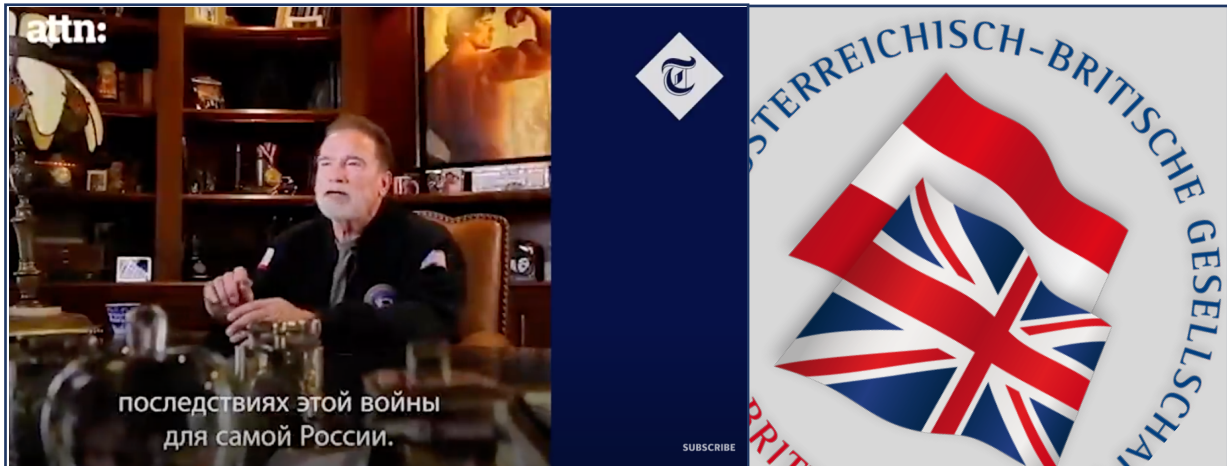


# Schwarzenegger addresses Russian people.

by Jochen Ressel



On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022, a special video message has been distributed through various communication channels, produced by the famous and worldwide known former Governor of California, former bodybuilding World Champion, and former actor, born in Austria who made his career in the United States, Arnold Schwarzenegger – and it went viral. The total reach can hardly be calculated as it has been shared all around the globe by TV and new media channels. On Twitter alone, more than 35 million views have been registered on Schwarzenegger's account only, over 6.2 million views on his Insta account, 1.2 million on The Telegraph's YouTube channel, and almost 1 million on CNN's YouTube channel – to mention a few.

Therefore, it's worth thinking about the huge reaction and the content of the message, which can be summarized as follows:

## The key content

In his video, Schwarzenegger starts speaking about his lifelong admiration for the Russian people, beginning with his hero, weightlifting World Champion Yuri Vlasov, who he met once as a child in the 1960s and again shooting 1988's *Red Heat* in Red Square. He also refers to the lifelong "shame" his father felt as one of the Nazi troops who took part in the siege of Leningrad, which began months before the US even entered World War II and killed an estimated 1 million Russians, mostly civilians.

Considering that Russia's victory over the Nazi invasion of the city is one of the proudest moments in Russian history, Schwarzenegger was undoubtedly hoping to strike a nerve when he compared today's Russian troops in besieged Ukraine with the murderous Nazi horde. Following this very personal introduction, he addresses the Russian people directly:

*"No one likes to hear something critical of their government. I understand that. But, as a longtime friend of the Russian people, I hope that you will hear what I have to say. And may I remind you that I speak with the same heartfelt concern as I spoke to the American people when there was an attempted insurrection on January 6th last year, when a wild crowd was storming the US Capital, trying to overthrow our government.*

*You see, there are moments like this that are so wrong, and then we have to speak up. This is exactly the same with your government. I know that your government has told you that this is a war to denazify Ukraine. Denazify Ukraine? This is not true! Ukraine is a country with a Jewish president. A Jewish president, I might add, whose father's three brothers were all murdered by the Nazis.".....*

And he mentions numerous facts the Russian media never told their citizens:

*"Because of its brutality, Russia is now isolated from the society of nations.....You're also not being told the truth about the consequences of this war on Russia itself. I regret to tell you that thousands of Russian soldiers have been killed. They have been caught between the Ukrainians fighting for their homeland and the Russian leadership fighting for conquest.....*

*Massive amounts of Russian equipment have been destroyed or abandoned. The destruction that Russian bombs are raining down upon innocent civilians has so outraged the world that the strongest global economic sanctions ever taken have been imposed on your country. Those who don't deserve it on both sides of the war will suffer.".....*

After some more facts hidden from the official Russian media, he directly calls the Russian people and President Putin:

*"So I urge the Russian people and the Russian soldiers in Ukraine to understand the propaganda and the disinformation that you are being told. I ask you to help me spread the truth. Let your fellow Russians know the human catastrophe that is happening in Ukraine. And to President Putin, I say: You started this war. You are leading this war. You can stop this war.*

*Now let me close with a message to all of the Russians who have been protesting in the streets against the invasion of Ukraine: The world has seen your bravery. We know that you have suffered the consequences of your courage. You have been arrested.*

*You have been jailed. And you have been beaten. You are my new heroes. You have the strength of Yuri Petrovich Vlasov. You have the true heart of Russia. My dear Russian friends, may God bless you all.*

- Follow this link for the full transcript (Los Angeles Magazine):  
<https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/full-transcript-arnold-schwarzenegger-urges-russian-troops-in-ukraine-to-go-home/>
- Follow this link to view Mr. Schwarzeneggers video message on YouTube:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWCIXZd9c78>

### **“So, what..” or a reason to think about in more depth?**

In terms of content, some may argue that the whole worldwide fuss about this video is highly exaggerated and simply good PR by a world-famous American, whose message hardly reaches the addressees due to the inaccessibility of social media channels in Russia. But considering the tremendous reach of his message, it should make us think, as he obviously has hit an emotional nerve of our societies all around the globe. Hence, let me raise some questions to think about:

- Can such messages really contribute to achieving peace?
- Are we - regardless of the effectiveness or non-effectiveness - morally obliged to let such strong messages out into the world and distribute it by sharing if others do?
- Do we actually have the right to classify this message as a simple self-PR of an actor, or do we feel a genuine and sincere interest in contributing to change facts? And does it really matter in such cases of humanitarian catastrophes?
- Can such news contribute to autocratic rulers becoming even more bitter and brutal, thus creating a boomerang effect?
- Do we - or Mr Schwarzenegger - know how the Russian people really think and how relevant a message from the West is to them anyway?
- Or is it not quite simply that the world needs such messages to strengthen itself in the fight against aggressors?
- How much applause does such a video earn when we are freezing in our homes as a result of Russian oil and gas shortages when food is in short supply, and 1 litre of petrol costs € 3.50 and this cost is added to all our goods delivered by lorries, driving inflation to unprecedented heights?
- How reliable and resilient are we morally when with only a few thousand refugees from Ukraine, voices are already being raised that we cannot take in any more?

Some of these questions might be inconvenient for us to answer. We may even tend to lie to ourselves rather than admit the truth with some of these questions. But there is no escape as we are forced to carefully reflect on our values in times of crisis. And Mr Schwarzenegger contributed reasonably to it, although I doubt that many people understand it this way.

More than ever, the Austro-British Society is looking forward to your views and comments on these fascinating questions raised above!

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*About the author*

**Jochen Ressel** is the Secretary-General of the Austro-British Society. He worked several years for a UK company and its HQ in London. He held management positions in various companies and institutions as the Executive Director of the Senate of Economy, where he regularly commented on current political and economic developments. Currently, he holds the position as COO of SoccerCoin, a FinTech company active in the field of sports.

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