

Arkadi Babtschenko

IN A FRENZY – Russia's War*Im Rausch*

- A powerful voice and an exciting internal perspective on Russia and the war in Ukraine.
- The impressive personal account from the former Russian soldier and war reporter.
- Already published in Sweden.
- The author's previous books were sold to the UK, Spain and Italy.
- English sample translation available.



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So clear, so close, so knowing and so personal: no one writes about the Ukraine war like Arkadi Babtschenko.

As a former soldier, Arkadi Babtschenko knows the Russian army inside out; he has lived in the Ukraine and in exile as a critical, persecuted author for years. He has been writing about the situation since 2014 with this unique internal view of both sides as no one else can – in a passionately personal and stylistically brilliant manner with immense knowledge: there is the state-affiliated media, which breeds “Russian infantilism” with trash and national kitsch, without dignity or shame. The Russian Victory Days, which only celebrate the past – not the future. The future, in the form of dead soldiers, is emphatically hushed up.

Babtschenko writes about Putin’s delusion, which has gripped the whole of Russia, about concrete weaknesses with regard to material and strategy, and, right from the start, makes incredibly accurate predictions. From 24 February 2022, his texts take on the form of a unique diary of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the decisive conflict of the current day that has already profoundly changed the world; it sheds light on the events and portrays them with a linguistic verve that is unparalleled, clear-sighted and yet incredibly close.

“Babtschenko’s account is reminiscent of Remarque and Hemingway.” Neue Literarische Rundschau on Die Farbe des Krieges

“Die Farbe des Krieges can easily compete with the great literary testimonies from other wars ...

Babtschenko has breathtaking visual power.” Süddeutsche Zeitung

“Babtschenko depicts the horror of war like no one before.” Die Zeit

Arkadi Babtschenko, born in Moscow in 1977, fought in the Chechen wars. He later wrote for *Novaya Gazeta* as a war correspondent. He has been living in exile since 2017. In 2018, a fatal attack on Babtschenko was reported in Kiev – according to Ukrainian intelligence, a staging to protect him from Russian pursuers; the case caused an international stir. Babtschenko’s books such as *Die Farbe des Krieges* (2007) are among the most important works of recent war literature.

ARKADI BABCHENKO

IN A FRENZY - Russia's War

Sample translated by Alexandra Roesch

Prologue

14th April 2014

My name is Arkady Arkadyevich Babchenko. I am thirty-seven years old, a university graduate, married and raising a daughter.

When I was nineteen, my homeland gave me a pair of felt boots, pressed a machine gun into my hand, put me in an armoured car and said: 'Off you go.' And I did so. At the time, the war was called 'restoring constitutional order'. At the age of twenty-two, I went to the district recruiting office and enlisted in the army, this time voluntarily, and went to war a second time. In 1999, it was called 'antiterrorist operation' during which I 'took part directly in combat operations over the course of one hundred and two days', as it says in my military service record.

My homeland issued me with a complimentary train ticket and two thousand roubles in monetary benefits for these two wars.

My cousin Sergey Babchenko was killed in Tajikistan. At the border. Just after mobilisation. They had sent young folk to make up the numbers. They had to go straight into the field. He had offered to go in place of the boys. They ran into a gang smuggling heroin. He was a machine gunner. They killed him by shooting him in the head. The only one in this particular fight. A sniper. Now his name is on a memorial plaque for the fallen in Bashkiria, his homeland.

My father Arkady Lavrentyevich Babchenko launched spaceships into space. He was a development engineer, working in the so-called 'box' – the Central Design Office for Heavy Engineering. He made cable masts for rockets. His last job was a cable mast for the 'Buran'. My father sometimes disappeared for six months on work trips. He lived in a dormitory in Baikonur. In Moscow, on the other hand, he lived in a two-room flat together with his wife, son, mother, father, brother and his family. These two rooms are our only inheritance. We had nothing else. No car, no garage, no dacha.

In the nineties, when the 'Buran' flew into space, just the once, before everything went to pieces, my father did not go trading or stealing. He was not suited to that at all. He was born to send spaceships into space. Until his death, he designed his cable poles that no-one needed anymore. In almost complete poverty.

He died of a stroke in 1996. I was at war at the time. We didn't even get to say goodbye.

My grandfather, Lavrentiy Petrovich Babchenko, one hundred percent Zaporozhye Cossack, was a tank driver. He fought in Khalkin-Gol. Wounded three times. Once seriously. These wounds then finished him off – he died in 1980, when I was three years old.

His wife, Elena Mikailovna Kuptsova (named after her first husband, I don't know her real name because my grandmother kept it secret – yes, she was Jewish), was in action during the war on the rooftops extinguishing incendiary bombs. When she did get the opportunity, she didn't emigrate from Russia, she stayed put. Until she died, she worked all her life. Three days a week. In the boiler room. In our house. In the cellar.

She died about two months after her son. I was still fighting at the time. I don't even know how she was buried.

My great-grandmother whose name was Bakhtiyarova (yes, she was part Tatar) had come to Moscow in the thirties. She lived in a side room of the school with her two children. Later she worked in the school for the rest of her life.

Her daughter, my grandmother, made iodoform – iodine crystals for cauterising torn limbs – throughout the war. Later, as part of the labour front, she unloaded coal wagons. Or chopped wood.

Her brother, my uncle, ran away to the front in the first months of the war at the age of fifteen and didn't come back until 1950 – from the Far East.

Her granddaughter, my mother, went to Chechnya with me. She saw everything with her own eyes. Then she adopted six children.

The first child in my own family was an adopted child. The second one too. It was only our third child, our daughter, who was our biological child.

Today my mother has a children's home. All the children are from Lipjezk. From disadvantaged families. Alcoholism is a problem.

My wife's grandfather, Petr Gorkanov, is a pure-blooded Mordovian, he fought in the Great Patriotic War in the chemical troops where he lost his eyesight. He lived in the country until his death. He heated his home with wood. It was not connected to gas during his lifetime.

My father-in-law, an ensign, pure-blooded Mordovian, served in Germany. When everything fell apart, he somehow found shelter in barracks and dormitories with his wife and children.

All nineteen years of my adult life – and even earlier, since 1993 – I have been going through a lot of shit with my country. I was always there where things were going wrong. In the Russian White House in the 1993 shelling, and then, well, in the White House. In Chechnya, then back in Chechnya. In South Ossetia – then in South Ossetia again. In Krymsk – then in Krymsk. In Blagoveshchensk – then in Blagoveshchensk.

During this entire time, me, my family, my ancestors and my relatives supported Russia, as it should be.

When it came to burning in Khalkin-Gol, conquering space for a few kopecks, starving in the cellar, producing iodoform for the front, vagabonding through the barracks with the children, dying in Tajikistan, feeding the lice in Chechnya, adopting abandoned children – then we were Russian.

Not once in Chechnya did anyone suggest I put down the machine gun and piss off to my Khokhol country (a Russian slur for Ukraine) and die in the bloody Ukraine. As long as you are supposed to give your life for the Russian homeland, the Russian homeland doesn't give a damn whether you are Jewish or not.

The homeland only knows one nationality: cannon fodder.

It was only after the war that they suggested I piss off to Khokhol country.

Of course that was only those who had never been in any war themselves.

I have never heard as much filth said about me and my relatives as in the last few months.

No-one ever asked me about my nationality at the 'fascist Bandera Jew' Euromaidan uprising. The 'Right Sector', which fought side by side with Russians, Jews, Crimean Tatars and Armenians on the barricades, couldn't care less. Not a bit. They don't care about that.

In the homeland, however, that person for whose accession to the throne the second Chechen War was instigated and who himself never once fought for his homeland – anywhere, who happily avoided Afghanistan and later, when he was already in power, sent all those young recruits in his place and that of his children to the wars he himself started in Georgia and Crimea, he tells me from the podium – tells me, who went to his war as a volunteer – that I am a traitor, a second-rate enemy agent.

Today, in my homeland, I am seen as a Jew, a Khokhol, Banderite, fifth columnist and national traitor.

Strange is your world, O Lord.

Part One

The Virus of War

13th June 2012

War is a virus. An all-encompassing pandemic disease. No politician, no economic situation, no Hitler alone is capable of setting people in motion towards the East if the numbers of virus carriers in society is not large enough. It must incubate in the people. They must fall ill. Become carriers of the virus.

Russia is a country in a permanent state of war. Since Napoleon, we have had wars to a greater or lesser extent on average every twenty-five years. There has been a war for every generation of our country. This is the reason that war has been infiltrated into the genetic code of our nation, it has changed us genetically.

The virus is in each of us, but it lies dormant. The pandemic only breaks out when it enters the acute phase. This does not happen as often as one might think. But sometimes it is horrific.

Sometimes things happen in a society that by all appearances is not in a state of agony or even decay that make your hair stand on end. Things that are completely unthinkable in a healthy society.

For example, when people blatantly come on a freedom march wearing an SS uniform in a country that has undergone the most terrible war in human history. And nothing happens to them. As if that were perfectly all right. Quite normal.

Or when people in another country in whose tearing apart we participated and whose officer corps was shot in our forests – when people in that country demonstrate with the flags of the Reich. That would be as if German fans paraded through the streets of Rzhev with NSDAP flags on a German national day.

And it is really awful when the remainder of the population of this country makes comments like ‘These Poles are completely mad’. And the state does not react at all.

Such things, which I stress are unthinkable in a healthy society, are indicators of the moral decay of a sick society. And this decay, dear friends, is approaching extremely fast.

We are almost ready for the virus of war. We are almost ready to fight. We almost WANT war. This can be seen quite clearly in people's faces. The number of virus carriers in the acute state is not taking years to increase, but only months. Later, just a few years later, these people will claim, as usual, that they were only obeying orders, that they hadn't understood what they were doing, and anyway, it was all him, not me. Then we will once again understand the simple and banal truth (like after Chechnya, for example) – that we must not kill. A truth that we forget with such wonderful regularity every twenty-five years.

But to make us aware of this banal truth once again, we first have to go through another catastrophe whose precursors are already appearing here and there with murderous regularity.

At the moment these can still be treated. For example, through good education. By building up the state. By opening up opportunities for social advancement. Integration of society. Through work and adequate income. And, of course, first and foremost, through freedom.

There is still time now.

But not much more.

The path the country is taking right now leads to a certain abyss.

Twilight

10th April 2013

I am concerned, gentlemen. Not about the clerics or the confidants or their hurt feelings, for God's sake. I have already said how I know about all this: those with their hurt feelings and their laws that they try to pass for that reason. With regard to the clerics and tsars, I am in complete solidarity with Alexander Sergejevich.

I am concerned with what they have done with my country. What they have done to themselves with the approval of my country. How quickly they were able to nail the cross of obscurantism into the brains of such a gigantic number of people, and what a gigantic number of people are actually happy about this newly acquired slavery.

I am annoyed that the proportion of physicists, engineers, philologists, astronomers, botanists, linguists, mathematicians, librarians and overall, just the sheer number of educated people is catastrophically and vanishingly low compared to the proportion of xenophobes, dark spirits, swines and plain idiots. I am saddened by the fact that I see almost no intelligent faces in the underground any more. That the tier of inspired physicists and poets wearing glasses, who argue heatedly and only believe in science, not in fast money nor clerics or tsars, have disappeared from my life. That the country has driven out the clever ones and is in the process of driving out the last of them. That the astrophysicist, Alexei Fillipenko, whom I still watch on the Discovery channel, speaks English and not Russian.

Well, the fools, what else would you expect? But what annoys me most is that they were able to hammer this into the heads of educated people too. During the war, I saw how men could be turned into animals within a few weeks. But that an entire nation could be turned into a mass of idiot characters within just a few years – that was new to me. What was it that Joseph Goebbels said – give me the mass media and I will turn every nation into a herd of pigs? That also upsets me.

It aggrieves me that there are so many of them. The speed with which they multiply and with which they spread their obscurantism throughout the country. It aggrieves me to see the ease with which they discard civilisation and how readily they plunge back into the Middle Ages. Once we reach the critical mass, there is no turning back. It's a one-way street. Trying to build a Cambridge or even just a Skolkovo in orthodox Iran is impossible.

It annoys me that it required such an incredibly short amount of time – a decade – for all these Yudeniches, Gundyayevs, Surkovs, toilet dunkers, standard-bearers, Cossacks, patriotic patrols and the like to show up here. It annoys me that this country lets them have free rein, that they can cause trouble and spread their spittle, more and more. It annoys me that the country has allowed these pigs, idiots and character-neutered types to seize power and do as they please.

I am sick to death of all these clerical gangs, the meetings in the Kremlin with the clerics, the Petersburg thief at that very place, the jargon of the guttersnipe president, Laodicean codes, the insult to any feelings – which I, I will repeat myself a third time, have god knows where – the standard bearers who must be pricking up their ears now, and so on and so forth. I am fed up with this indefinable state of limbo. I want it to finally stop. Clarity should prevail at last, no matter at whose expense. Orthodox Iran – fine, then an Orthodox Iran. Free Russia, then a free Russia. I want the solution.

No, I don't want everything to go rotten, to go under. I am simply defining the lines. Russia will be free, one way or another. And not only free from thieves and usurpers. But also from obscurantism and ignorance.

But the pace at which we are approaching the Middle Ages is downright frightening, gentlemen. Truly.

Talk show

27th October 2015

Call from state television channel: 'Good afternoon, Arkady. We would like to invite you to take part in a programme on patriotism on the 4th November. The presenters will be Tatyana Vedeneyeva, Angelina Vovk and Yuri Nikolayev.'

So, straight away, the stereotype is broken. The cogs in my head start to rattle, then stop with a squeak. In my world, the 4th November is the day on which hooded people march through Lyublino, raising their arms in victory and shouting 'Glory to Russia!'. So why patriotism? What does patriotism have to do with it? What does that have to do with Aunt Tatyana? Or with Angelina Vovk? The state television channel wants to invite me to report on torchlight processions together with Khryusha and Stepashka or what? And anyway, why me and why state television? And then it clicked. After all, I live in the real world. And state television lives in a world that it has created itself. And obviously just for itself. And the 4th November is not the day of Russian marches but the day of some sort of national unity.

'Hmmm ...' I say. 'Have you thought this through? You are not going to show me anyway. I am on your blacklist. You will cut everything I say anyway.'

‘No,’ they say. ‘What? How can you say such a thing? We don’t have blacklists at state television.’ (Oho, yes you do, even back when I worked there – ten years ago). ‘You can say whatever you want, there is no censorship here. Mitya Aleshkovskiy recommended you, he was brilliant when her appeared on the programme about ‘Duty to the Fatherland’, we are thrilled, over the moon, but of course we can’t invite him again so soon, we need someone like him, you know, so that’s why we have invited you. You served in the army, didn’t you? Well, then you see. You were in the war? There you go. You volunteered in the Far East? That is fantastic, then we can talk about the volunteer movement as an expression of patriotism and love of the Fatherland.’

Okay. If you are really sure, then I will come, no problem.

Television never ceases to amaze me, more and more all the time. If you think this whole beautiful colourful world is created in East Ankino, where smart people hurry along the corridors, then you are sorely mistaken. The programme on the tenth anniversary of the White House bombing, for example, was filmed in the cellars of the Kitay-gorod. But this time they put together the programme on patriotism in some rented industrial zone in the backyard of the Alekseyevskaya underground station. At first I thought I had been taken to a DIY store by mistake, or to a provincial railway station somewhere near Ryazan. A row of bio portaloos on the street. In front of them, a wretched group of raggle-taggle people. ‘Have you seen the brigade leader? Which brigade are you from?’ Extras, as it turned out. For the crowd scenes. ‘They can’t use the toilets here in the building.’ Indeed. Who wants people like that using their toilets during breaks in filming? Four men accompanied Angelika Vovk up the stairs. All with a smile on their face as if they had the honour of accompanying the heir to the throne. The young female editors were exactly that – very young. Around twenty. That too was nothing new: television in this country is made by young ambitious girls and boys with sharp elbows, who know exactly what they want from life, have a clear goal in sight and won’t be swayed. And that goal is quite clearly not the production of quality journalism. I don’t think that is a goal at all in Russia. Maybe in London.

Arkady, here is a list of the questions the presenter will ask you. We need a story from you about the floods. Something along the lines of how you rescued a stray dog.

‘Hmm ... what? A dog? What dog?’

‘Well, the little dog. You are swimming and swimming, the village is flooded, the inhabitants evacuated, you see the little dog and save it. That is very patriotic.’

‘Oh, the little ... of course, sure. The little dog. I understand. Yes. The little dog ... Listen, seven and a half thousand houses were flooded there, they won’t be dry by the time the first frost arrives, in the spring all the joints will crack and collapse, tens of thousands of people in three regions of the country will be left without a roof over their heads, a few hundred villages will have to be built from scratch – why the hell are we talking about a little dog?’

‘All right, then talk about the Far East without a story. Just talk about what you did there. How you distributed humanitarian aid. And in the meantime, have a think if you might have an anecdote about the war that you can tell us?’

‘About the war? Yes, I have an anecdote. I can tell you how the battalion commander chased a prisoner of war into the minefield and he brought him back thirty thousand dollars from the fallen, counterfeit money, but then he got blown up, and the commander ordered his orderly, a conscript, to shoot him, and he shot him at the dam and then ran from campfire to campfire in the battalion, saying he could no longer sleep.’

Or I can tell you how a soldier in my unit stopped a drug addict at his checkpoint who wanted to get his fix in Shatoj; he tied him to a tree, in winter, and questioned him for one day and one night about where he got his dope from, and then he wanted to shoot him, but I wouldn't allow it, and we shouted at one another, even took up our weapons, then the battalion commander arrived and took the drug addict to Chernokosova. They probably made an insurgent out of him there; if his relatives didn't buy his freedom and if he didn't die, then he is probably still in prison. Or I can tell you about Dima Lachin, who was in the war for two whole days before a bullet pierced his spine, his legs gave out, he begged us to cut them off, the Fatherland fobbed him off with a pension of seventy dollars, although just one catheter costs two hundred; then we then tried to get him into the Burdenko hospital, but he died at the very moment I got all the necessary paperwork together – he just didn't want to live anymore. Or I can tell you about 'The Rights of Mothers' foundation, how it has been helping the families of eighty thousand fallen army conscripts, free of charge, for twenty years. Or about Nina Piestechina, who has been living in Kazan railway station for the last five years and who carries around the bones of her burnt son in a mayonnaise jar, together with two bags of papers, applications, complaints and certificates, which she keeps having to send to the authorities in an attempt to get the flat she is entitled to. Or about Lyudmila Belova, who has been trying to get a pension allowance from the state for eighteen years for the loss of the family breadwinner. 1200 roubles – that is, as far as I know, roughly three-hundredths of the monthly salary of those who are about to tell us something about patriotism on the screen ... of ...'

'Arkady, well, you see ... that doesn't work here. We need something patriotic. Something along the lines of you getting injured and your friend getting you out. And then he dies. Ideally.'

It was the 'ideally' that was the final straw. Quite a strange feeling, they look you in the face and ask you to tell them how your friend got killed. Ideally. No, no, I stayed calm. I simply told them that in that case I probably didn't have a patriotic story for them.

'Okay, then just keep it vague – say you were there, it was awful, I wouldn't wish it on anyone. Now let's talk about the army. What do you think? Should every man serve?'

'What am I supposed to think? I think, for example, that the armies of countries who live in the 21st century and in the digital age are converting their armed forces to automation and robots. Drones plough through the airspace and soldiers become a separate combat unit, linked to a computer system with video camera, navigation system, night vision, GPS and so on, and we are still debating whether a man should serve in the army or not. By the way, ask yourself why you never encounter a single regular soldier among Putin's personal security, all only absolute professionals with the rank of lieutenant colonel? Why do they protect themselves with a professional army while they assign eighteen-year-old boys to defend the country? Why ...'

'Okay, Arkady, then let's drop the army thing too. Just say that you are of the opinion that we need a professional army. That's fine. Now, moving on – you signed a contract after Chechnya and went back as a volunteer. Tell us why. That is very patriotic and fits the theme of our programme.'

'No problem. Gladly. Because we have a workers' and peasants' army, in which only workers and peasants serve, it's a cheap pool of labour that the state couldn't care less about. Things that are free are not appreciated. The women give birth to enough reinforcements. This is why the country has always let its soldiers down, completely.'

After Chechnya, there wasn't a single system of rehabilitation for former combatants. Even today there isn't a single one. Which is why the boys with the bottomless eyes who have turned grey by the time they return from war are left to fend for themselves. And the overwhelming majority either crack up, end up in prison, or go back. I didn't want to drink myself to death or go to prison, so I went back. And that's what thousands of us did. It has nothing to do with patriotism. If there was a war in Moscow, we would gladly fight in Moscow. You can't imagine how happy we would be to fight in Moscow! Particularly in the districts near the Kremlin and Ostankino tower ...'

'All right, Arkady. Let's drop that. Tatyana, this is Arkady Babchenko, whom Aleshkovskiy recommended to us.'

Tatyana proves to be a doer: 'I will speak plainly. For us, Aleshkovskiy represents the opposition, and we can't broadcast anything he said. We have censorship here.' (Ah, finally someone said it!) 'If you want to speak along the same lines, then it won't be aired.'

'Tatyana. I will also speak plainly. I also represent the opposition. And I can tell you all that too, but as someone raised by sergeants, I won't hold back with my opinions.'

'As you wish. Then we won't broadcast what you say.'

They lead me into the studio. Sit me down on a sofa. Nikolayev practises the pronunciation of patriotic intonations. The Alexandrov choir warms up. Dana uses make-up to make me look patriotic. Other people are working on the nuances of their stories. Everyone is abuzz with the awareness of just how lucky they are: doing their bit on state television about how they love their Fatherland more and more. They all prostrate themselves for the opportunity to be on state television.

There are fifteen minutes left before we go on air, but I can barely contain myself.

I call Tatyana over. I have now realised that the state television channel couldn't care less about any of my stories. They don't give a damn about all these veterans, soldiers and their mothers. All the Chechens, Blagoveshchensks, South Ossetians and Krims. That was not what it was about. What was state television supposed to do with some stupid answers from me to equally stupid questions? Who cares about that in a studio with toilets that are not to be used by the mass of extras? Tell them the story of the little dog that they want to hear from you, and be thankful for the opportunity that was given to you. Everyone here knows. Not one of the three hundred viewers in the audience here believes the pompous theatre that they are about to stage here with cheerful expressions. I have never seen more calculating people than the television employees. Even bankers couldn't keep up.

'Tatyana,' I say. 'I think it is best if I go home and we leave it altogether.'

'Okay,' Tatyana immediately agrees, and you can hear that a load has been taken off her mind.

'I can't deal with any more extreme stuff here ...' As I leave, I overhear how she slates the poor little editor who invited me. Angelina Vovk puts on the appropriate expression, the studio guests sweetly praise the greatness of our beloved, beautiful, unique country, you can cut the patriotism with a knife. 'Action, camera!' I hear. 'Fatherland, we are going to tell you about our love for you.' Enjoy goggling at the box!

Back to the Stone Age

15th November 2015

I constantly get asked: ‘Arkady, what will happen next? What is to become of our homeland and us?’

What’s going to happen ... let’s take a look in the crystal ball.

For a while, everything will remain more or less as it is. The price of crude oil around fifty dollars per barrel, a war in Syria that drags on, Obama-Schmuck, a new colder war, creeping devaluation of pensions, budgets, wages and money and generally falling living standards.

How long? I don’t know. Two years perhaps. Maybe twenty-two. Regimes like this are sometimes quite resilient.

And the inexorable, creeping impoverishment of the population does not undermine the government in any way. On the contrary: the poorer the population and the poorer the country, the more stable the power.

There is no better gift for a dictator than the ‘Oil for Food’ programme. Poverty and external enemies – just what he needs. The main thing is that television is still functioning. And it does in our country, at full throttle. Children can be dying of hunger in doorways – there will always be enough money for the television.

Speaking of ‘Oil for Food’, maybe that is not just a hyperbole. European bureaucracy is very slow to get moving and takes a long time, but eventually it does get going. And it looks as if the important uncles over there decided that someone over here had gone too far and a conversation among adults was needed. It seems as if the decision has been taken to overthrow the regime.

And regimes these days are no longer toppled by tank columns, but by destroying the economy. All this talk of sanctions not being directed at the people, but against the regime; that we are not fighting the people of Iraq, Korea or Russia, whom we value and respect, who deserve better, but the regime of Saddam Hussein, Kim Jong-un or Vladimir Putin – these are all fairy tales for the less fortunate. Toppling a regime is only possible through the economic collapse of the entire population, the collapse of the economy of an entire country. And it will collapse, there is no doubt about that.

I envisage the ousting of Russia from the world economy.

Too bad that this process is practically irrevocable for countries with commodity reserves.

And Putin has accelerated it like no other. What is more, this highly gifted comrade has also brought the end of the hydrocarbon age closer.

The Stone Age did not end because they ran out of stones. Similarly, the age of fossil oil is not coming to an end because the resources are no longer there. Instead of just slowing down the process of switching to new energy sources, delaying the development of new types of energy and high technologies by selling as much fossil oil as possible for as long as possible, and as cheaply as possible, and even using this time and the oil dollars to transfer his economy from raw material bases to new technological bases, Comrade Putin, who - like a petrol station owner - considers himself the master of time and oil and gas monopolies on this planet, has accelerated scientific and technological progress in the development of alternative energy sources faster than Greenpeace could ever have dreamed of. He has achieved more in one year than the environmentalists failed to do in half a century. The Greens are jumping for joy, clapping and bowing and scraping.

He has also assisted the Saudis in entering Europe. And market players like that don't give anything back.

Well, the communists' dream is coming true – pensions here will rise to 1200 roubles. It's a pity that a loaf of bread will cost 10,000, a flat on the Arbat a hundred billion, and a billion will be the equivalent of a hundred dollars.

Well, and the dead bodies, of course. We can't do without them. Whether in Syria, Chechnya or Ukraine. I wouldn't count on it all being over in Ukraine, no, as long as Putin remains in power there will always be war, just with changing settings. And if something goes wrong in Syria and this war is no longer suited to distracting the population from internal problems, then the combat action will simply be shifted back to the Donbass. With a new attack on Kharkiv, for example.

You shouldn't presume that there are tactical or strategic considerations behind this. The war is meant to solve entirely different issues – all sorts, just not military ones. Poverty, war, prison and zombie TV – these are the four pillars of this regime.

And then, one fine day, it will all collapse. Suddenly, completely and everywhere. Wise Sergei Smirnov said: 'The disaster will be short, but all-encompassing.'

As experience has shown, a few hundred armed and organised men are enough to throw a city like Slovyansk into chaos. To throw a country like Russia into chaos, all you need is ten gangs of ten thousand people. You can get those together here in one minute.

There is no need to describe this period in detail. We can see with our own eyes what happens. Everything is on air, live. Just look at the so-called People's Republics of Luhansk and Donetsk. That's just how it will be.

Here it will be one big people's republic, on one sixth of the earth's surface, from sea to sea. With alcoholics at the checkpoints, severed heads in the rivers, torture in the cellars, missing businessmen and public executions.

The tsar will be quietly strangled in the backyards of the Kremlin – or, quite the opposite, gleefully hanged from the Dzierżyński monument on the Lubyanka – and the 86 per cent who now adore him will be those who will string him up. Seated in the front row will be those who now laud his greatness and irreplaceability more loudly than all others, and one day later, the monument will also be toppled.

And then, when it is all over, those who survived will enjoy an external administration here in the ruins.

The world will not risk leaving this territory that is populated by idiots with nuclear weapons to its own devices. It will take action.

The Tsar will be taken down, what is left of Dzierżyński will be tidied up, an American flag will be stuck into the pedestal. Humanitarian aid will be delivered, people will scratch each other's eyes out in the scrum for 'Bush legs', cheerfully waving flags at the CNN and BBC cameras, saying that they always hated Putin, but love Hillary and Trump, and that they will thank America once more for buckwheat and washing powder.

American flags in general will become a bestseller in this country. A little business idea I had.

After the democratic, open, honest and lawful elections – honest and open elections can always be held in this country, the voters vote honestly and openly for anyone who is shown long enough on state television - why we need a Churkov is a mystery to me – there will be an external administrator. Someone like Aleksei Navalny.

Maybe it won't be someone like Navalny, but Navalny himself, provided he doesn't disappear without a trace in the NKVD camps and survives the People's Republic. Or Dmitry Medvedev. Or someone else with comparable liberal views who, through his ability to compromise, pleases more or less everyone. In a word, our Russian Hamid Karzai. Or Jalal Talabani, the Iraqi president who followed on from Saddam.

Karzai-Navalny will serve his two terms with the help of the external administration, and this period will be relatively quiet.

This period will probably be the best in the history of Russia in the 21st century – the quietest, without war, without deaths and without shocks, with a relatively levelled poverty level and perhaps even a minimal economic upswing. But it will never be as it was before. Nothing ends and then returns to the way it was, you need to realise that.

There will be no more energy superpower. No golden oil dollars. No palaces and no Sobyenin paving stones on the streets. No Sochi, no Krasnaya Polyana. No getting up from your knees.

None of that will happen. Nobody will ever take us back. No G8, no G20, no EU and no summits. We had the unique chance to become one of the actual leaders of the world economy, we were given ALL the credit opportunities, all doors were opened, we were allowed into all circles, people smiled at us and shook our hands, but we messed it all up, spent all the money that rained down from heaven on flamboyant palaces, Olympic games, Mercedes, military parades, war, murders and wailing about our own greatness.

We were given the chance, but once again we have proved only one thing to the world – that we are incapable of generating democracy, technology, economy, stability, development and security. We can only generate Putins, in different models. And people like us better kept at a distance, somewhere in the third world zone, smiling at them above the door chain.

We won't get another chance at such credits.

Something like northern Brazil will emerge here under the external administration, with a touch of north Venezuela: a huge, tree-covered territory of the semi third world, relatively settled and stable, uniformly poor (apart from the capital), and whether or not there is life in the depths of the country is unknown.

And because the country not only messed up this unique chance, but also learnt nothing from it, northern Brazil will not be here for long.

Karzai will finish his two terms; he won't modernise anything, of course, on the one hand because there is basically nothing to modernise, because crude oil will never cost a hundred and fifty dollars again and nothing other than the raw material economy has ever been built here, but also because he has no reason to do so. He will retire triumphantly, his place taken by an entirely grey and weak successor whose name no-one will remember, and thus the period of relative calm will gradually come to an end.

For far too long, everything that stretched its head just a little above the bottle of Zhiguli beer has been destroyed. For centuries, the gene for love of freedom, independence, entrepreneurship, diligence, independent thought and critical information processing has been rendered extinct in Russia. And in the last hundred years, this was brutally done with a scythe.

Putin managed to do one thing: he drew out the worst in mankind. All the hate, xenophobia, aggression. The dirtiest, most disgusting, blackest traits of human nature. Not even the USSR managed that. Even the Soviet Union merely declared the proletariat to be the hegemonic class;

in reality, it was the labouring intelligentsia, the engineers and teachers as well as the proverbial physicists and poets, who ruled.

Putin, on the other hand, did not simply pick the lumpenproletariat off the floor and make it the hegemonic class – even the lumpenproletariat is capable of being peaceful; he made the aggressive proles the rulers.

It's true, the gene of love of freedom and free thinking has an amazing capacity to re-emerge from nowhere. Despite the eradication that took place in Stalin's camps, in the civil war, in the punishment battalions of the Second World War, in torture cellars and in the Holodomor, a new intellectual class emerged virtually out of nothing in the seventies. But this regeneration is not infinitely possible.

In the end, the land will reach a stage where nothing light nor good can grow any longer. There is simply not enough time for civil society to form, it does not develop that critical mass, that percentage that would be necessary to set changes in motion – its members are wiped out faster than they are born. Murdered by minors with machetes, out in the countryside.

That is the Congolisation of the country.

And Russia is headed straight towards Congolisation.

In this northern Congo, zombies in pure form will crawl out of the darkness. Evil in pure, distilled form.

A mixture of KGB, Gestapo, the cleric Dmitri Smirnov, Chaplin, Milchakov, German Sterligov, Okhlobystin, Prokhanov, Limonov, Dugin, Tesak and Bezler. In a word: an orthodox IS.

The country is turning into a mixture of Iraq, Haiti, Somalia, Colombia, IS and the Donetsk People's Republic.

In the capital, guarded by government troops, life will go on – as it did in Mogadishu – and in one or two major cities as well, but beware of entering the zone beyond the Moscow ring road after dark.

Stark, banal and undiluted gangsterism will rule in Magadan.

Vladivostok and Kaliningrad will try to form some sort of statehood, while watching wide-eyed what happens to the neighbouring regions. Eventually they will join the Russian republics of Primorsk and Baltic.

Kadyrov rules in Chechnya. On the plains, in the mountains, a new form of IS. As we see in the entire north Caucasus. We can already say goodbye to these regions today.

In Rostov, Krasnodar, Stavropol – in the south in general – there will be a sort of southern Cossack People's Republic. People will be whipped with nagaikas, they will drink, the coal shafts will be flogged off as scrap metal, they will fight against the Chechen-Ingush-Dagestani and sing songs about horses and the ataman. From time to time the Ukrainian army will check the border regions to make sure everything is all right, as Israel does in the uncontrolled border regions of Lebanon – without success.

And China will sit between Vladivostok and the Urals. From sea to sea. From ocean to ocean. All the way to the North Pole. Lake Baikal will become the tourist attraction of the planet. Properties there will cost millions of yuan. The Russian-speaking population of Blagoveshchensk, Krasnoyarsk and the city-like settlement of Tiksi will pray to the Chinese Communist Party, drive on ten-lane highways in quite decent cars and think that it was their good fortune that they assimilated, forgot their own language and merged into the great empire. And they will be right.

The rest of the country, the villages, will be irrelevant. Completely intimidated, the population will live in their cellars, while over their heads in the destroyed houses, war will rage – sometimes in one direction, sometimes in the other, but it will be constant.

It will all end with the small nation state Muscovy, just as the Roman Empire eventually became Italy. Albeit after a period of dozens of fragmented small principalities.

The Roman Empire took three hundred years to disintegrate, the Russian one a hundred, but in our times, everything happens more quickly, so the mosaic of principalities will already have emerged here by the end of the century.

I would compare the first stage, the complete Congolisation of the country, to the collapse of Iraq, but slowed down by the gigantic dimensions of the territory. Complete Congolisation will take about thirty or forty years; those in power will do everything they can to speed up the development as much as possible, so perhaps it will happen more quickly.

No matter how it turns out, Russia will leave the world stage, the nuclear club will be removed from its hands. Its neighbours will leave the country alone – no one bothers with the Congo any more either – because what happens deep inside the country is of no real interest to anyone.

However, there is an alternative too. There is still a chance that the madhouse will find its way back to a more or less normal state. Unfortunately, I have recently been coming to the conclusion more and more that this will not be a fundamental change of direction, but only a delay in the disintegration of the empire. I believe the historical direction is already predetermined.

Part Two

The Invasion

23rd February 2022 23.31 PM

Good Night

24th February 2022, 08.43 AM

Last night I went to sleep with the thought of having to write a post that was probably similar to something that could have been written in 1939, before the start of World War II. A kaleidoscope of lightning quick changes – the League of Nations said this, America said that, imposed sanctions on so and so, Turkey is of the opinion, Bulgaria declared that ... it seems very much the same to me. God forbid.

Laughed enough about Biden?

Well then ...

Needed to treat the wounded:

1. Intraosseous catheters NIO, 20 units – 120,000 hryvnia
2. Tourniquets SAM, 4 units – 46,000 hryvnia
3. Israeli bandages, 100 units – 35,000 hryvnia
4. Burn compresses, 400 units – 32,000 hryvnia
5. Venous catheter fixators, 500 units – 20,000 hryvnia
6. Medical examination benches, 5 units – 20,000 hryvnia
7. Medical uTactic backpacks, 5 units – 18,000 hryvnia
8. Frameless stretchers, 40 units – 16,000 hryvnia

There is more to come!

24th February 10.13 AM

For the first time in fifteen years I watched an appearance of the arsehole. In full length. Now the old man has completely lost it. He has not only declared war on the Ukraine, he's also talking about a new world order. In his speech he spoke about America for ten times as long as he spoke about Ukraine. All the things he mentioned. Wasn't it all far-fetched? World War II, the collapse of the USSR, Iraq, Libya, Belgrade? He declared that we (Russia) are protecting ourselves against NATO; that we won't tolerate fascists on our borders, and he practically openly threatened to use nuclear weapons if anyone tries to stop him from occupying Ukraine, which he has no intention of doing. All of this in one and the same head.

So then, Russians. Prepare yourselves. Put on your soldier coats.

The blitzkrieg clearly failed, the start was sluggish and hesitant; for Russia that is a mistake, this is ALREADY the beginning of its defeat, such things need to be done with the utmost intensity, by surprise and quickly, and that didn't happen – that is why this fun is going to take longer. Hook by hook, noose by noose, let's go. A war of attrition never happens without mobilisation. Congratulations, Russians. We warned you.

I always wanted to know what goes through the mind of someone who crosses the border of another state at five in the morning to attack it. What are they thinking? What sort of image of the world do they have? What sort of mindset do you have to have to sit in a ditch half an hour before the invasion, to look across the river, across the field, across the border, and then get into an armoured personnel carrier, drive off, invade, ready to burn alive in this tin can in order to ...yes, in order to what? How do they explain that? They must do it somehow? But to hell with it.

Glory to the Ukraine!

24th February 11.09 AM

The first hundred hours will be decisive. What they can occupy during that time, they won't surrender again. After that it's a war of equals. Once the defensive Ukrainian strategy is working well, they will only be able to advance with huge effort ... therefore, practically, almost not at all. From the information available so far, it can be concluded that things are not going well for them. Not well at all. Everything could have been a lot worse. That was more like a bloody blitzkrieg. In other words, it failed. Vlad, you are an idiot. You fuck everything up, even the attack.

It doesn't seem to be about the whole of Ukraine. They will push through a corridor and revive New Russia with the eastern territories. But if they get stuck, come to a halt, then they will flatten everything. The residential areas. There are no two ways about it. That's the way they always do it. Take it from me – the cellar of a multi-storey building is the best of all easily accessible shelters. It is hard to bring down an entire building. You need a rocket or an aerial bomb to do that.

If you are not directly on the front line, create emergency exits in the cellar. There should be at least two and they should lead in different directions. Ideally you should dig a few more to other sides of the house. And clear out any flammable stuff that is lying around.

24th February 12.53 AM

Goodness. A downed helicopter trying to land at Hostomel. For Russians who don't know their way around, Hostomel is near Kyiv. They tried to drop airborne troops there, a storybook invasion where they storm the capital of the neighbouring country – they will have to answer for that in The Hague. Once helicopter shot down right over a field, the other on a hill – and these were the very latest model, Ka-52 'Alligator', which Putin says is 'absolutely exemplary'. So one that can't be shot down, that hits every target in the world, the pride of the Russian Air Force.

This is what I wrote about three weeks ago:

'What is a 'Stinger'? Why do they keep saying it's for low-flying targets? That's rubbish. Combat altitude: up to 3800 metres. Range of engagement: up to four and a half kilometres. So you can definitely forget the safe use of combat helicopters, and the Air Force will be able to engage its targets from an altitude of at least five kilometres.'

Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia!

Thank you!

A huge thank you, brothers!

And today Estonia is also celebrating its day of independence!

Eesti riigi vapipäeval!

To the Republic of Estonia's independence!

Thank you!

Дякуємо !

Aitäh !

24th February 1.39 PM

Kharkiv. Destroyed Russian military equipment.

It is said they have recaptured the bypass road.

24th February 2.13 PM

What is going on? Can someone explain? Sending dirty, lice-ridden recruits on armoured personnel carriers to the outskirts of the city to burn like they did in Grozny thirty years ago – damn, is that all you've got? This is how you planned to conquer a country of forty million? That is all the idiot is capable of? That's his entire blitzkrieg? Or what?

Almost half a day has passed since the invasion. Well, damn. Your Gauleiter in Kharkiv was meant to have shot the enemies in the cellars by now! Where is the big, powerful, exemplary, hypersonic and invincible wonder weapon? Or is he just trying to divert attention? I don't understand.

Arsehole – he just fucks everything up.

24th February 3.26 PM

In the Glukhov region, the military used 'Javelins', an anti-tank guided missile, and disabled a Russian military column. Fifteen T-72 tanks – according to an employee of the Land Forces Command.

24th February 4.14 PM

Firstly, if you have decided to leave the country, then you have missed the right time to do so. Because now people have suddenly remembered that they absolutely have to save their tapestry that came from the Uzbek textile factory in Tashkent in 1978, worth 16 roubles and 18 kopecks, as well as the quilt and the GRUNDIG television from 1997, best quality, works perfectly, you don't throw something like that away – and they are now clogging up the arterial roads and motorway junctions. If you get caught in such a traffic jam and see or hear military technology – get out of the car and move away from the road.

If it is enemy technology, then they don't care, they are under orders and will roll over your cars with their armoured personnel carriers.

If, on the other hand, it is your own technology – then the enemy will use every opportunity to attack the marching column. They don't give a damn if there are people nearby.

If you live in a big city, as paradoxical as it may sound, that is the safest, or rather least unsafe place you could be.

I really can't imagine how they plan on taking Kharkiv, for example. The storming of Grozny lasted a month and a half, costing them at least one and a half thousand dead and several hundred units of military equipment. Kharkiv alone has the same population as the whole of Chechnya in 1995.

Clearly they had been expecting the Ukrainian defence to collapse after the first attacks and then they would march straight in for a parade. But it didn't. The blitzkrieg failed definitively. Now they will advance further into the country, they will encircle cities and try to take them with the help of blockades, but these are still the old tactics.

Encircling a city and entering a city are two entirely different things. They cannot be compared. But if they get stuck, they will start flattening everything. Including the residential areas. So let me say once more – if there is an underground station nearby, then head there. That is the safest place to be. If there is a bunker, go there. If not, then seek refuge in the cellar of a high-rise building. These can only be brought down with rockets. The example of the impact of a Kalibr in a courtyard near Chuguev shows that the hit has to be direct or be an aerial bomb – a decent one weighing five hundred kilos, no less. Neither artillery nor rocket launchers can bring down a multi-storey building.

Secondly, when fighting begins on the streets in your town, the first thing to go will be the water, electricity and the heating. Take measures for water now. Gather as much as you can. You can never have too much. You can freeze it at sub-zero temperatures. Ice keeps well and is easier to thaw than snow. Snow is difficult to manage, it is porous and contains a lot of air and only yields a tenth of the water of its original volume.

Charge all the batteries you have.

Firewood. Organise firewood if you can.

The fun will probably last a while.

Thirdly, take a five-storey house with five staircases and four flats on each floor as an example. A total of one hundred. If we calculate only one person per flat, that is one hundred people. Even if half of them have fled – that's still fifty.

Together, fifty people shit fifty piles of shit over the course of a day.

The sewage system won't work. In no time, you will have filled the bushes behind the garages, the yard, the boiler room with shit, within a week.

Spring is coming. All that shit will seep away – into the nearest water reservoir. The heat will come, dust, a light breeze – acute bacterial dysentery will break out in no time where people live crowded together in poor sanitary conditions.

An infant dies of dysentery within two days – the tiny body simply does not hold enough water to allow antibiotics to work. A five-year-old will die within a week. An adult can take up to two weeks. I have had this damned diarrhoea. You can't stand up for days and you shit in three-metre streams, all the way to the ceiling.

So think about where you are going to shit beforehand. It is just as important as food and water. So much for now.

And still, if you are not directly involved in helping, in defending the territory, as volunteers, weaving nets, then try and get out of town. It's not as easy as it was yesterday, but it is still better to do so. Simply because you won't be in the way. Water will run out within a week, food within two, the army will have to set aside vehicles to bring you water, to provide escorts; this drains resources and manpower, there is unnecessary crowding, unnecessary attention, crowds are an easy target. You will get sick, clog up hospitals, take beds away from the wounded, you will hinder the use of weapons – if there is a machine gun nest in your house and you are hiding away in the cellar waving white flags, then the Ukrainian army will have a harder time liquidating the gunmen, and anyway, you will be a nuisance.

Everyone can be most useful if they are in the right place.

So think about your strategy in advance.

Children need to be taken to safety, absolutely no discussion.

And the main thing is – don't panic. As they say at sea – it's not the water that kills you, it's the panic. Don't let fear dictate rash decisions.

That is my advice in a nutshell. I have made a large post about this topic, point by point, but I won't send it now because I don't want to scare anyone. You can find it on 'site.ua', titled "Theses on survival".

P.S. Do not go out into the countryside. Firstly, a five-storey building is hard to bring down, whereas a farmhouse requires just one mine and you are buried. Secondly, if they can't take down the cities, they will take the countryside. If you go anywhere, go to a city, and choose a big one.

24th February 6.01 PM

And I still don't get it. Where is the focus? Where is the determination? Or were the landing troops in Hostomel just sent to their death to fill the Crimean canal with water? As a diversionary tactic? But Christo Grozev writes that according to his sources in the Ukrainian government, 10 Il-76 planes set off from Pskov towards Kyiv. Half a day after the war started? When everyone was already on high alert?

Or are they really in such a world of their own that they expected to be greeted with flowers in Kharkiv?

Or is this a diversionary tactic and we have to prepare for some other awful thing?

But half a day already, Karl.

24th February 10.37 PM

Hostomel really is the turning point. If it can be held – taking it a second time will be a lot harder, plus precious time has passed – then this blitzkrieg can be forgotten for good.

Surprising how topical their own imperial-chauvinist slang from the early 2000s has become to them, but –

Let's go to Bobruisk, Beasts©.

That's where the 18 Il-76 planes from the Pskov Division that were meant to conquer Kyiv have allegedly been diverted to.

25th February 10.36AM

And so it actually is. I can't understand it. It looks like they don't have any more nasty tricks up their sleeve. The way it looks is that they have thrown three quarters of what they have into the fray at the moment. Well, fine. You drop two hundred men off twenty kilometres from the capital of a country of forty million – judging by the photos of the prisoners, more infantry than special forces – and then? Did you really think that two hundred mugs could secure a strategic airport? Or four hundred for that matter.

Do they want to pretend it's Czechoslovakia? But there everything went to plan. The first plane landed at two o'clock, at half past four the Central Committee building was surrounded, the main forces started to land at five.

What were they planning to do here? Hold up the airport for half a day with a troop of alcoholics? They took the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Great. To do what with it? To kill another ten thousand people in the Ukraine – in twenty years' time? What good will that do in the conquest of Kyiv? They brought two Kamaz trucks from Obolon. To do what? Assassinate Zelenskyy? How are you thinking of doing that?

They are trying to surround Kyiv. As if this tactic had been successful in Chechnya. There are three cities in Chechnya – Grozny, Argun and Gudermes. The rest are villages. Surrounding and clearing villages – yes, okay.

One and a half million people live in the whole of Chechnya. It took fifteen years to achieve that. Kyiv alone has four and a half million, including the suburbs. How can you clear a city that has three times as many people as the whole of Chechnya?

The territorial defence with their Javelins will stand by and watch?

Do they want to bombard the place with cruise missiles for months on end? Create a second Aleppo? It won't work.

Right. Suppose the Russians are advancing on Kyiv although their sparks are flying in all directions. Right. They are in. They have reached Bankova Street. Have made arrests, ousted, put people in jail.

And now?

The slogan is: 'No to Putin, no to Russia!' And there they would say: they have deposed Zelenskyy but nothing has changed. Absolutely nothing. The Gauleiter signs the surrender. Okay. Will the Ukrainian armed forces, territorial defence and partisans know that they have surrendered?

Russian ship, fuck off, Russian ship.

If they already need a big missile cruiser to conquer a speck of granite in the sea, how on earth are they going to control the whole country?

In reports given to Putin, he has been presented with a completely different world, a parallel world, his own world. But that is where he lives.

They genuinely believed that they would be greeted with flowers in Kharkiv.

Surely they can't be that stupid. Or can they?

The next two days will be decisive. And they will, I hope, mean a breakthrough.

Well, that is all I have to say for now.

I am switching to reading mode.

I won't clutter up the web.

Glory to Ukraine!

25th February 12.26 PM

Twenty years. For twenty years they retooled the army. They poured incredible amounts of money into it. They say around twenty billion. Boasting from every stovepipe about the epochal hypersonic and hyper-modern weapons. Shot down Bulawas. Perished in the Losharik – a submarine can sink. Rumbled across Red Square in Armata tanks. Built the legendary 'Tigers', the 'Terminator' tank escort vehicle, and bragged on national television about all their wonder weapons like the Kiseljow, Popow and Skabejew.

But in an invasion, there can be no 'combat reconnaissance'. On the contrary – you throw the best, the most combat-capable, the top weapons into the attack in order to make the best possible use of the surprise factor and push as far inland as possible. Surprise is everything.

WHERE???

Where the hell?

Where is all that super-duper stuff they bragged about on television?

I look at the photos and videos – the same old BTR-80, albeit a newer Model A, and armoured personnel carriers.

Armoured personnel carriers, shit!!!

And petrified soldiers on these personnel carriers, facing fighters in the Ukrainian territorial defence who look like terminators.

Damn, I am having complete déjà vu right now. The armed personnel carriers defending itself in mortal combat in Obolon, burning minesweepers on the outskirts of the city and corpses in Russian camouflage uniforms in the snow all around. Is this 1994, or what?

And in addition – there was not a single casualty on the way to Grozny. They marched into the city as if on parade and took up positions. Until night came ...

Here they were already decimated on the way there.

In two days they had as many casualties as in the entire year in Grozny. And night has not even fallen yet.

Finland war. This is the purest of Finland wars. When the USSR army, which at that time had the reputation in the world of being an invincible monster, was to crack Finland within a few hours like a nut – yes, like a nut or a sunflower seed – and leave not a trace of it. The Finns were given just a few days. We all know how that ended. One hundred and fifty thousand bodies and seventy kilometres conquered. Two thousand per kilometre.

Exactly the same is happening today. Except that the country is twice as large in area and extent, the population ten times as large, and the whole thing is peppered with modern weapons.

Finland was blitzed with human flesh in a very primitive way. They are trying the same with the Ukraine. The cemeteries near Rostov are bursting at the seams.

Yesterday the New York Times wrote that, according to the Pentagon, Kyiv will be conquered in ninety-six hours. Goodness knows how they are going to conquer a city of four million peppered with territorial defences in four days with this scrap metal – they have tried that on two conquered Kamaz, but here is the thing:

The thing is that the West expected Ukraine to fall quickly. Like it did back then. Like in the 1940s. Seventy years ago.

The West thought it was unreasonable to intervene and help. It signalled its refusal. Didn't want to get involved. Why give weapons to a country that is as good as lost? Pointless. Especially when these weapons would then end up in the hands of the enemy anyway. Logical. Now they are waiting, observing. And if Ukraine holds out for a few more days – the blitzkrieg has undeniably already taken hold – if they resist, destroy the enemy and photos go round the world again like those of the frozen Soviet soldiers on the Finnish roadside – then the West will get involved again. It will have no choice. Then Ukraine will be given assistance, weapons will be supplied. On a new level.

The Finnish army has become one of the best in the world since the war. Ukraine's will be even better. And Ukraine will stand firm.

Glory to Ukraine!