

# [***Tucker Carlson is in Russia to interview Putin. He's already doing the bidding of the Kremlin***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B8P-1201-JBSS-S0BN-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Tucker Carlson's interview with Vladimir Putin hasn't been posted online yet, but he is already doing the Russian authoritarian's bidding.

In a video posted to X announcing the sit-down Tuesday - the first interview Putin has granted with a Western media figure since his full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago - Carlson predictably and dishonestly villainized the press. The right-wing extremist, who has lauded autocrats in recent years, claimed English-speaking outlets are "corrupt" and "lie" to their audiences as they disseminate "propaganda of the ugliest kind." (Projection much?)

As a supposed example of manipulative media behavior, Carlson accused journalists of engaging in "fawning pep sessions" when interviewing Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky, who the former Fox News host asserted he would like to earnestly sit down with, but once likened to a rat.

"At the same time our politicians and media outlets have been doing this, promoting a foreign leader like he's a new consumer brand," Carlson said, "not a single Western journalist has bothered to interview the president of the other country involved in this conflict: Vladimir Putin."

While technically true, Carlson is lying by omission, the very thing he accused the Western press of doing in the video he posted online. It is true that no Western journalist has interviewed Putin since the onset of the war, but it isn't for a lack of trying. The actual reason is quite simple: Putin has declined to grant access - a fact that should make it all the more obvious as to why Carlson, of all people, has been welcomed into the Kremlin palace, while others have been denied.

"Does Tucker really think we journalists haven't been trying to interview President Putin every day since his full scale invasion of Ukraine?" CNN's Christiane Amanpour rhetorically remarked upon seeing Carlson's claim. "It's absurd - we'll continue to ask for an interview, just as we have for years now."

Even Putin's own spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said Carlson was outright wrong on the matter. Asked on Wednesday if no Western journalist had attempted to interview Putin, Peskov said, "No, Mr. Carlson is wrong. Actually, he can't know that. We receive a lot of applications for interviews with the president." Peskov hinted at the reason that Carlson was selected, saying he "has a position that is different from the rest" of Western media.

Meanwhile, as Carlson implied that US news organizations are not interested in telling the Russian story, The Wall Street Journal's Evan Gershkovich sits in a prison for doing precisely that.

Putin not only has declined to participate in interviews with the free press, but over the past two years he has waged a war against the media, **locking up journalists**, **fining Big Tech companies** for hosting "fake" information about the Ukraine invasion, and **pushing through censorship laws** that clamp down on news organizations.

"It is most striking to see Carlson justify his interview with Putin and trip to Russia as the work of a journalist - at a time when Western journalists are literally sitting in jail for having done nothing wrong other than seeking to report independently in Putin's Russia, not to mention the many Russian journalists who face imprisonment or exile in the effort to continue their work," Susan Glasser, the New Yorker writer who previously served as The Washington Post's Moscow bureau co-chief, told CNN.

"Real journalism, unfortunately, is a crime in Putin's Russia," Glasser added. "Will his report from there acknowledge this?"

CNN asked Carlson on Tuesday why he would smear the press by falsely asserting journalists are not interested in interviewing Putin or reporting on Russia. CNN also asked him if during the sit-down he questioned Putin about Gershkovich's imprisonment. The text message went unanswered.

Carlson claims to be in favor of journalism that is unafraid. And he claims to stand in opposition to those who cozy up to power. But the right-wing personality has a lengthy history of giving free passes to those who share his ***politics***, while also [*prancing around*](https://e.newsletters.cnn.com/click?Ecm9iZXJ0Lm1jbGVhbkB3YXJuZXJtZWRpYS5jb20/CeyJtaWQiOiIxNzA3Mjc1NjA4MTk2NThjYmQ3Yzk1NTc1IiwiY3QiOiJjbm4tMTFmMWFjM2YzZDdlZTc0MGExNDllMWQzNWQ0ODY5ZTMtMSIsInJkIjoid2FybmVybWVkaWEuY29tIn0/HWkhfQ05OX2lfTmV3c19OREJBTjAyMDcyMDI0YzExNjAwMzliMSxjbjEsaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cueW91dHViZS5jb20vd2F0Y2g/qP3Y9SThQQy1NZjVmMGc/sar65678a7b) with Donald Trump (someone he [*privately professed*](https://e.newsletters.cnn.com/click?) to hold deep contempt for).

In recent years, he has offered flattering interviews to Hungarian autocrat Viktor Orban and Argentina's far-right president Javier Milei, giving the figures a massive stage to push their agenda, and using his platform to pull the American right further to the fringe.

Which is to say, don't hold your breath if you think Carlson will bring the heat to Putin. What is more likely to happen: Carlson will effectively humanize the ruthless Russian authoritarian (who is personally responsible for countless deaths) while serving as an empty vessel in which Putin can ship his dangerous propaganda to the American public.

Carlson's pilgrimage to Moscow is already a major victory for Putin, whose state media has **breathlessly hyped the trip** in recent days, chronicling Carlson's every move with images of him seated at a Moscow theater watching a ballet, having lunch at a swanky restaurant, and accessing "fast and free Wi-Fi internet."

Steven Pifer, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and former longtime Foreign Service Officer who focused during his State Department career on relations with the former Soviet Union, said that Putin will use Carlson's visit and interview "to claim that Russia is not all that isolated politically."

"It is unfortunate that an American commentator, who likely will not pose challenging questions, is giving Putin an outlet for his propaganda points," Pifer told CNN. "Bear in mind that Putin wants to stir and widen divisions within the United States as much as possible."

That may just be a goal both Putin and Carlson share.

Anna Chernova contributed to this article.

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