

Attention: The producers of “60 Minutes”

Last night, whilst checking the TV channels, I chanced on the '60 Minutes' program and was intrigued when I heard THE Ukraine mentioned, being proud of my Ukrainian heritage.

The initial intrigue very quickly turned to anger and disgust because of:

- the repeated use of the incorrect term 'THE Ukraine'
- the seedy nature of the report ('report' being a very generous term for the nature of the segment)
- the grossly inaccurate portrayal of Ukrainian women, and indeed all Ukrainians, as sexploitative objects readily available on the market
- a total failure to put the 'report' in context of the existing political and economic climate in Ukraine.

To explain further:

Perhaps 'journalists' from THE Australia (perhaps with origins in THE England or THE Ireland) are at best extremely lazy or just plainly ignorant. Unlike the English language, Ukrainian (along with other Slavonic languages) does not have or use either a definite or indefinite article ('THE' or 'A'). The correct term for the largest wholly European country is **Ukraine**. This is definitive enough. The introduction of the definite article I find offensive, derogatory and in fact racially discriminatory. If you think use of the phrase 'The Ukraine' is correct, then you should also always refer to THE Australia, THE England, THE Germany, etc, etc. And just for the record, the Ukrainian capital of Ukraine is the Ukrainian city of KYIV!

Without explicitly saying so, the 'report' actually portrayed a bunch of sorry middle-aged emotionally-failed men who were ready to spend money buying a 'bride' from Europe. Scant regard was paid to the 'facilitators' of this dubious market. This is tawdry tabloid television at its gutter worst. Perhaps Channel 9 and 60 Minutes are looking to fill the void left by the demise of 'The News of the World'! Perhaps, also, a full parliamentary investigation into the workings of Channel 9 needs to be considered.

Ukraine has a population double that of THE Australia, and has a large mix of people. As in any society there are many people who will attempt to improve their living standards. A small number are prepared to sell their personal 'assets' to achieve this. However, of the remaining more than 40 million Ukrainians, approximately half of whom are female, the vast majority do not have to resort to looking for e-bay partners. They lead 'normal' lives – attend school, tertiary education, go to work, marry, have families, etc – within the constraints of their society.

And sadly, 60 Minutes has abysmally failed to mention what form that society in Ukraine is currently taking. Perhaps this is beyond the investigative capacity of Channel 9. However, here are some pointers as to the degradation of conditions in Ukraine since the (skilfully engineered in Moscow) election some 18 months ago of the current President and his government:

- Repeated gross breaches of the Ukrainian Constitution
- Flagrant violation of 'guaranteed' human rights
- Erosion of democratic rights hard-won during the Orange Revolution
- Ongoing corruption of the government and its cronies
- Increasing censorship and suppression of the press and media (including radio and TV)
- The reversion of history to a form provided by and approved by the government in Moscow.
- The progressive replacement of the constitutional state language of Ukrainian by the Moscow-approved language of Russian
- The imprisonment and show trials of political opponents of the current regime

These are all verifiable facts. Independent international bodies such as Amnesty International, Freedom House and International Press Institute attest to the declining conditions in Ukraine. And if this all seems to be too difficult or too remote to be of concern for Channel 9, also consider this. THE Australia is the only member of the G20 which does not have an Embassy in Ukraine. THE Australia has the lowest (effectively none) diplomatic representation in Ukraine of all OECD countries. Given the size of Ukraine, its geographical position and its economic potential, why not question this major oversight? After all, the *60 Minutes* 'report' showed Australian citizens in Ukraine and presumably a *60 Minutes* team visited Ukraine – and no local diplomatic support from the Australian government.

Given the fact that Ukraine is fast approaching the 20th anniversary of its re-found Independence, there is an excellent opportunity for Channel 9 and *60 Minutes* to redress some of the extreme offence caused by the recent program. There is plenty of material ranging from a detailed expose of the current political state of affairs in Ukraine through the Australian government's poor diplomatic representation in Ukraine to the rich cultural and historical beauty of Ukraine.

I sincerely hope you will attempt to rectify your poor record in matters Ukrainian in the near future. I look forward to a time when I can consider Channel 9 better than currently beneath contempt.

In disgust

Baz Jarockyj