

Pro and contra: The freedom of speech and censorship in Ukraine

Serhiy Vasyliiev, head of the General Department of Information and Press of the Administration of the President of Ukraine: “The parliamentary hearings that have just occurred do not really have any serious impact on further development of mass media. There is a logic according to which the media have developed in this country within the recent years; [it] has been built on economic, political, social factors, the historic tradition; it has been influenced by globalization, European integration processes. Hence, believing that something has to change after a one-day discussion, even though the discussion was so agitated and diverse, is naive. That is like the weather conditions: today it gets warmer, but tomorrow the temperature [will be] very different because it is winter.

I believe that the current situation is adequate to the socio-political situation in the country. What, according to [Friedrich] Engels, defines the top level of freedom? [It is] economic freedom. The development of the media in Ukraine is blocked by the general economic situation: a [TV] channel cannot be rich and profit-making in a poor country. Moreover, the information kind of services is not developed enough, that means that probably the population does not see it as a priority kind of services. That is why polarization of this issue is in fact absolutely artificial. The issue of freedom of speech today [is] the project [that is] ordered abroad [and] financed with foreign money. This is one of the projects in the series [aiming at] discreditation of our state, discreditation of the current authorities, the President directly. If there are those who have ordered the project and substantial money is being paid – multi-thousand grants – the work has to be done for that. Naturally, the Administration of the President is not going to fight those who give grants and take some steps regarding those who work for those grants. However, the Administration of the President will do everything possible to [make sure that] absolutely all people in this state know what exactly is happening: [the Administration] will undertake awareness-building information work in order to make sure that behind nice words there are no hidden ears with other thoughts, that behind chats about freedom of speech there are not absolutely different goals and tasks, that at a closer study show through the verbal disguise. If a person, a consumer of information, has a chance to know what is really happening under that performance, that is the expression of freedom of speech. But not forcing a problem artificially by a bunch of journalists who had taken grants for themselves and made all other colleagues [act as] background figures that make it possible for them to get the money. I don't want to count money in someone else's pocket but [I] also do not want that in such a way, having no moral right [for that] the people who earn their honoraria abroad organize performances and humiliated honor, dignity of our state and our people, smeared it. They do all that as mankurts, as cosmopolites for whom it does not matter on which territory they live. As if tomorrow they get rid of Kuchma and his hated regime and will live in a different country. And in the whole world the reputation they have made for this state will become normal, clean and clear. This is complete illusion. For our children and our grandchildren will have to clean the reputation of our country.