

**Andrew Fylypovych, Esquire
905 Manor Avenue
Meadowbrook, PA 19046
484-567-5710
afyl@burnswhite.com**

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VIA FAX ONLY: 203-254-4292

Rev. Jeffrey P. von Arx, S.J.
President
Fairfield University
1073 North Benson Road
Fairfield CT 06824

RE: Tonight's presentation by Stephen Cohen

Dear Father von Arx:

It truly pains me to write this letter. My daughter, Alexandra, graduated from Fairfield last May. If she were not currently on assignment at the University of Georgia's campus in Monteverde, Costa Rica, she would be standing at your doorstep asking: "Is this a joke?" The question, of course, is about Fairfield's astounding decision to celebrate the 20th anniversary of your Russian, Eastern European, and Central Asian Studies Program by inviting Stephen Cohen as the principal speaker—a man whose own writings demonstrate that he has no intention of participating in any "honest, unbiased debate" regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

No one is suggesting that Mr. Cohen not be allowed to speak. But an "honest, unbiased debate" requires a level playing field with two equally sophisticated participants. Merely allowing Mr. Cohen to be the principal speaker allows him to use his not insubstantial academic pedigree to browbeat any unwitting listener into submission with baseless innuendo that is more worthy of a Goebbels award rather than the privilege of speaking at such an event. This certainly does not "honor" Fairfield as Professor McFadden has suggested in the University's press announcement. Nor does it meet Fairfield's mission statement where "the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement".

Allow me to demonstrate how Mr. Cohen will abuse the privilege about to be bestowed on him. The quotes come from an article by Mr. Cohen which was originally published in the on-line version of The Nation on June 30, 2014, updated on July 7 and 17.
<http://www.thenation.com/article/180466/silence-american-hawks-about-kievs-atrocities>
(accessed Feb. 4, 2015).

- 1) [with respect to the so-called "rebels in eastern Ukraine]:"**But calling themselves "self-defense" fighters is not wrong. They did not begin the combat; their land is being invaded and assaulted by a government whose political legitimacy is arguably no greater than their own, two of their large regions having voted overwhelmingly for autonomy referenda; and, unlike actual terrorists, they have not committed acts of war outside their own communities."**

Factually grossly inaccurate, these statements ignore the fact that the armed leadership of the so-called rebels came from Moscow; there was no “invasion” of the Donbass by anyone except Russian citizens and mercenaries, all activities were preceded by the armed accession of Crimea, and the “referenda” were universally condemned as forced exercises and not an expression of free will. What is even more baffling is the creation of a pseudo-academic category of “actual terrorists”. Seriously? Applying Mr. Cohen’s definition, the criminals who recently wreaked havoc in France could not possibly be “actual terrorists” because they did not commit acts of war “outside their communities.” Is his an academic analysis or a propaganda piece written by the best of the Kremlin’s PR machines?

2) “However authoritarian Putin may be, there is nothing authentically fascist in his rulership [*sic*], policies, state ideology or personal conduct.”

It appears that Mr. Cohen likes to create definitions to suit his needs. Just as he managed to invent the concept of “actual” terrorists, he now conjures up “authentic” fascists. Anyone who has spent any time studying fascism has to recognize that it is not susceptible to an easy definition. Moreover, it does not appear that any reputable scholar has actually defined what an “authentic” fascist is—or should it matter. This is an artificial nuance created by Mr. Cohen to obfuscate reality. Umberto Eco has probably compiled the most comprehensive list of characteristics (more than a dozen, in fact) of what defines a fascist. There is no point in exhausting the list, but let’s examine just a few: a) “The Cult of Tradition”—Putin is certainly careful to make himself look like the defender of things ancient Russian—from geography to religion to language; b) “Disagreement Is Treason”—just ask Mssrs. Magnitsky (bludgeoned in prison), Khodorkovsky (stripped of all wealth, in prison for a decade, exiled) and Litvinenko (essentially tortured to death via a dose of plutonium laced tea)—no further review is necessary; c) “Contempt for the Weak”—picture Putin bare-chested on a horse—yes, those pictures are real; d) “Non-truths and Lying and Spreading of Propaganda”—brazen falsehoods abound—from fake trajectories of the missile that shot down the Malaysian airliner to denials of the source of the “little green men” to the vast assemblage of internet trolls who are paid to sabotage clear thinking on the web; e) “Fear of Difference”—there is no worse place for a dark skinned person to be than on a Moscow street in broad daylight; f) “Obsession with a Plot”—of course, NATO is out to invade Russia. How much more authentic can this fascist be?

3) “Moreover, tens of millions of today’s Russians whose family members were killed by actual fascists in that war [WW2] will regard this defamation [calling Putin a fascist] of their popular president as sacrilege, as they do the atrocities committed by Kiev.”

Of course, we never really know what the Russian masses truly think—see “Disagreement is Treason” above. Since when should concern be focused solely on what the Russians think. What about the countless millions of Ukrainians, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Poles and other Eastern Europeans who were smothered by the Russian tsars, the Soviet commissars and now by Putin himself, the direct administrato-political descendant of the likes of Dzerzhinsky, Beria, Kaganovich and Stalin himself. While western politicians may engage in name calling, Putin engages in bone crushing brutality. His minions do not trample on feelings, they *kill* people. Unthinkable in the 21st century is Putin’s willingness to again try to reduce the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church to rubble. Witness only the forcible demolition of their churches in Crimea and physical violence against priests. Lest we forget, it was a Jesuit priest

from Shenandoah, PA, Walter Ciszek, S.J., who spent almost two decades in a Siberian gulag camp before being released in 1963. And Fairfield allows an apologist for Putin to speak with impunity without anyone to challenge him?

4) **“Nuland [an Assistant US Sec. of State] was then caught on tape plotting with the American ambassador, Geoffrey Pyatt, to oust Yanukovych’s government and replace him with Yatsenyuk, who soon became, and remains, prime minister.”**

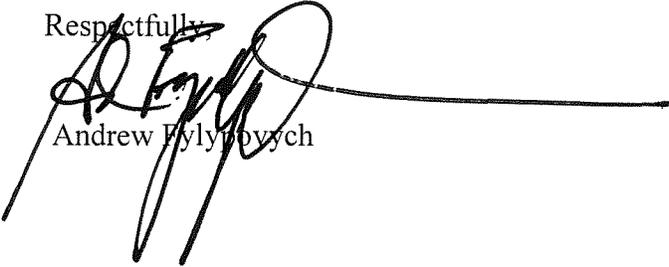
Mr. Cohen has taken poetic license to new lows. NPR, which can hardly be in cahoots with Senator McCain, reported a conversation, where a voice purportedly to be Nuland’s, says that Arseniy Yatseniuk, one of the opposition’s leaders, has “got the economic experience, the governing experience” and *should join Yanukovych’s cabinet*. She argues that two of the other leaders, Oleh Tyahnybok and former boxer Vitaly Klitschko, should remain on the outside and offer advice to Yatseniuk. None of the three accepted government positions at that time. Not exactly a plot to replace.

5) **“Putin, not Kiev or Washington, has demonstrated ‘remarkable restraint’.”**

Utilizing an invasion force of at least 10,000 heavily armed men; hundreds of tanks; launching thousands of missiles; flying bombers dangerously close to civil aviation routes all around the world—no rational observer can call that “remarkable restraint.” Not to mention torturing and psychologically abusing captured Ukrainian female fighter pilot, Nadiya Savchenko, who is barely clinging to life in a Moscow prison. Putin can shake hands with ISIS.

The “fog of war” that Mr. Cohen complains of actually rolls in from his ocean of cold lies and cleverly sophisticated innuendo. He can continue to spread that fog—it is after all, America--but not in a debate in an academic setting where he is the sole player. *I urge you to postpone his appearance at Fairfield until such time as a credible opponent can also be present so as to make it a legitimate academic debate.* Three potential candidates come to mind immediately: Timothy Snyder of Yale, Alexander Motyl of Rutgers and Chrystia Freeland, a former journalist for The Economist, now a Member of the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa. Academic and intellectual honesty require that such action be taken. It is not too late.

Respectfully,


Andrew Fylypovych

cc: Professor David McFadden
Department of History
Canisius Hall Rm 318
Fairfield University
dmcfadden@fairfield.edu (via email only)

Ms. Meg McCaffrey
Press Office
Fairfield University
mmccaffrey@fairfield.edu (via email only)