



The Transformation of Colonel Kvachkov

OE Watch Commentary: One of Russia's more notorious military prisoners, Colonel (retired) Vladimir Kvachkov, was released from prison earlier this year. Kvachkov gained notoriety in 2005 when accused of trying to assassinate Anatoliy Chubais, a prominent Russian official who had been partially responsible for Russia's painful, and often corrupt, privatization program. While ultimately acquitted of this crime, Kvachkov was subsequently arrested in 2010 for plotting an armed mutiny and given an eight-year sentence. While still in prison, he released an incendiary, nationalist video, and was charged with inciting hatred, and given two additional years in prison. As a former GRU (Military Intelligence) officer, Kvachkov gained notoriety for saying (and acting upon) what some in uniform were thinking, becoming a hero for many Russian nationalists. In the accompanying excerpt from a long interview in the popular, military weekly *Military-Industrial Courier* (VPK), Kvachkov shares some of his observations.

While spending more than a decade behind bars, Kvachkov discovered the Orthodox faith, and asserts that he is "no longer the colonel who knew how to fight and conduct special operations. Now I feel like a soldier of Christ...". He goes on to claim that the primary reason behind the Soviet Union's demise stemmed primarily from "the Soviet people's loss of an understanding of the meaning of their life on Earth," stressing that "the collapse of the USSR showed that without a religious faith it is impossible to build a fair state." As a firm Orthodox believer, Kvachkov maintains not only that "the military cannot live without ideology," but that "the state system of Russia should be an autocratic Orthodox monarchy."

Regarding the situation in Ukraine, Kvachkov argues that "we need to recognize the Donbas and Lugansk republics as part of Russia," but that if Russia wants to further expand, it must first focus on developing "an attractive economic model of our internal development, with religious and spiritual components." He goes on to point out that in Russia today, "the gap between the poor and the rich is huge," noting that him and his grandson, who is employed by the Russian National Guard may find themselves "on different sides of the barricades."

Kvachkov has expressed admiration for certain aspects of the current Kremlin leadership (e.g. the return of Crimea), but has spoken out strongly against a number of their actions and policies. For instance, he maintains that the country's current economic system "is rolling into the abyss of liberal capitalism." While certainly not an accurate barometer of military thinking, the fact that *VPK* provided a forum for this controversial officer to express his thoughts suggests that he still has followers in the ranks. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"...I understood that the army cannot live without ideology.... The state system of Russia should be an autocratic Orthodox monarchy..."



Colonel (ret) Vladimir Kvachkov, September 2018.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Kvachkov.jpg,
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Source: Oleg Falichev, "Духовные университеты полковника Квачкова (The Spiritual Universities of Col. Kvachkov)," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer VPK* [Military-Industrial Courier], 9 April 2019. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/49517>

The release of the man accused of attempting to assassinate Anatoly Chubais in 2005, and then, in 2010, an attempt at armed rebellion, ...Retired colonel, Vladimir Kvachkov, formerly an employee of the General Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, spoke to Military-Industrial Courier.

-How long did you spend in prison?

11 years, four months, 15 days.

...All these years there was a process of my internal conversion. And now, in front of you, there is no longer the colonel who knew how to fight and conduct special operations. Now I feel like a soldier of Christ, a man, I hope, having overcome my pride. ...Your will must be a continuation of the will of God. This is the duty of the Russian Orthodox officer to understand and fulfill what is ordained to you from above....

...No one believed in communism. I am convinced: the Soviet Union died, first of all, for a spiritual and moral reason - because of the loss by the Soviet people of the understanding of the meaning of their life on Earth....The collapse of the USSR showed that without a religious faith it is impossible to build a fair state.

...As a military man, besides having the first philological education, I understood that the army cannot live without ideology.... The state system of Russia should be an autocratic Orthodox monarchy.

- You have not seen the country for many years. Has it changed?

It seems to me for the worse. It has become less Russian, less Christian, and is rolling into the abyss of liberal capitalism....

Of course, the return of the Crimea from the geopolitical point of view is the most important event, here I am completely on the side of Vladimir Putin.... But having raised the Russian spirit in the Crimea, we immediately extinguished it in Donetsk and Lugansk....

...When we ourselves live according to the truth, then we say: brothers, we in Great Russia restored state property, the law of God in schools, introduced the teaching of the foundations of Orthodox culture, restored the best methods of the Soviet education system and truly free health care. Russia must become an attractive country in all respects. Then reach out to us... Of course, we need to recognize the Donbass and Lugansk republics as part of Russia. Moreover, to restore them in the boundaries in which they existed before the current events. The question, I repeat, is different: what will we offer to the Donbas? New oligarchs, our flawed education and health? There should be an attractive economic model of our internal development, with religious and spiritual components....

...Today, information war is in full swing. It is necessary to understand: without state ideology there can be no effective counteraction....

...My grandson was called up to the special division of operational assignment of the Rosguard [National Guard]. A situation may arise that we will find ourselves on different sides of the barricades. Why does he have to shoot at his grandfather - for the good life of collective Chubais?...The gap between the poor and the rich is huge...