

**From Alexander Korobko:**

“In January 2022, just weeks before Russia launched its Special Military Operation in Ukraine, retired Russian General Leonid Ivashov published an open letter titled “The Eve of War.” In this letter, the former top Russian general cautioned Putin against invading Ukraine. The letter attracted significant international attention and was widely reported by Western media - from the New York Post to the Daily Mail and beyond. At the time, Michael McFaul described Ivashov’s text as a “big deal.”

Since then, while General Ivashov has granted a few interviews to online media outlets, he has never been asked about his anti-war open letter. Consequently, “The Eve of War” and its arguments against the realities of the past three years have largely been ignored. As an independent journalist and filmmaker originally from Donetsk, who has known CCI for a long time, I decided to break that silence. In a rare and candid conversation, General Ivashov spoke about the letter, its warnings, and the current state of the Russian-Ukrainian war.”

The video of the interview and the interview transcript follow.

[General Ivashov: War and Peace. "There Will Be No Third World War" - A Long Interview](#)

**Transcript provided by Alexander Korobko**

Alexander Korobko:

Leonid Grigorievich, in January 2022 you published your well-known open letter titled “The Eve of War,” in which you wrote that the main threat to Russia is internal rather than external; that a war with Ukraine would be a catastrophe; and that Russia needs to focus on its own revival. At the time, I was filming in my native Donbass when I read it, and it left me with mixed feelings. Like you, I certainly did not want a war between two sister nations - Russia and Ukraine - but at the same time I could see that it had already been going on in a hybrid form since 2014. Even Alexey Arestovych, who was initially a spokesperson for militant Ukrainian propaganda, at one point made a complete 180-degree turn and said that - quote - “Ukraine as an Anti-Russia project is the main cause of the war, and that Russia’s neighbours should be either friendly, neutral, or part of Russia”. Has your view changed over the past three years? After all, you wrote “The Eve of War” just before the Special Military Operation, and now many are talking about its possible imminent end. If Ukraine survives but the “Anti-Russia” project disappears, wouldn’t that be the best outcome for Russia, Ukraine, and the world?

Leonid Ivashov:

On January 28, 2022, I published the resolution of the Council of the All-Russian Officers’ Assembly. I made it public. This statement was not adopted easily at the Council meeting. There were tough discussions - truly intense debates. Some officers, especially generals, were assessing the state of the Russian and Ukrainian armies, the balance of forces, and the defensive measures Ukraine was taking. That was one aspect. Second, we saw no critical crisis between Russia and Ukraine as two independent

states. There were issues and problems that could have been resolved without tanks. Using tanks would only deepen antagonism and contradictions.

There were strong movements in both Russia and Ukraine, as well as in other former Soviet republics. For example, the Union of Afghan War Veterans - those who had served together in the same units in Afghanistan. The Union of Soviet Officers operated as a public organization in both Russia and Ukraine. There were also other groups, including people from the security services, who stayed in touch and suggested ways to de-escalate the pre-conflict situation. The Union of Afghan Veterans, together with Russia's Committee of Military Service Veterans, proposed ideas to both sides. But we were not allowed to meet in Kiev or Moscow. Two meetings were held in Istanbul instead - Erdoğan hosted them - because no one in Kiev or Moscow wanted to listen to the experience of the Afghan War or to the value of friendship anymore. Certain forces on both sides were doing everything possible - through provocations and any means - to make the war happen. And it did. The Ukrainian "Anti-Russia" project had been launched even before the Maidan, and it fully emerged there. Slogans appeared like "Moscsals to the gallows," "Whoever doesn't jump is a Moscal," and so on. That was the starting point. Russia eventually accepted this logic of war, but only after many years.

And before that... why did Donbass and Lugansk hold referendums? They were legitimate. International law - which takes precedence over all other legal norms - includes the right of nations to self-determination. At that time, our officers' movement, both in Ukraine and in Russia, supported recognizing the referendum results. We should have used legal methods. Legal methods. We also needed to conduct information and psychological operations because Bandera followers and Nazis constituted a minuscule minority compared to the vast majority of the Ukrainian population that desired peaceful and friendly relations.

That is why we issued our statement and warned about the consequences. We analyzed them on three levels: geopolitical, strategic (including military-strategic), and tactical.

Everything stated in that document on behalf of the officers' council has come true - but in an even worse form. So, my position has only become firmer. We officers even blamed ourselves for not opposing this artificially created tragedy of two peoples more actively.

I'm convinced this was a political crime on all sides. None of the parties - neither one, nor the other, nor any third force - followed the norms of the UN Charter. It is the greatest document in human history, defining principles for maintaining peace, rules of responsibility, and bodies like the UN Security Council and its Military Staff Committee, which identifies acts of aggression and can authorize military force against an aggressor. All of that was thrown away. That is, peaceful and legal mechanisms for settling relations between Russia and Ukraine existed. But wild capital prevailed, and those in power, both in Ukraine and in Russia, saw nothing beyond profit, oligarchic palaces, luxury yachts, and so on. So I stand by my view: this unleashed war is the greatest crime against our peoples and our countries. Of course, I support any measures to stop the killing of people, the destruction of vital infrastructure and homes, injuries, and all the rest.

Alexander Korobko:

Leonid Grigorievich, what should we do now? The ongoing three-year conflict between Russia and Ukraine has resulted in numerous casualties. What is the way forward? How do you assess the meeting between the two presidents, Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump, in Alaska? No matter what mistakes have been made, what do you think the status quo is right now?

Leonid Ivashov:

Well, you know, I don't have a particularly positive view of Trump. It's clear he's not... well, let's not speculate about his motives, but he wants to stop the war for his own personal gain, for the benefit of his group, and so on. And this needs to be supported - supported right now. That's why I'm in favor of halting the military actions. Halting them. And then, please, sit down at the negotiating table.

Here Trump could... well, as he has shown, when he invited Zelensky to Washington after the Alaska meeting and also invited the main European leaders. And essentially, I assume, using compromising material on each of the guests, using behind-the-scenes leverage, and perhaps even whispering promises in their ears - he might have whispered to Zelensky that he, too, could become a Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Using these levers, he forced them to back this settlement plan: to cease military actions and sign a peace treaty. I believe, for example, that Europe really agreed - under Trump's pressure, and with reservations - to Trump's settlement plan. Zelensky agreed, and Putin naturally agreed too. Moreover, if Trump is to be believed, Putin made serious concessions.

And recall the memorandum or ultimatum from Ryabkov, the deputy foreign minister, dated December 15, 2021, where we set out what NATO and the US should do - two draft agreements. There, NATO was seen as the main threat, so we demanded rolling back NATO's borders essentially to May 1997, when several Warsaw Pact countries joined NATO. In other words: you must pull back the borders. That seemed right, but it was presented in a completely undiplomatic way. And we also wanted Ukraine never to join NATO.

But at Trump's meeting, the Europeans said that NATO would provide security guarantees. And the Italian prime minister even stated that Article 5 of the NATO Washington Treaty should be extended to Ukraine.

Alexander Korobko:

I think that's unlikely to happen. I think that, despite all their militant rhetoric, the Europeans will make some gesture towards Trump and accept his plan. Trump understands that deploying NATO troops in Ukraine is simply unrealistic.

Leonid Ivashov:

Yes, Alexander, they will accept the plan - but with reservations. I'll say again: if someone attacks Ukraine or commits aggression, all NATO countries would be obliged to take measures to repel it. That means any skirmish could immediately draw NATO countries into a war with Russia. So, this is no better than admitting Ukraine to NATO itself - it might even be more complicated. Putin sensed this and agreed.

But there are forces on both sides, among the warring countries, that don't want peace. Right now, Zelensky is already backing away from what he said during the talks with Trump. And Zelensky himself, of course, doesn't want to step down. He knows that peace would mean holding elections, and he's unlikely to win them. What would happen to him then - possible criminal prosecution? Unfortunately, when it comes to Ukraine, Zelensky and Putin share the same position: the people living in these territories are pushed aside, and it's all about dividing land. But what about the people? Even if some exchange happens, what if someone doesn't want to go to Russia or return to Ukraine? How do we handle that? People's livelihoods and support systems are unclear.

In Donbass, for example, I heard in an interview with the Head of the Donetsk People's Republic that water is supplied only for a few hours - sometimes no more than two hours - once every three days. How can people survive without water? Not just for plants, gardens, or fruit trees, but for basic human needs. And what about life-support systems? In Ukraine, they were interconnected; each region relied on others. There are so many every day and legal issues to be solved. That's why my position aligns with that of Alexander Lukashenko and many others who want peace: first, stop the fighting; restore normal life and services so people can survive. Then deal with territorial exchanges and the rest.

I once suggested something similar to Armenians and Azerbaijanis: organize meetings where Armenian women from Karabakh could meet Azerbaijani women, bring fruit, offer help, and work together to restore water and electricity in the region. Here too, we need to reach out to each other in the same way. We must set aside feelings of revenge and retribution. Everyone has suffered enough. Ukrainians paid for their Maidan and the "Anti-Russia" project. Russia has also suffered heavy losses. Now we need to reset all that.

Let legal processes proceed under the Geneva Conventions: protecting civilians, rules for prisoners of war, and so on. Let that continue - but we must move towards each other. Donbass and Lugansk exercised their right to self-determination through referendums - that's an international norm. They even went further than Crimea: not joining Russia immediately, but first declaring independence, then signing agreements on security and all forms of cooperation. That was ignored.

So, I stand for a ceasefire first, followed by normalization. At the same time: bury the fallen; exchange prisoners of war - all for all - except for real sadists. And we need to take steps towards each other. Both sides have suffered and become victims. And further ahead, yes, people talk about changing power in Ukraine and so on, but no one will "resettle" the current Ukraine. No one will bring a different Ukraine there yet. So we need to meet each other halfway. And understand that when Yeltsin recognized independence and the Soviet Union was dismantled - so that one could drink without restraint, and another, Kravchuk, could stand above Moscow - it was all for personal, selfish, inhuman goals. Today, we must return to humanity.

Alexander Korobko:

It's intriguing that you mentioned Lukashenko—it's actually a very positive aspect. When Americans or Turks try to reconcile Russia with Ukraine, it feels completely out of tune. After all... remember the monument on the border of Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia - "Three Sisters"? When one of the sisters is

doing it, it feels much more logical. Do you think Lukashenko can somehow glue this broken vase back together? Because, as you rightly noted, Trump has very personal motives, and he's not necessarily expert enough in Slavic disputes. How likely is it that Lukashenko could succeed where even Trump, with all his resources, might fail?

Leonid Ivashov:

The wisdom of Alexander Grigorievich Lukashenko has had a very positive influence on the so-called Special Military Operation and on the overall military-political situation in the region. And it's no coincidence. Even Donald Trump personally called Alexander Grigorievich and consulted him on certain issues. It may not have been explicit, but he got an assessment of Putin, of the combat actions, and a hint that first we should halt the fighting along the line of contact and then talk. And Trump is pursuing that now, yes.

Now, about the "Three Sisters." Back in the day, I wrote music to lyrics by the artistic director of the Alexandrov Ensemble - a song called "Domes of Orthodox Churches." I wrote about Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia. The song was very popular. I'll try to send it to you. Maybe we can perform it or include it. Yes, it was performed by the Alexandrov Ensemble. You can find it online. Here are the lines:

*Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia - three sisters,*

*Ever youthful, tender and fair,*

*When each one wove into her bright braids*

*Golden church domes shining in prayer.*

*Within them lives a quiet power,*

*A gentle sorrow, deep yet bright;*

*Three Slavic hearts were joined as one*

*By Orthodox Rus' radiant light.*

That's what we need to focus on - these qualities of ours.

Alexander Korobko:

I understand. Leonid Grigorievich, speaking about many people in America, England, and Europe who want peace, who have a very positive attitude towards Russia, and who don't want war at all: our correspondent in London, during one of the polls we conducted, asked British people in Hyde Park whether they would approve a military operation against Scotland if it had left the United Kingdom and, say, aimed for a military alliance with Russia or China. And most said, "Yes, I would approve."

It seems to me the issue here is not that the British dislike Russia, or that Russians dislike NATO countries. It's not that simple. But doesn't this show that, in the world as it is - where "tribal enmities,"

as Yesenin put it, haven't faded - some kind of equilibrium is important: buffer zones, fences, even between good neighbors...

Leonid Ivashov:

Alexander, sorry for interrupting, but you can't compare Britain to Russia. I've been to Britain; I had confidential talks there with a member of the House of Commons. Certainly, I didn't have the same with the Secretary of State for Defense. But we need to understand that we are two different entities. Britain - this little island - became a great power, a great maritime power, precisely through expansion, violence, conquest, and building a network of colonies. A network of colonies. The jewel in this colonial empire was India; they called it the pearl in the British crown.

Russia never had a single colony. And there was no empire after the collapse - after the 1917 revolution. There was no empire. It was a union of peoples whom we shaped, raised in fraternal relations; we were brothers to each other, all equal. There was no Soviet empire. It was a union of peoples and nationalities across this vast space.

So what the British consider their greatness - their right to rule, and so on - if Scotland, for example, declares independence, that is roughly like what Ukraine did: declaring independence, gaining recognition, and so forth. That cannot be allowed, because then Northern Ireland would leave too, and Britain would be left as this tiny island, not even an EU member.

I read the UN Charter and truly believe in it: "to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained; and to promote social progress..." - there it is, social progress. Because any development starts with the development of the individual: education, morality, scientific achievements, personal growth. "...better standards of life in larger freedom... to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors... to ensure that armed forces shall not be used, save in the common interest... and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples."

The preamble states that maintaining international peace and security is the duty of Russia, Ukraine, Britain - of everyone. And to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace; to suppress acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace; and to bring about, by peaceful means, in conformity with the principles of justice, and so on.

That's it. This is the main guide for every government and the primary responsibility. We need to understand this. We need to strive for it. Not roll in with tanks, impose order, and appoint a ruler. That won't work. It simply won't.

Alexander Korobko:

Thank you, Leonid Grigorievich. We've somehow quietly reached my final question. In 1984, as a kid, I dreamed of an "Elektronika-302" tape recorder. My father, Yuri Ivanovich Korobko - who toughened his character in a Donetsk mine in his youth - told me straight out: "If Reagan gets elected, son, there'll be a

nuclear war. And you won't need that tape recorder." I told him, "No, Dad, there won't be a war. Aliens won't let it happen." He laughed and still bought me the tape recorder. Seriously now, people are talking about World War III again today. What do you think: how high is its probability? Is it higher than back in 1984, or not?

Leonid Ivashov:

To reassure all our viewers and listeners, I can state unequivocally - drawing on my own experience, international expertise, scientific knowledge, and service background - that a nuclear war, a full-scale nuclear war, will never happen. Never. Here are a few arguments:

First, the most powerful nuclear missiles will target decision-making centers. That means those who start the war will be the first to perish, wherever they are. That's the essence of nuclear deterrence: first, the centers.

Second, operational-tactical missiles will hit headquarters - targeting at the operational-tactical level.

Then further down: division and regiment commanders, using tactical nuclear weapons. That is why no ruling elites will ever choose mutual destruction. They simply won't. So, there will be no war.

Alexander Korobko:

Thank you, Leonid Grigorievich. I'd like to say that no matter how alarming some of the things we've discussed may sound, I personally see real positivity in our interview - perhaps in just two key points, but very important ones. First, as you said, there will be no nuclear war, and that gives us a huge chance. Second, ideas don't die - they live on. That's perfectly clear from our conversation. For some reason, during this talk I remembered my favorite science-fiction book, Ivan Yefremov's "Andromeda: A Space-Age Tale", and I thought that the ability to dream is probably what gives us our greatest hope. As long as people keep dreaming of a better world, learning from the Soviet experience or broader human experience, and striving - in a sense - to become "Humans 2.0", that's where the main hope lies. If you'll allow me to sum up our conversation in that way.

Leonid Ivashov:

...{There's a hypothesis}... though I'm not sure how accurate it is, that the Andromeda constellation might be the center of universal intelligence. That's my first point.

To conclude, I'd like to end with classic Robert Burns: a line that comes to mind when people blame the heavens for our poor lives and so on:

*"How pathetic the jester is on the king's throne -*

*How stupid the people who allowed it."*

That is what needs to be conveyed. Looking, for example, at Zelensky or others, one can say: "How pathetic the jester is on the king's throne." But the people who allowed it are still to blame. Yes, there

was deception, intrigue, and so on - but I wish us all the best. Before we can achieve this, we must first become human. We need to restore ourselves and truly embody the essence of humanity, not merely ruling over all living and inanimate things, but becoming saviors and reconcilers of natural phenomena. We must become truly human.

Most importantly, in our interactions with one another, let's refrain from hastily labelling someone as a "khokhol" (1), a Banderite, or whatever. First, see the person - their human worries, their pain, their cares. We must see the human being in everyone before judging or evaluating our own actions: "Was it me, my behavior, that turned a friend or brother into an enemy?" That's the eternal question for us. Let's focus on it.

All the best!

Alexander Korobko:

All the best - thank you. And may the main center of decision-making for our viewers be the "cosmic intelligence" in the Andromeda Nebula {rather than political centers}. Thank you, and I wish you good health, Leonid Grigorievich.

1 khokhol - a derogatory ethnic slur for Ukrainians