

## 05.02.2015 Ukraine. A bloody war that needs to be stopped.

The Mediapart site has published an investigation carried out by "Correct!", a German site of the same type, on the destruction of the airliner that was flying from Amsterdam to Malaysia last August. 298 passengers, all civilians, died, killed by the implacable machinery of war which has engulfed the Russian-speaking regions of eastern Ukraine.

You will not be familiar with the BUK, the Russian-made anti-aircraft missile launchers deployed alongside armoured units to destroy enemy planes and helicopters before they can destroy the tanks on the ground one by one. The role of these self-propelled launchers is to discourage air attacks on tanks which are manoeuvring on the ground. And, of course, to protect themselves, since they are logically the primary targets for enemy aircraft. It was a BUK of the Russian army which shot down the Malaysian airliner in the circumstances described in this article.

During the first few weeks of last summer, the confrontation was growing between the "rebels" who had armoured units, some captured from the Ukrainian army, some come from Russia, and the Kiev government's air force which had total control of the air. Earlier, this air superiority had been decisive, and the pro-Russian forces had taken substantial losses.

Then the trend reversed in early July, and a few days before the Malaysian Airlines crash of 17 July it emerged that Ukrainian army fighter planes and helicopters had been shot down. The journalists were convinced: this reversal of fortunes was the result of the deployment of a Russian BUK in Ukraine, in other words an anti-aircraft missile launcher accompanied by a radar vehicle and other equipment. The journalists also carried out an "internet investigation" by collecting the Facebook photos shared by people who had photographed this remarkable convoy, going as far as to identify its registration number, the place where it was deployed for firing, the Russian regiment to which it belonged, and even the name of the man who fired the missile.

Why was a civil airliner shot down? Quite simply because the Ukrainian fighters used civilian flights as "shields" by making attacks from areas used by scheduled flights, the element of surprise allowing pilots to swoop onto their targets before the BUK could get off a shot. That day, the Malaysian Airlines pilot requested a change of course to avoid bad weather. This alteration of course was interpreted as a suspect manoeuvre and a quarter of an hour later it was destroyed by a missile fired by the BUK.

The investigation by the German journalists was rigorous. It showed the direct responsibility of the Putin government for the disaster since the missile was fired by Russian troops under the direct command of the Russian army. Vladimir Putin's government is responsible for shooting down the plane. Whether that was intentional or accidental, in a moment of panic, is secondary.

However, the Ukrainian government also bears a share of responsibility. It has used airline passengers as human shields during its air attacks on the Russian armour. These fighters had hidden behind airliners full of holidaymakers, endangering the hundreds of innocent lives.

Lastly, the governments of the Member States of the European Union also bear their share of responsibility. By refusing to recognise that the conflict in eastern Ukraine was de facto a war, they failed to take the measures required, like prohibiting their airlines from flying above the area where the fighting was in progress.

This shared responsibility makes it doubtful that there will be major media follow-up of this independent investigation which has implications at the highest level, including within the European Union. It shows that it is only the logic of warfare which is really working here, and the point at which it is dangerous to allow it to develop.

It is urgent that real talks get under way for peace in this part of the world.