring billions of euros in weapons into the Ukrainian army and neo-Nazi militias, are using the neo-Nazis to wage a dirty war against Russia.

This does not in any way change the reactionary character of the Kremlin's war in Ukraine, though it does factually confirm some of Russian President Vladimir Putin's claims on NATO's ties to Ukrainian neo-Nazis. Putin's war is founded on Russian nationalism, his explicit rejection of communism and on the Stalinist bureaucracy's 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union. As Putin is allied to far-right forces in Russia and internationally, including the National Rally in France, one cannot call his war “anti-fascist.”

It is however, above all, an unanswerable indictment of the foreign policy of imperialism and of the establishment media and pseudo-left groups like the Pabloite New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) that support it. These petty-bourgeois circles have increasingly aligned themselves behind the NATO wars since the wars NATO launched in 2011 against Libya and Syria, they have systematically presented CIA-backed wars as “democratic” revolutions.

The first substantial reports from on the ground that do not come from media sources that simply echo NATO propaganda are blowing the official presentation of the war apart. The now undeniable presence of neo-Nazis on the Ukrainian side testify to the politically criminal character of the war, the NATO governments who are waging it and the political parties that are supporting it.



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