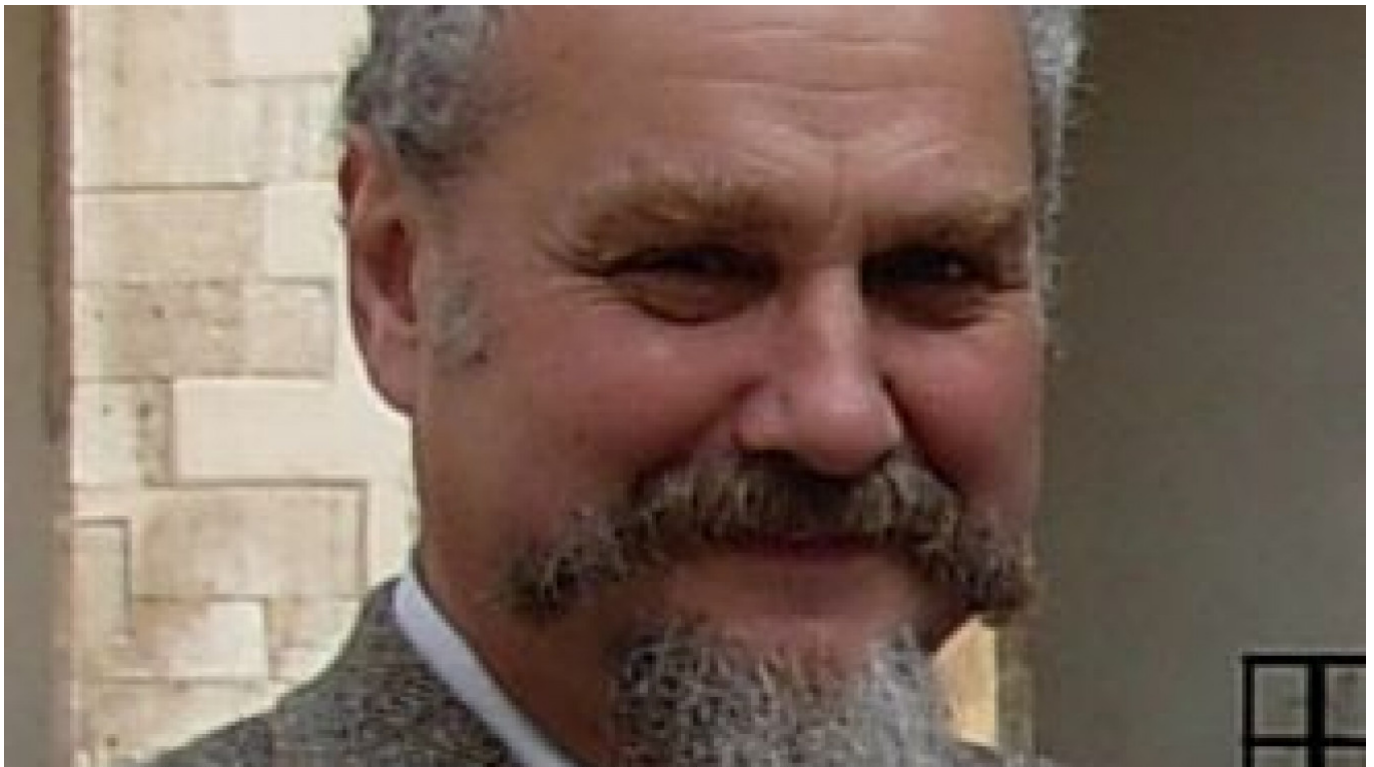


Professor Says Sacked Over Opinion Article Against Possible Ukraine Invasion

By [Matthew Bodner](#)

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Professor Andrei Zubov. (Foma / Wiki Commons)

A professor at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, or MGIMO, said Tuesday that he has been fired for writing an opinion piece comparing a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine with Nazi Germany's Anschluss with Austria in 1938.

Professor Andrei Zubov's article titled "This Has Already Happened" was published by Vedomosti on Saturday, the day that the Federation Council voted to give President Vladimir Putin permission to send troops to Ukraine.

Zubov wrote that such an operation would seriously damage Russian relations with Ukraine and the West and put the world on the brink of another cold war.

"We need to come to our senses and stop," Zubov wrote. "Our policies will drag our people into a terrible, horrible venture. Historical experience tells us that nothing costs so much. We

should not do what the Germans did in their time on the promises of Goebbels and Hitler."

He implored readers to "say no to this insane and, most importantly, completely unnecessary aggression" before saying "we don't need any more blood or tears."

MGIMO's rector had told the head of the philosophy department that Zubov could either submit a letter of resignation or be fired, Slon.ru reported. Zubov refused to write any such letter.

The institute has not yet commented on the dismissal, though Zubov said he was told that the decision was solely brought about by his comments in the article.

The news was met with shock on the Facebook page of Zubov's daughter, who was the first to publicly write about the sacking.

One Facebook user, who identified himself as Konstantin Matsan, wrote that he was "ashamed of MGIMO" and urged Zubov to "hold on!" Another blogger going by the name Vasiliy Rulinskiy simply wrote, "Lord, have mercy!"

Speaking after his sacking, Zubov said that although he has written controversial material in the past and been "scolded" for it by the institute, he had never felt the need to censor himself.

When asked why the opinion article in question might have cost him his job, he replied that MGIMO's rector was likely forced to fire him by his superiors in the government.

"Of course, I have a hunch. MGIMO is the institute of the Foreign Ministry and my opinion was incompatible with the ministry's position," he said.

His sacking has led commentators to draw comparisons with Soviet times, when writers were regularly persecuted for not sticking to the official party line, but Zubov believes Russian society has changed sufficiently to make sure those times don't return.

"I remember those times very well," he told The New Times. But now it's a completely different situation: hundreds, thousands of people call and write me every day. Back then, everyone hid their heads in the sand. ... This means that we have great prospects, that we won't be driven back to 'Soviet silence'."

He said that he felt sympathy for MGIMO's management because many staff probably agreed with what he wrote in the article. "These are very smart and understanding people. But they have received instructions from the authorities. ... Their situation is worse than mine."

Zubov defiantly maintains that his analysis is correct and that his position gave him the right to draw the comparison.

"Hitler and Putin — they are completely different people, they have very different goals and aspirations. But it is a fact that the foreign policy of 1930s Germany and modern Russia are similar, very similar institutionally. I am absolutely confident and ready to prove it as a professional," he said.

Zubov is a doctor of historical sciences, and the author of five monographs and about 150 scientific papers, and has edited two volumes of "Russian History: 20th Century." He is also one of the authors of the Basic Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church.

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