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FROM THE AUTHOR

When the USSR collapsed, I was 24, and I already ran my own publishing house. My native language is Russian. I have lived all my life in Kharkiv. I have published more than ten thousand titles of books, a third of which are in Russian. I know hundreds of thoughtful, educated, and intelligent people who live in Russia. And, I'm just not ready to understand them. I am not ready to understand people who consciously support the scoundrel who is destroying my country with their silent approval. The one who destroys their country. The one who destroys the future of the humankind.

When in 2014, Ukraine made its decision to take up the European path, expressing its choice in the most democratic way inherent in our country (on the Maidan protests) Russia occupied part of our territory, Crimea and Donbas.

The moment was chosen as Jesuitically as possible. It was the moment when Ukraine got rid of Yanukovich

[fugitive President], and the army destroyed by him practically did not exist. I often visited the Crimea, travelled it many times from Kerch to Tarkhankut, and I felt its loss kind of physiologically, like the loss of an important organ.

My last meeting with Crimea was a jailbreak at the Simferopol railway station in June 2014, when I came to say goodbye to my dacha (summerhouse) in eastern Crimea. One of the people wearing gray raincoats and peering into the faces of those who got off the Kyiv train identified me as a participant in the broadcasts on Hromadske TV during the Maidan protests.

Some alcoholics with machine guns from some kind of self-defence group (defence from whom?) who followed the gray personalities with cold eyes, took me to the premises of the former lockers on the first platform. There, an intelligent-looking man, taking my passport and hearing with surprise the name of a publishing house familiar to him, articulated with his lips, ‘I’ll let you go right now’.

He crumpled my passport for a long time, discussed the library conference in Sudak with me, waited for a couple with machine guns to leave us, did not lead me to a makeshift “monkey house”

(jail cell), looked out into the street, returned my backpack and passport and said, “Wait until they enter the underground path, and do not run”.

It was obvious to everyone that the war that began in 2014 would end only with the death of the tyrant, or with a change of regime in Russia, which, in fact, is the same thing. It remains for Ukraine to develop its army, military industry and build a modern, technologically advanced, cultural, European-oriented nation.

The Kharkiv spring in 2014 could have ended with an occupation, but there were enough pro-Ukrainian Kharkiv residents who saved the city. I remember every Sunday demonstrations under Russian flags along the main street of the city, Sumskaia. These poorly dressed, gloomy people, getting off the buses that arrived from the Russian border, which is located 30 kilometres from my house, brought fear and a sense of hopelessness into the souls of Kharkovites. The border was completely open, but not everyone understood that these people were not our fellow citizens. Ukraine did not have a capable army, and in the first period of the war, the country was saved by the Volunteer Battalions, and their supply was provided by voluntary social

workers. Civil society replaced the state for a while. The country has come into being. The Ukrainian political nation began to take shape.

On February 21, 2022, I had tickets to Warsaw and from there to the Baltic countries. And, a strong sense of the inevitable, associated with the beginning of a new phase of the war. I wrote several posts on social networks, recalling Gleiwitz and other historical precedents, realizing that the beginning of a new, “hot” stage of the war can only be stopped by the Russian public or by the West’s super-tough sanctions actions that prevent aggression, and not follow it.

When, in 1939, the Nazis staged a simple play written by Heydrich in which the Poles allegedly seized a radio station on the German side of the border and broadcast an anti-German proclamation (prepared in advance, as well as the corpses of concentration camp prisoners dressed in Polish military uniforms), this served justification for the war. I was expecting something similar in Donetsk or Luhansk.

Naturally, I cancelled the trip, having called everyone with whom meetings were scheduled in Poland and the Baltics. I did not want to be far from my family and colleagues at such a critical

moment. In several days of the war, many of my friends went into self-defence and I understood the level of threat, but also the level of response.

The war found me in Kyiv. After the shock of the first hours, I saw the absolute composure of the defenders of the city, the leadership of the country and the army. Each step, both organizational and diplomatic, was systematic and unmistakable. People believed in Victory from the first days. Mariupol and Kharkiv, two key big cities that did not surrender to the enemy, are subject to maximum, catastrophic destruction of urban infrastructure, historical buildings, and residential areas. The crimes of the invaders are recorded and, of course, they will be considered not only in Ukrainian, but also in international courts. It is Kharkiv or Mariupol that should become the place of the tribunal's meeting. Kharkiv has always been the juridical centre of Ukraine. Mariupol has become a symbol of resilience.

The war continues. My relatives are now in Kharkiv. One of my colleagues was in the shelling zone in Iziium; and, before her eyes, in front of the windows of a flat building, a Russian helicopter exploded into pieces. My friends were bullied by the invaders near Kyiv. My social media feed is full

of deaths notifications of the loved ones. For me, this war is not on TV, it is all around. And, so it is for every Ukrainian.

From the first days of aggression, one of the questions that occupied my mind was how different paths the two peoples of the once one country went, and what led to this. What was the reason—the huge reserves of raw materials appropriated by a handful of adventurers who decided to take over the world, or the initial readiness of the population to believe zombie-maker propagandists who created an Orwellian-style parallel reality. I know personally some of these people. It was important for me to understand what their psychology is, and to look into their spiritual “kitchen.” Perhaps it was these small people who indeed led Europe to a big war. They acted all over the world, creating a parallel reality not only for Russians, but also for Germans, Israelis, and Americans. They bought politicians, financed political parties, interfered in elections through social networks, forced entire groups of countries to compromise their interests using economic threats. It is after such gray people that the armies follow.

After a week of aggression, it became already obvious that the Russian military was forced to fight

not with the Ukrainian army, but with the whole people, and they had no chance. The only question is when the war will end, and what will happen next. I do not share the point of view of those who say that the Russian people are wise enough to draw conclusions. I think that only prolonged impoverishment “behind the Iron Curtain” can push them to these conclusions. It was an attempt to show what will happen afterwards that I undertook. What will happen next in Ukraine is obvious. After this tragedy, the world will help us quickly restore the country. Unfortunately, many will die, and some will not return from forced emigration. Nevertheless, Ukraine will see itself “in fashion” and loved by the entire world for a long time. This country will become the leader of a new life.

Ukraine has never been and will never be an aggressor, so the war cannot end in Moscow. Therefore, the change of the regime in Russia is the business of the Russians themselves; so, I tried to analyse whether the Russian society is ready to change everything in a radical fashion. Or else is it ready to gradually slide into poverty along with its insane authorities.

And, the third part (the most difficult) is the most terrible. I tried my best to understand the most

evil criminal, to walk in his shoes, and to analyse his thoughts from his own perspective. And, it turned out to be a very nerve-wracking thing to do. To be in the place of a serial maniac, in the place of a man who cynically lies to the entire world, a man who threatens humanity with death at a time when values have changed, when mercy and sympathy have ceased to be the lot of literature. We are living in the times when humanity for the first time in history has enough resources for successful development. It is the time when countries compete in scientific success and cultural achievement. Moreover, it turned out that it was almost impossible to abide in the depths of this person's thoughts; I would be "thrown out" after each piece of text.

Try to do it on your own. This book is not a history of the past. It is a warning about the future. Let's save the world together.

JANUARY 2022

01.20.2022

Diary entry on iPad

We returned from Paris. It is good that, finally, covid restrictions have almost been lifted. Of course, no one needs our Sputnik vaccine, but it's good that we went twice to Finland's border in the fall and were injected with Pfizer; which now makes it easier to travel around Europe. Stupid "Chukhons"¹; they didn't even take money for injections. Three weeks in Paris, Montmartre, Latin Quarter, Tuileries, and New Year's Eve on the Quai d'Orsay. They definitely know how to arrange a holiday. The good thing is that it was cheaper than a week in Sochi. Masha was so eager to go there, all their party girls being there, and all sorts of Timothy with discos or whatever they call it now. But, my wife decided to save some money. With such a rouble exchange rate, we can afford to eat not only the onion soup. And, I remember how some twenty years ago they would bring sausage with them to Nice.

¹ Disdainful Russian word for the Finnic peoples.

01.21.2022
“Native St. Petersburg”
community in VKontakte

Dear compatriots, I returned from vacation, I saw how the scoundrels “rot”¹. Soon they will experience a complete “kirdyk”² without our money. They look into our mouths. And, they dare to yelp that somehow we are moving our troops around Ukraine in a wrong way. Just think about it, the “Khohlys”³ got a little scared, because we moved a couple of Iskander missile systems from the Siberian Army District to Voronezh. It’s none of their damn business. They are using our gas for heating, so may they shut up and keep silent. At present, the price of gas is fair, have they prepared their money? It will not be the same, because we will agree with Qatar, and today’s 700 dollars per thousand cubic meters will seem like manna from heaven to them.

01.22.2022
WhatsApp message

Seryozha, there Lavrov spoke very diplomatically with them, saying that we will not touch Ukraine;

¹ Russian propaganda term for Western society’s “decay”.

² Russian slang word for “finished, done with”.

³ Slang: Russian disdainful word for the Ukrainians.

Russia honours our agreements and world peace. Shall I comment it this way on the evening live program, or as usual?

01.23.2022

“Ukraine Today” Telegram channel

Dear readers! According to the most reliable data, Zelensky, together with Poroshenko, stole more than \$20 billion of your money from the budget in six years.

But, Lukashenko, he does think about the people. Look at the kind of roads he built. He shot all the corrupt officials back in the nineties. So, no one steals under “Batska”¹. The roads are better than in Europe; only in Russia they’re just as cool.

01.24.2022

Facebook. Photo against the backdrop of St. Isaac’s Cathedral

I am proud that I live in St. Petersburg, I admire your miracle, Montferrand. In the 19th century, we already had the technology that made it possible to put up such columns that would withstand any

¹ “Father”, a nickname for Alexander Lukashenko.

war. Although, what kind of war can there be in the XXI century? We will quickly put them down on their knees economically.

01.25.2022

“At-Dva” community in VKontakte

Guys, are you not tired of listening to this Biden? Why do you not like the exercises in Belarus? It is high time for “Batska” to show that he has had enough of fidgeting. He was offered the position of head of the Union State for five years, but did not want to. Now no one will offer it to him. We’ve got Medvedev who is not employed. Let “Batska” tremble from our tanks throughout his country.

And, let the “Khohlys” see how we know how to suppress terrorists. All their “Benderovets” [another slang word for the Ukrainians] gangs will be flipped in two hours when it comes down to it.

01.26.2022

Diary entry on iPad

Still, it’s good that I didn’t go to work for “ЕКНО Moskvу” then. Otherwise, I would have sat there without money, and I would have trembled that the

FSB [Federal Security Service] would not let me out of the country when I had to answer for chatter.

And now, it is a couple of hours a day of the f**ing talking business, and I see myself comfortably provided, and the family is happy, and there is enough money left to spend on “girls.” And Egypt with Turkey a couple of times a year, and Paris “by night”, and fishing in Finland with friends, and a pension is not two kopecks, like hard-working blue collars have.

01.27.2022
“Mom’s happiness”
community in VKontakte

Girls, you are just great, come on, give birth again—the President spoke about increasing assistance for the second and further child. We definitely need to maintain the dominance of the Slavic population. You can see how many Tajiks have come over in large numbers, I understand that it is necessary that somebody do the work for us, but let’s give birth even more, my dear girl. Someone must keep these newcomers in check, they are anointed with oil in our country, as compared to their impoverished countries.

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